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Foiled Russian Assassination Plot Targeted CEO of German Arms Maker Rheinmetall – CNN

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Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall AG. **rheinmetall.com**

Russia had plans to assassinate the CEO of German defense company Rheinmetall, a key producer of artillery shells and military vehicles for Ukraine, CNN reported Thursday, citing five anonymous U.S. and Western officials familiar with U.S. intelligence.

U.S. intelligence had informed Berlin of these plans, allowing German security services to foil the plot against Armin Papperger, the U.S. broadcaster said. An unnamed high-level German government official confirmed to CNN that the U.S. had warned Germany.

CNN did not say when exactly Russia had allegedly planned to kill Papperger and whether it sought to carry out the plot directly or through a local proxy.

It said the plot was "the most mature" among a series of Russian plans to assassinate European defense industry executives who were supporting Ukraine in its fight against

invading Russian forces.

The U.S. National Security Council, the German and Russian embassies in Washington and Rheinmetall have all declined to comment on the reported plot against Papperger.

Papperger later said he believed the outline of the report but could not confirm details of the plot, telling the Financial Times: "I think CNN is not just looking up at the sky."

Germany had provided a "great level of security around my person" after being alerted by U.S. intelligence of the plot, Papperger added.

The Kremlin on Friday dismissed the report.

"It's all presented in the style of another fake story, therefore such reports cannot be taken seriously," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Rheinmetall, one of the world's largest producers of artillery and tank shells, ramped up production after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

It is involved in a joint venture with a Ukrainian partner to service and repair Western-supplied weapons, with plans to open an ammunition factory and an armored vehicle-building factory in Ukraine.

CNN reported Wednesday, citing a senior unnamed NATO official, that Russia has been carrying out a sabotage campaign across Europe to stop the flow of Western arms to Ukraine for over six months. Russia has dismissed the claims as unfounded.

"Russia's intensifying campaign of subversion is something that we are taking extremely seriously and have been intently focused on over the past few months," NSC spokesperson Adrienne Watson was quoted as saying on Thursday.

AFP contributed reporting.

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