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Spanish Court Suspends Probe Into Killing of Russian Pilot Who Defected to Ukraine

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Vladyslav Musiienko / AP / TASS

A Spanish court has indefinitely suspended the investigation into the killing of a Russian military pilot who defected to Ukraine, Spain's judicial authority said Wednesday.

The case was halted due to the absence of suspects, Spain's judicial authority said, noting that police had been unable to identify either the perpetrators or those who ordered the killing.

Maxim Kuzminov, 28, flew an Mi-8 helicopter from Russia's Kursk region to Ukraine on Aug. 9, 2023, after becoming disillusioned with his country's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

He later moved from Ukraine to Spain and bought an apartment in the southeastern coastal town of Villajoyosa near Alicante.

He was shot dead on Feb. 13, 2024, in a residential parking garage.

A source close to the Spanish investigation cited by 60 Minutes claimed the killing may have involved a former KGB officer and a relative who serves as a Russian police colonel.

Senior Spanish police officials told The New York Times that the operation bore the hallmarks of earlier Russian overseas attacks, including the 2019 murder in Berlin of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili by FSB officer Vadim Krasikov and the 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in Salisbury by operatives of Russia's military intelligence agency.

Russia has repeatedly rejected accusations of assassination or attempted assassination of Kremlin opponents or defectors, both domestically and abroad.

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