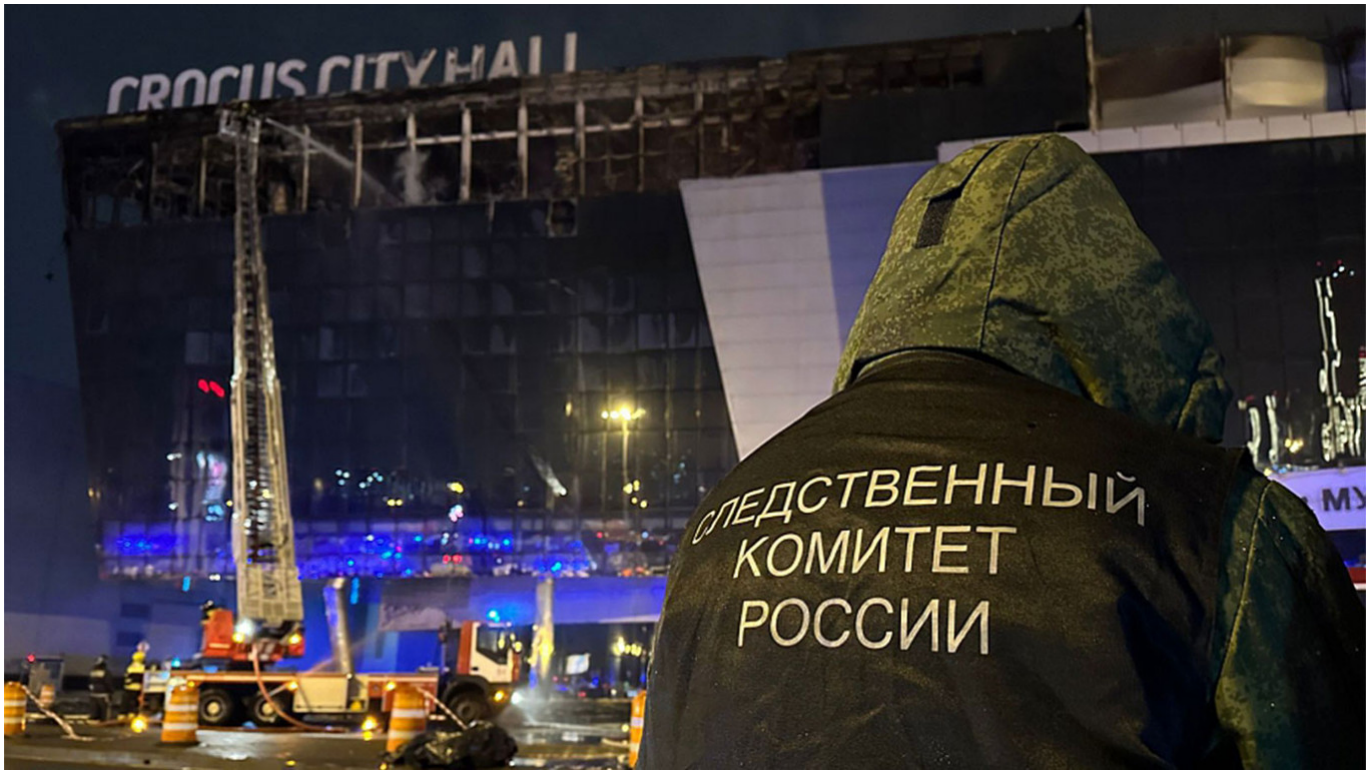
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Russia Says Found Link to Ukraine on Concert Attack Suspect's Phone

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Russian Investigative Committee

Russian investigators said Friday that they have uncovered more evidence of Ukraine's alleged involvement in last month's deadly concert hall attack, including photos of Ukrainian flags found on one of the suspected assailant's phones.

Following the March 22 attack on Crocus City Hall, which left at least 145 people dead and hundreds more injured, Russian officials have pointed the blame at Ukraine and its Western partners despite Islamic militants claiming responsibility for the massacre. Kyiv and the West deny any involvement and accuse Moscow of exploiting the tragedy for propaganda purposes.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said one of the suspected accomplices in the attack had sent his "handler" screenshots of Crocus City Hall's entrances on Feb. 24, the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"The defendant confirmed all of this in his testimony," the law enforcement body said without identifying the individual by name. Russian authorities have detained at least 14

people who are believed to have been involved in the concert hall attack, including four suspected gunmen.

Related article: Russia's FSB Detains 3 More Concert Attack Suspects

The reliability of information obtained during police interrogations has been brought into question after the suspected gunmen were shown in court with visible signs of abuse, while graphic photos and videos circulated online suggest that they were tortured.

Russia's Investigative Committee said other photos on the same phone showed men in camouflage holding a Ukrainian flag in front of destroyed buildings. "The data may indicate a link between the terrorist attack and the special military operation [in Ukraine]," the law enforcement body said.

"The probe is ongoing, including a series of investigative procedures and operational steps aimed at confirming the involvement of Ukrainian special services and international Islamist terrorist organizations in organizing and financing the terrorist act," it added.

Last week, the Investigative Committee claimed to have obtained "verifiable" proof on the suspects' phones that they had received "significant amounts of money and cryptocurrency" from Ukraine.

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