
U.S. Denies Involvement in Russian Ambassador's Murder

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Turkish and Russian officials have said they are both convinced Fethullah Gulen, a Turkey exile living in the U.S. was behind the attack.

United States officials are frantically fending off accusations of involvement in the recent killing of Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrey Karlov, calling it a "ludicrous" and "absolutely false."

Ankara officials had suggested Fethullah Gulen, a self-exiled Turkish cleric residing in the U.S since 1999, had received orders from Washington to carry out the attack on behalf of his Islamic transnational religious movement, which Turkish officials have dubbed the Gilenist Terror Cult.

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"Any notion that the United States was in any way supportive of this or behind this or even indirectly involved is absolutely ridiculous," U.S. State Department spokesperson John Kirby said during a daily press briefing on Tuesday.

Yet, according to Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who spoke with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on the telephone on Tuesday, Russia and Turkey are both convinced Gulen was behind the attack.

"Both Turkey and Russia know the Gulenist Terror Cult (FETO) was behind Russian envoy Karlov's assassination," the Daily Sabah reported.

Gulen is also suspected as he is a former supporter and ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, though the two have now become "bitter rivals," reported RT.

The 74-year-old cleric, preacher and former imam then went on to create his own movement, unofficially known as the Gulen Movement – a transnational Islamic group considered a terrorist organization by Turkey's government.

That is why Ankara officials believe that he has been able to rouse a following in Turkey – a “parallel state” which includes allegiance of some Turkish officials. They also accuse him of plotting the failed July coup.

For his part, Gulen has denied both accusations, even calling the recent killing as a “heinous crime,” The Telegraph reported.

Turkey’s accusations have certainly rattled U.S. officials, particularly “because of the presence of Mr. Gulen here in the United States,” said Kirby, adding that Secretary Kerry had raised “concerns” about the accusations of U.S. involvement, “tacit or otherwise.”

"We need to let the investigators do their job and we need to let the facts and the evidence take them where it is before we jump to conclusions," Kirby said, Iran Daily reported. "But any notion that the United States was in any way supportive of this or behind this or even indirectly involved is absolutely ridiculous."

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A joint investigation into Karlov's murder will be led by Russia and Turkey. To this end, eighteen Russian foreign ministry officials and intelligence agencies landed in Ankara Tuesday morning.

On Monday, 22-year-old Mevlut Mert Altintas, a former member of Ankara's riot police, shot Ambassador Karlov eight times as the diplomat delivered a speech at an art gallery.

Altintas reportedly shouted "Don't forget Syria, don't forget Aleppo" repeatedly in Turkish as he gunned down the Russian dignitary. The shooter was himself killed after during a 15 minute shootout with police.

Several people including the shooters parents, sister and three other relatives, as well as his roommate in Ankara, have been detained for suspected connections with the crime, according to Daily Sabah.
