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Bulgaria Suspects 6 Russians in Arms Depot Blasts

April 28, 2021



Miroslav Chaloupka / CTK / ZUMA / TASS

Bulgarian prosecutors have linked six Russian nationals to a series of explosions at ammunition and arms factories on its soil, media in the southeastern European nation reported Wednesday.

Prosecutor-General's Office spokeswoman Siika Mileva said the four incidents dating as far back as a decade ago may be connected to the attempted 2015 poisoning of Bulgarian arms dealer Emilian Gebrev, according to the Bulgarian News Agency.

Three Russian nationals suspected of working for the GRU military intelligence agency are wanted in connection with Gebrev's poisoning, it cited Mileva as saying at a press conference. Three others were reportedly in Bulgaria around the time of the poisoning attempt and the explosions — one of which took place in 2011, two in 2015 and one last year.

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The arms and ammunition in all four explosions had been intended for export to either Ukraine or Georgia, the Bulgarian News Agency reported, citing Bulgarian prosecutors.

“The collected evidence leads to the conclusion that the purpose of the Russian citizens’ actions was to intercept the supply of military products to Georgia and Ukraine,” the news agency said.

The Bulgarian prosecutor’s office said that it has been working with the Czech authorities to establish a link between the four bombings and the deadly 2014 arms depot blast on Czech territory that has led to a major fallout between Prague and Moscow.

Prague accused Russian special services of involvement in the explosions, triggering a tit-for-tat series of diplomatic expulsions involving fellow EU and NATO members in eastern and central Europe that continued into Wednesday.

The Kremlin has denied the accusations as absurd, with Russia’s foreign minister the latest to deride them — and the Czech government’s domestic row between its pro-Russia president and pro-EU government — as “schizophrenia.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov later on Wednesday also mocked Bulgaria’s accusations, saying Sofia “evidently wants to outdo the Czechs.”

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