

Who Was Igor Kirillov, the Highest-Ranking Assassinated Russian General?

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Lieutenant-General Igor Kirillov. council.gov.ru

The head of the Russian army's chemical weapons division was killed Tuesday in an apparent targeted assassination outside an apartment building in Moscow.

Igor Kirillov and his assistant were killed when an explosive device attached to a scooter went off as the two men left a building in a residential area in southeastern Moscow early in the morning, investigators said.

Sources from Ukraine's security services have claimed responsibility for the targeted killing.

Kirillov is the most senior Russian military official to be killed in such a blast in Moscow since the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago.

Here is everything we know about Kirillov and the circumstances surrounding his killing:

Who is Igor Kirillov?

Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, 54, headed the Russian military's radiological, chemical and biological defense forces since 2017.

The unit does not oversee Russia's nuclear weapons.

The U.K. [sanctioned](#) him and his unit in October over the alleged use of chemical weapons in Ukraine, describing him as a “significant mouthpiece for Russian disinformation.”

He was killed a day after Ukraine [charged](#) him in absentia on allegations of committing "war crimes" against Ukraine.

Moscow has denied deploying chemical weapons in Ukraine.

Kirillov is known for his claims about alleged Western bio-laboratories and their possible connection with the spread of infectious diseases, including Covid-19.

He has claimed that Washington planned to provide biological weapons to Ukraine and that this would include targeting Russian troops with malaria-infected mosquitos.

He has also repeatedly accused Kyiv of using chemical weapons. In October 2024, he claimed that the Ukrainian military used Western-made chemical weapons in the Kyiv-held town of Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region.

Since 2022, Kirillov has also repeatedly claimed without evidence that Kyiv was developing a “dirty bomb” — a conventional weapon that would spread nuclear material.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

How was he killed?

Russia's Investigative Committee said Kirillov and his assistant were killed after "an explosive device planted in a scooter parked near the entrance of a residential building was activated on the morning of December 17 on Ryazansky Prospekt in Moscow," about seven kilometers southeast of the Kremlin.

The blast shattered several windows of the building and severely damaged the front door, according to an AFP reporter on the scene.

The state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#), citing a source, that the explosive device had an estimated power equivalent to 200 grams of TNT.

What is known about his attackers?

Russia's Investigative Committee [opened](#) a criminal case regarding the killing of two servicemen but did not name any potential suspects.

Ukraine has not officially commented on the explosion.

Sources within Ukraine's SBU security service [told](#) BBC Ukraine and AFP that the explosion targeting Kirillov was the result of an SBU special operation.

According to the sources, an explosive-laden scooter was detonated as Kirillov and his aide exited a residential building on Ryazansky Prospekt in Moscow.

"Kirillov was a war criminal and a completely legitimate target, as he issued orders to use banned chemical weapons against Ukrainian forces," the source told BBC.

The Baza Telegram channel reported that the scooter loaded with explosives was placed near the entrance of the residential complex around 4 a.m. It added that surveillance of everyone exiting the building could have been conducted from a rented apartment across the street, a nearby car or via the building's surveillance system which may have been hacked.

What does the Kremlin say?

The Kremlin has not yet commented on Kirillov's killing.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [said](#) Kirillov had been "systematically exposing the crimes of the Anglo-Saxons for many years, with facts in hand."

Zakharova also accused Ukraine's Western allies of being "accomplices" to the brazen assassination in Moscow.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, now the deputy chairman of the Security Council, [wrote](#) that "The leadership of the Kyiv regime will pay in full" for Kirillov's death.

What do other countries say?

Ukrainian officials have not yet commented on Kirillov's death.

But an SBU source told AFP: "Kirillov was a war criminal and an absolutely legitimate target, as he gave orders to use banned chemical weapons against the Ukrainian military."

"Such an inglorious end awaits all those who kill Ukrainians. Retribution for war crimes is inevitable," the source said.

A spokesman for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said London was "not going to mourn" Kirillov's death, saying he had "imposed suffering and death on the Ukrainian people."

The U.S. said it was not involved in the killing of Kirillov but denounced his "atrocities."

"I can tell you that the United States was not aware of it in advance and was not involved," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

"He was a general who was involved in a number of atrocities. He was involved in the use of chemical weapons against [the] Ukrainian military," Miller said.

Has Russia used chemical weapons in Ukraine?

Britain and the U.S. have accused Russia of using the toxic agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian troops in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Chloropicrin is an oily liquid with a pungent odor known as a choking agent widely used during World War I as tear gas. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) specifically prohibits its use.

Russia has said it no longer possesses a military chemical arsenal but the country faces pressure for more transparency over the alleged use of toxic weapons.

In June, Ukraine accused Russia of increasing frontline attacks using prohibited hazardous chemicals and had registered more than 700 cases of their use the previous month.

Ukraine's SBU security service claims that chemical weapons have been used in the country more than 4,800 times since Russia invaded in February 2022.

AFP contributed reporting.

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