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Russia Says Arrested 8 Suspects in Crimean Bridge Blast

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Black smoke billows from a fire on the Kerch bridge that links Crimea to Russia, after a truck exploded, near Kerch, on October 8, 2022. **AFP**

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said it has arrested eight suspects in last week's apparent attack that tore apart the Crimean Bridge and killed three people, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Five Russians, three Ukrainians and one Armenian were detained over their alleged involvement in the Oct. 8 explosion that collapsed a road segment and caused a major train oil tank fire along the Moscow-built bridge connecting the annexed peninsula to mainland Russia.

The FSB accused Ukraine's secret services of organizing the explosion, with a Kyiv agent having coordinated the transit of the explosives.

"The organizer of the terrorist attack on the Crimean bridge was the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry, its head Kirill Budanov, employees and

agents," Interfax quoted the FSB as saying.

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While Kyiv has not officially confirmed any involvement in the explosion, some Ukrainian officials celebrated the damage.

According to the FSB's investigation, the attack was carried out by a Georgian-registered cargo truck that had been loaded with explosive devices.

"The explosives were hidden in 22 plastic film rolls weighing 22,770 kilograms (50,200 pounds)," it said.

The rolls left on a boat in August from the Ukrainian port of Odesa to Bulgaria. They then transited through the port of Poti in Georgia, then sent overland to Armenia before arriving by road in Russia, according to the FSB.

Investigators claim that Russian citizen Makhir Yusubov, born in 1971, was driving the truck westward to the Crimean city of Simferopol when the explosives detonated.

The FSB said its investigation is ongoing and vowed that all participants in the alleged attack "including foreign citizens" would be dealt with "in accordance with Russian law."

Some observers have raised doubts over Russian authorities' claim that the explosion was the result of a truck bomb.

Spanning 19 kilometers over the Kerch Strait, the $4 billion bridge is a key symbol of Moscow's widely unrecognized claim over the Crimean peninsula, which it annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

It has also been a key supply route for Russia's forces along the southern front of its invasion of Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin personally inaugurated the bridge when it was completed in 2018.

The attack, which came just a day after Putin's 70th birthday, is one of Moscow's biggest humiliations in its seven-month war against Ukraine.

AFP contributed reporting.

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