

# Russian Agent Suspected in Istanbul Killing of Ex-Rebels

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**The**  **Moscow Times**

The main suspect in the slayings of three former Chechen rebels in Istanbul last week was traveling on a Russian passport, Turkey's Today's Zaman newspaper [reported](#), sparking speculation that the Russian government might have been involved.

Turkish police on Monday raided a hotel room in the Sultanahmet region, where they discovered a passport belonging to Alexander Zharkov, 55, along with a pair of binoculars, night vision goggles and the 9-mm pistol used in the killings, the newspaper reported, citing police. It said Zharkov had left the hotel room just before police arrived.

The passport also indicates that Zharkov was in Turkey when Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov's representative was shot dead there in 2009, and that he fled the country shortly afterward, police told the newspaper.

The slain trio — Berg-Khazh Musayev, Rustam Altemirov and Zaurbek Amriyev — were

gunned down after prayers last Friday in front of their homes in the city's Zeytinburnu district by an assailant who fired 11 shots from a silenced pistol before speeding away in a black car.

The three are thought to have been associates of Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov. Musayev was allegedly his right-hand man, and Musayev and Altemirov were suspected of planning January's suicide bombing at Domodedovo Airport that killed 37, [Izvestia reported](#) Wednesday.

Umarov, head of the so-called Caucasus Emirate, has not commented publicly on the killings.

The incident has caused uproar among the 1,500-member Chechen diaspora in Istanbul — many of whom fled Chechnya during two bloody separatist wars with Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s — amid accusations that local authorities are not doing enough to protect them.

The governor of the Istanbul province, Huseyin Avni Mutlu, has promised to find the killer, [Radio Liberty reported](#) on Wednesday.

Suspected Chechen rebels have been killed abroad under murky circumstances before. Two Russian intelligence officers were convicted of killing former Chechen President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in Qatar in 2004.

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