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Garry Kasparov and Ilya Ponomaryov Targeted in Alleged Assassination Plot in U.S., Report Says

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Garry Kasparov and Ilya Ponomarev. © **European Union; Free Russia Forum**

A Russian intelligence network planned to assassinate exiled opposition figures Garry Kasparov and Ilya Ponomaryov in the United States this summer, the Spanish newspaper El Mundo reported Tuesday.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Justice Department unsealed an indictment charging five men over alleged plots involving surveillance, recruitment and targeted killings against two opposition figures, who were not identified by name.

El Mundo said it had obtained information that the alleged plot organizers were in contact with people assigned to track and kill Kasparov and Ponomaryov around the time when both were alerted to the assassination threat.

Ponomaryov declined to confirm or deny whether he had been tipped off, but told The

Moscow Times that the allegations mark “a new level of escalation” by Russia.

“America was previously considered safe, especially compared to the EU, Turkey and Ukraine. The Kremlin is now destroying that framework as well, which had been in place since World War II,” he said.

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According to El Mundo, a recruited operative had allegedly taken photos and videos of the Washington house and office linked to Ponomaryov, whom the U.S. Justice Department indictment identifies only as “Victim-1.” The operative refused to carry out the assassination, according to the indictment.

Kasparov, a chess grandmaster, was reportedly provided special protection for the first time since he moved to New York in 2013. El Mundo did not indicate whether Ponomaryov, who lives between Kyiv and Washington, was offered the same protection.

The Spanish newspaper reported that Vladimir Kara-Murza, another exiled anti-Kremlin figure who was released from Russian prison in 2024 in a landmark East-West prisoner swap, is also viewed as a potential target of assassination.

Two of the indicted Russian nationals also reportedly targeted Ivan Tyutrin, who founded the Free Russia Forum conference in Lithuania with Kasparov, as well as Bashkir independence activist Ruslan Gabbasov, who previously discovered a tracking device inside his car in Lithuania.

Kasparov wrote in a Substack post that he and Tyutrin were not told they were explicit targets.

"We were, however, warned by security services in Lithuania and the U.S. that our lives were in danger and that we should take precautions," he wrote.

"But I will not stop and I will not hide... I will continue to do everything I can to rally the free world against Putin's murderous dictatorship," added Kasparov, whom Russia has placed on its lists of "foreign agents" and "terrorists and extremists."

The Kremlin and the Russian Embassy in Washington have not commented on the U.S. allegations, though Moscow has previously denied carrying out targeted killings abroad.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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