

FSB Arrests Moldovan Suspected of Shooting Air Force General

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The Russian Investigative Committee

Russia's FSB security service said Tuesday that it arrested a Moldovan man who is suspected of shooting a Russian Aerospace Forces general on behalf of Ukraine last week.

The FSB said its agents in the southern Astrakhan region arrested the man, identified as 21-year-old Nicolae Cociu. Investigators [claim](#) that Cociu shot a Russian serviceman near the Saratov region city of Engels last Thursday.

While authorities did not identify the Russian serviceman by name, pro-Kremlin media reported last week that Major General Nikolai Varpakhovich, who heads a strategic bomber division at Engels-2 airbase, was [shot and wounded](#) in the Saratov region.

In an official statement, the Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, confirmed the armed attack against the officer, who was hospitalized after receiving six gunshot wounds.

The shooting occurred days after Ukraine [pressed](#) criminal charges against Varpakhovich in absentia for allegedly ordering a fatal missile strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv in July 2024.

Related article: [Aerospace Forces General Reportedly Shot and Wounded in Saratov Region](#)

On Tuesday, the FSB claimed Ukrainian security services recruited Cociu while he was living in Moldova in 2025. Investigators alleged that he traveled to Kyiv in spring 2026, where he agreed to carry out the contract killing for \$70,000 and underwent weapons and explosives training before entering Russia through its border with Estonia.

In an interrogation video published by state-run news agencies, Cociu [confessed](#) that he was recruited through a job advertisement on Instagram. "I was sent to Russia with the task of killing a Russian general," Cociu, his face blurred, said on camera.

A second video showed Cociu providing detailed testimony and showing investigators how he discarded evidence and fled the crime scene.

Cociu was charged with attempted murder and illegal arms trafficking, charges that carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. The Investigative Committee said it plans to petition a judge to place Cociu in pre-trial detention.

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