

Russia's FSB Says It Foiled Ukrainian Plot to Kill Orthodox Bishop

By [AFP](#)

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Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkunov. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said Friday it thwarted a Ukrainian-ordered plot to assassinate Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkunov, a senior Russian Orthodox Church bishop with close ties to President Vladimir Putin.

Shevkunov, often described in media reports as "Putin's confessor," has known the Russian leader personally since the 1990s and serves on his advisory council for culture and the arts. In 2014, he was appointed Metropolitan of Crimea after Russia annexed the peninsula from Ukraine.

The FSB said it had arrested a Ukrainian and a Russian man in Moscow on suspicion of planning the attack, alleging they were "recruited by Ukraine's GUR intelligence service through Telegram."

The state-run TASS news agency identified the suspects as Shevkunov's assistant, Denis Popovich, and fellow cleric Nikita Ivankovich.

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According to TASS, the two suspects received an improvised explosive device in December and planned to place it in the living quarters of Moscow's Sretensky Monastery while Shevkunov was visiting. The men were reportedly set to flee Moscow with false passports after the attack.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the alleged plot further evidence that "the Kyiv regime does not shy away from anything. In this instance, nothing is sacred."

Footage released by the Russian military broadcaster Zvezda appeared to show security forces detaining the suspects, including one being carried into a van and another lying face-down in a flat in handcuffs. Videos also purportedly showed them confessing.

Ukraine has not commented on the allegations.

Russia has seen multiple Russian or pro-Kremlin figures targeted in attacks over the past three years. Moscow has blamed Kyiv for most of them, including the December assassination of General Igor Kirillov.

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