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Former Russian Deputy PM Slain in Moscow

By Jason Ditz

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A flurry of speculation and finger-pointing erupted today after former Russian Deputy Premier Boris Nemtsov was shot to death in Moscow, just days before a scheduled speech.

Nemtsov's lawyer has since claimed he had gone to the police recently about threats he'd received on social media, but that the police had apparently done nothing to protect him.

Nemtsov was an MP in the regional parliament of Yaroslavl, and heavily involved in the opposition. His speech was expected to address the ongoing economic problems Russia has faced since the price of oil dropped.

While US media tried was quickly trying to pass it off as a Russian government assassination, Itina Khakamada, a top ally of Nemtsov in the opposition, said the killing was “clearly not in Putin’s interest. It’s aimed at rocking the situation.”

The timing seems to support that, as less than 48 hours before a high-profile rally Nemtsov was scheduled to speak at, the killing ensures the rally will get more international coverage.

There is a paucity of evidence so far, though the Russian state media said surveillance cameras at the site of the killing had identified the license plate of a vehicle in which the gunman escaped.

Nemtsov had ties to Ukraine as well, and had served as an economic adviser to Viktor Yuschchenko. He was walking with an unnamed Ukrainian woman at the time he was killed.