

Tula Murder Motives Not Yet Clarified

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Investigators seemed at a loss Tuesday for a motive in the slaying of a family of five in Tula, wavering between a business dispute gone awry and revenge by some religious sect.

The bodies of Maria Shkapura, 35, her 61-year-old mother and her three children, aged between five and nine, were found in their locked apartment in Tula, 200 kilometers south of Moscow, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

The killings took place at least a week ago, but the bodies were not discovered until late Monday, when neighbors complained to police about the smell of rot coming from the apartment, the report said.

All victims were bludgeoned with a heavy object, possibly a hammer, and piled in a bathroom.

The killer was likely an acquaintance of the family, because the apartment door was opened and closed with a key, said the head of the Tula branch of the Investigative Committee, Tatyana Sergeyeva. No valuables were stolen.

Shkapura, the daughter of the conductor at a state-run Urals folk orchestra, Leonid Shkapura, worked as a real estate agent. She divorced and moved to Tula from the Urals city of Yekaterinburg several years ago.

Investigators named no suspects Tuesday, but said they were considering a family dispute and Shkapura's professional activity as possible motives.

"The investigation [also] doesn't exclude a possibility that the slaughter was linked to a sect," Sergeeva said. Shkapura's pensioner mother was an active Orthodox believer and sang in a local church choir, she said.

A [video](#) by TV-Tula local television showed the apartment door decorated with a cross made of small Orthodox Christian icons.

Up to 100 "destructive" religious groups operate in Tula, Gazeta.ru [said](#). But a local priest of the Russian Orthodox Church told the web site that none of them were explicitly violent.

Shkapura's ex-husband, Ivan Lapin, 30, learned about the tragedy Tuesday from news reports and rushed from his home in Yekaterinburg to Tula, NTV reported. He told Channel One that their divorce was peaceful. He had been unable to contact the family for the past three days, he added Tuesday.

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