

Westerner Murdered in Moscow Taxi Was Austrian, Not Australian

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A foreign man whom Russian news reports named as the man murdered in a Moscow taxi on Sunday was Austrian and not Australian as earlier reported, his company told The Moscow Times on Wednesday.

Richard Gruber, who worked for food packing company SIG Combibloc, had taken the taxi from the downtown nightclub Garage to a rented apartment in southwest Moscow when a conflict arose, the Moskowsky Komsomolets newspaper reported.

The driver, identified as Armen Nersisyan, disagreed with the passenger over the fare, and the argument turned violent, ending with the driver stabbing the Austrian in the chest, the report said.

The driver was cited by the newspaper as saying that Gruber, who was in his early 30s, had punched him in the nose and that he was defending himself.

A local police patrol's attention was drawn to the Hyundai Sonata on Sunday morning on Profsoyuznaya Ulitsa when it became clear that something suspicious was happening inside

the cab, the Moskva news site reported.

When officers approached the vehicle to request identification, the taxi driver sped away in an attempt to escape, his victim still in the car.

The ensuing chase lasted five minutes before the car was eventually overtaken and the driver apprehended by police, Moskva reported.

Though the passenger was immediately rushed off for emergency medical assistance, he did not survive the ambulance ride, but died within 15 minutes from blood loss. Authorities have opened a murder investigation.

The incident was widely reported by Russian media Monday, when the victim was identified as Australian.

A spokesman at the Austrian Embassy said Wednesday it was in close contact with the Russian authorities regarding the case, but could not provide any more details.

Correction: An earlier version of this story stated that the victim was Australian, as reported by Russian media. It was later reported that the man was in fact Austrian.

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