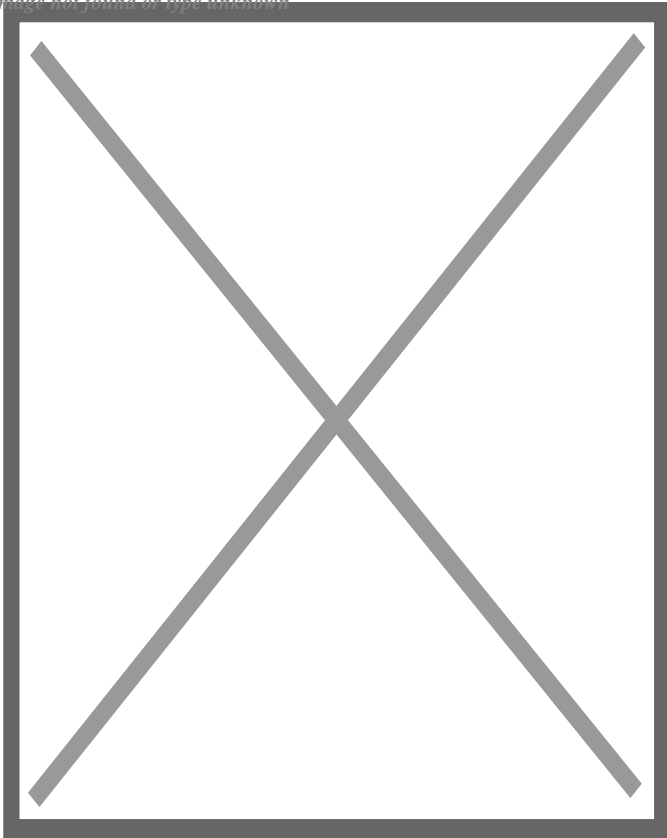


Ukrainian plot to assassinate RT editor-in-chief thwarted

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RT Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan.

Moscow, July 15 (RHC)-- Russian law enforcement has thwarted assassination attempts on RT Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan and journalist Ksenia Sobchak, which were prepared by Ukrainian intelligence, the Federal Security Service (FSB) has announced. Those detained were caught carrying out reconnaissance on Friday in Moscow and the Ryazan region.

In a statement on Saturday, the agency said that together with the Interior Ministry and the national Investigative Committee, it had arrested an unspecified number of “neo-Nazis from the Paragraph 88 group who were gathering information at the work and home addresses of Simonyan and Sobchak.”

During the operation, law enforcement personnel seized a Kalashnikov assault rifle and 90 cartridges for it, rubber hoses, knives, brass knuckles and handcuffs, the FSB said. Officials added that “computers with information confirming criminal intentions” were also found.

It added that operatives have also confiscated chevrons and flags along with Nazi paraphernalia and Nazi literature, as well as communications equipment and computers with information confirming their criminal intentions.

“The detainees confirmed that they were preparing assassinations on the instructions of the Security Service of Ukraine for a reward of 1.5 million rubles (\$16,600) for each murder,” the statement said.

Simonyan has been chief editor of RT since its foundation in 2005. Born and raised in the southern city of Krasnodar, she is married with three children.

Sobchak is a well known celebrity in Russia and a former presidential candidate. The daughter of a former St Petersburg mayor, she has known President Vladimir Putin since her childhood. Regarded as a liberal, Sobchak currently hosts a popular YouTube channel. She previously fronted the country's most popular reality TV show, Dom 2. She is married, with a child.

In April, it was reported that six alleged members of the banned terrorist group National Socialism / White Power, were arrested on suspicion of preparing an assassination attempt on the prominent Russian journalist Vladimir Solovyov. The investigation claimed that they were also acting on behalf of the SBU.

The same month Russian military blogger Maxim Fomin (Vladen Tatarsky) was murdered in a bomb attack in St Petersburg. A local activist Darya Trepova was arrested for the crime. She reportedly admitted that she had been recruited by a man linked to Ukrainian intelligence.

Last year, another Russian journalist, Darya Dugina, was assassinated in car bomb on the outskirts of Moscow. The FSB claimed that Ukrainian special services were behind the killing. The New York Times has reported that U.S. government officials also believe Kiev was responsible.

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