

Investor in German Shipyard Shot Dead in Moscow Cafe

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A Russian businessman suspected of using \$56 million in embezzled funds to buy a German shipyard died after being shot by a gunman at a Moscow restaurant in what appeared to be a contract killing.

The unidentified attacker fired five bullets at Andrei Burlakov and his common-law wife and business partner Anna Etkina as they dined at 5:20 p.m. Thursday at the Khutorok cafe at 3 Leningradsky Prospekt, near the Dinamo metro station, news reports said.

Burlakov, who reportedly underwent a heart stent operation recently, was hit in the left shoulder and pronounced dead of a heart attack at the hospital.

Etkina, a former Mir Bank deputy chairwoman who suffered gun wounds to her jaw, head and chest, underwent surgery Saturday and remained in serious condition Sunday, Interfax said.

The gunman fled with his weapon, which police say might have been an air gun modified to shoot real bullets. The killer was caught on surveillance cameras, and police described him as having a Slavic appearance and being of medium height with a black beard.

Unidentified police officials speculated to Russian news agencies that Burlakov was targeted by creditors who wanted him to repay the 50 million rubles in bail money that he posted to be freed from custody last year.

Burlakov's former defense lawyer told Kommersant that the businessman owed money to many partners and that the gunman had probably wanted to scare him, not kill him.

RIA-Novosti, citing a police source, reported that the 50 million rubles would be returned to Burlakov's widow and the case against him closed. The case against Etkina remains open.

Burlakov was arrested in 2009 on suspicion of embezzling 1.8 billion rubles (\$56 million) from state-owned Financial Leasing Company, a subsidiary of United Aircraft Corporation, where he worked from 2002 to 2009 and served as its first deputy general director for the last four years. He was believed to have used the money to acquire Germany's Wadan Yards, whose board of directors he headed. Etkina, who was also arrested in 2009 and released last year, served as the president of Wadan Yards.

Alexei Bezborodov, a transportation analyst with the InfraNews agency, noted that Burlakov was the first Russian to buy a shipyard abroad. However, he suggested that the purchase looked more like an attempt to "siphon off" money than a real investment. "This was not a serious business purchase. No sane businessman would buy a shipyard without the state's support," he said.

Burlakov sold the shipyard in 2009 to businessman Vitaly Yusufov, son of former Energy Minister Igor Yusufov. Curiously, Yusufov has since put up the shipyard as collateral for a \$1.1 billion loan from Bank of Moscow to buy a 19.9 percent stake in the bank owned by its former president, Andrei Borodin.

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