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Russian Arrested Over ‘Destabilization’ Plot for Paris Olympics – Prosecutors

By AFP

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Lafargue Raphael / ABACA / TASS

French police on Tuesday arrested a Russian man suspected of plotting acts of "destabilization" during the Paris Olympics, prosecutors said.

The man, born in 1984, was held in custody and placed under judicial investigation on suspicion of "organizing events likely to lead to destabilization during the Olympic Games," a source in the state prosecution service, who asked not to be named, told AFP.

The source said an investigation was opened into "passing intelligence to a foreign power in order to arouse hostilities in France," adding that the crime was punishable by up to 30 years in jail.

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Prosecutors said a visit to the man's home "at the request of the interior ministry" had uncovered evidence of the suspected plans.

They did not give any details of the alleged plot, except to say that it was not terrorist in nature, and that specialist anti-terrorist prosecutors were not following the case.

Authorities have investigated over 1 million people, including athletes, coaches, journalists, volunteers, security guards and even local residents near event locations ahead of the Olympics, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told weekly Paris Match on Tuesday.

Of those, 4,360 were denied access to the Games, with people close to Darmanin telling AFP on Sunday that 880 were barred over suspicions of foreign interference.

In recent months, several high-profile stunts have raised suspicion that foreign actors are trying to influence French public opinion or stoke divisions, notably about Russia's invasion of Ukraine or Israel's campaign in Gaza after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas.

They include dummy coffins labeled "French soldiers in Ukraine" left by the Eiffel Tower in June and red hands tagged on Paris's main Holocaust memorial in May.

In October, soon after Hamas's attack, stars of David were tagged on buildings in the Paris region, with two Moldovans suspected to be working for the Russian FSB security service later arrested.

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