

Kremlin Refuses to Say If Berlin Park Hitman Was Russian Agent

By [AFP](#)

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Vadim Krasikov. **Berlin Police**

Moscow on Friday refused to say whether a convicted hitman who killed a former Chechen fighter in Berlin four years ago was a Russian agent after President Vladimir Putin hinted that he wanted him freed in a three-way prisoner exchange.

In an interview with conservative pundit Tucker Carlson published Thursday, Putin brought up the case of Vadim Krasikov — without mentioning him by name — in the context of ongoing negotiations over a deal to free Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich.

Krasikov is serving a life sentence in Germany for the 2019 killing of former Chechen rebel commander Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in a Berlin park, which German authorities say was ordered by Russian intelligence services.

Gershkovich, meanwhile, has been imprisoned in Moscow since being arrested in March 2023

on charges of espionage — accusations rejected by him, his employer and the White House.

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Putin said it was likely a deal to exchange Gershkovich could be reached, but called on the United States to give in to Russian demands.

"There is a person serving a sentence in a U.S.-allied [country]. That person, out of patriotic sentiments, eliminated a bandit in a European capital," Putin said during the interview, referring to Krasikov's case.

"Whether he did it of his own volition or not, that is a different question," he added.

Asked outright on Friday whether Krasikov was an FSB agent, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "I will leave that question without an answer."

Washington has accused Moscow of arresting American citizens in hopes of using them to secure the release of Russian spies abroad.

In 2022, Russia freed American basketball player Brittney Griner in exchange for the arms dealer Viktor Bout.

"I do not rule out that the person you refer to, Mr. Gershkovich, could return to his motherland," Putin said in the interview with Carlson.

"It does not make any sense to keep him in prison in Russia," he added. "I believe an agreement can be reached."

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