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Russia Arrests Concert Hall Attack 'Financier,' Claims Ukraine Link

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Russian Investigative Committee Chairman Alexander Bastrykin. **t.me/sledcom_press**

Russian authorities have arrested a suspected "financier" of last week's deadly concert hall attack, Russia's top investigative body said Thursday, claiming that Ukraine had paid "large amounts" to the perpetrators.

"Another suspect involved in the terrorist financing scheme has been identified and detained," Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement, adding that the person was placed in pre-trial detention.

Eight other defendants in the ongoing terrorism probe have been remanded into custody by Moscow's Basmanny District Court.

Russia said Saturday it had arrested 11 people in connection with the Friday evening attack on Crocus City Hall, which saw gunmen open fire and set the music venue ablaze, killing at least 143 people and injuring hundreds more.

Related article: Victims of the Crocus City Hall Attack

The Islamic State's affiliate ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest in Russia since the 2004 Beslan school siege, and social media channels linked to the militant group have published graphic videos of the gunmen committing the mass killing.

However, top Russian officials, including Vladimir Putin, have suggested that Ukraine and the West were partly responsible for the mass killing, though they have yet to bring forward any concrete evidence to back up the claim.

Russia's Investigative Committee claimed Thursday that it had obtained "verifiable information that the perpetrators of the terrorist attack received significant amounts of money and cryptocurrency, which were used in preparing the crime, from Ukraine."

"The detained terrorists' connection with Ukrainian nationalists has been obtained from examining their electronic devices and analyzing financial transactions," Russia's Investigative Committee said.

Ukraine and its Western allies have described the accusations as "propaganda."

"My uncle used to say ... that the best manure salesmen often carry their samples in their mouths," U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters later on Thursday.

"Russian officials seem to be pretty good manure salesmen," Kirby said, slamming what he called Russia's "nonsense propaganda."

AFP contributed reporting.

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