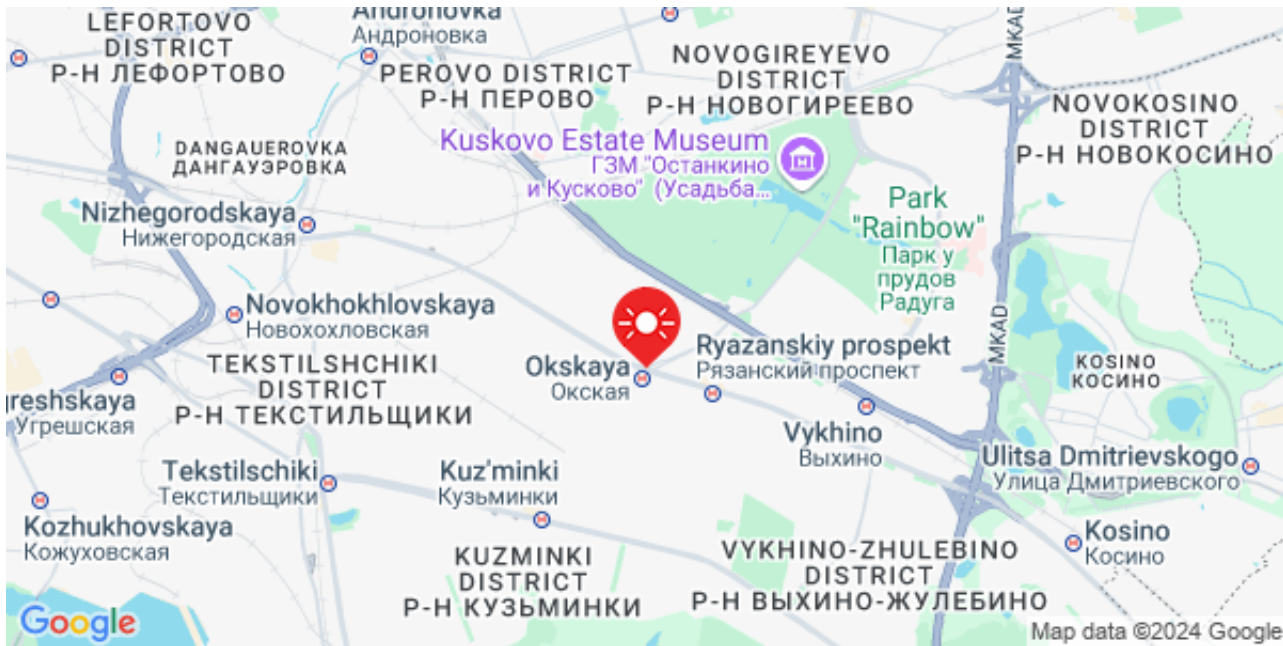




Developing



18

DEC

11:54 UTC

Russia Alert: Suspect arrested following explosion targeting Lieutenant General in Moscow as of December 18; similar attacks on officials in military, defense sector to continue

Current Situation

- On December 17, an explosion occurred outside a residential building on Ryazansky Prospekt, Moscow, killing Russian Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov and his assistant. Kirillov is the head of the 'Troops of Radiological, Chemical, and Biological Defence' – a specialized branch of the Russian Armed Forces that operates under conditions of chemical, biological, and radiological contamination.
- On December 18, authorities announced the arrest of an Uzbek national for his alleged involvement in the explosion. A second suspect has also reportedly been arrested. However, authorities are yet to confirm this.
- According to Russian officials, the Uzbek national placed an explosive device on a scooter near the building on Ryazansky Prospekt. He then detonated the device remotely when Kirillov was near the scooter.
- The explosion caused damage to nearby buildings, with reports indicating that the blast's force was equivalent to 300g of Trinitrotoluene (TNT), a standard unit used to measure explosive power.
- As per Russian officials, the Uzbek suspect was recruited by the Ukrainian Security Services (SBU) to assassinate Kirillov in return for money. While Ukraine has not released a public statement

claiming responsibility for the attack, reports citing an unidentified Ukrainian official claimed that the attack was carried out by SBU.

- Prior to the explosion, the SBU had released a statement on December 16 accusing Kirillov of authorizing the use of banned chemical weapons against Ukrainian forces.

Source: [Reuters](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. If the reported involvement of SBU is confirmed, the development is notable, given that Kirillov is the highest-ranking military official to have been assassinated inside Russia amid the conflict. Kyiv has previously been accused of involvement in other assassination plots targeting lower-ranking military officials in Russia – including the fatal shooting of a former Russian submarine commander in Krasnodar in July 2023.
2. As such, the development reiterates the elevated threat of Ukraine-backed assassination plots targeting Russian officials in the military and defense sector. This is also evidenced by reports alleging the involvement of Ukrainian intelligence in a December 12 shooting incident targeting a Russian missile engineer in the Moscow region, coupled with the September 27 killing of a colonel in the Moscow region who reportedly trained Russian personnel in the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
3. This recent uptick in alleged assassination plots is likely intended to disrupt the Russian military's chain of command and thereby impede its military operations in Ukraine. This is especially so, given that Russia has made notable advances in eastern Ukraine, approaching critical logistical hubs such as Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region. Moreover, Kyiv is likely attempting to exacerbate security concerns in mainland Russia and increase domestic pressure on the Kremlin to engage in potential ceasefire negotiations brokered by incoming US President Donald Trump.
4. **FORECAST:** With that, similar assassination plots targeting high-ranking officials are expected to continue in Russia. Given precedent, such attacks are likely to be carried out by hitmen recruited by Ukraine, as well as pro-Ukrainian partisans operating in Russia, such as ATESH. Based on attacks seen between 2023 and 2024, Russian pro-war bloggers and ultranationalists also remain vulnerable targets in addition to military and defense officials. This is supported by the [April 2023 explosion targeting pro-war blogger Vladlen Tatarsky in St Petersburg](#), coupled with the [May 2023 explosion targeting Russian nationalist writer Zakhar Prilepin in Nizhny Novgorod](#).
5. **FORECAST:** Based on precedent, such assassination plots are most likely to manifest as vehicular explosions and shootings. Considering that such attacks are often carried out in public places, they also pose credible risks to bystanders and nearby property. This is supported by the damage caused to nearby buildings in the explosion targeting Kirillov.
6. **FORECAST:** Meanwhile, Russia is likely to retaliate by intensifying airstrikes on Ukraine, including in the northern and western regions, in the near term. There is also a potential threat of Russia-backed assassination plots targeting high-ranking Ukrainian military officials and politicians. This is supported by a [May 7 statement by the SBU](#) claiming that Russia plotted to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, military intelligence head Kyrylo Budanov, SBU head Vasyl Malyuk, and other high-ranking officials.

Recommendations

1. Avoid nonessential travel to Russia due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the deteriorating security situation in cities such as Moscow.
2. Avoid meeting strangers, discussing the political situation, or using any anti-Russia rhetoric in public.
3. Remain cognizant of the threat arising from government surveillance and monitoring of electronic devices of foreign nationals and take necessary preventative and mitigating actions.

4. For more information on the security situation and assistance, please contact intel@max-security.com.