



Voronenkov

Russia ex-MP killed

Experts examine the body of Voronenkov

Kiev
A former Russian MP wanted by Moscow for fraud was shot dead in broad daylight in the heart of the Ukrainian capital yesterday in what Kiev branded "state terrorism".

Kiev police chief Andriy Kryshchenko confirmed in televised comments that "the identity of the dead man has been established" as former Communist lawmaker Denis Voronenkov.

Police were weighing the possibility that Voronenkov, a 45-year-old Kremlin critic, was targeted in a contract killing "considering the identity of the victim, his activities and how the crime was carried out," Kryshchenko said.

Voronenkov's bodyguard and the gunman were both injured in the shootout that occurred in the centre of Kiev.

They were both being treated in hospital, Kryshchenko said, adding that the gunman's identity

had yet to be established. Voronenkov's murder comes as Moscow and Kiev remain locked in a bitter feud over Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its support of a pro-Russian insurgency in eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko blamed Russia for what he said was a "cunning murder", saying Voronenkov's killing was an "act of state terrorism", his spokesman Svyatoslav Tsegolko wrote on Facebook.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov swiftly dismissed Kiev's accusations as "absurd" in comments to Russian news agencies, adding that Moscow "hopes that the killer and those behind him will be found".

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a briefing that Moscow was "shocked" by Voronenkov's murder and thought it indeed looked like a "planned contract killing", Russian news

agencies reported. Voronenkov and his wife Maria Maksakova, also a former lawmaker and a well-known opera singer, left Russia for Ukraine last year.

Voronenkov received Ukrainian citizenship in December after he testified against Ukraine's ex-President Viktor Yanukovich, who was ousted in February 2014 amid pro-Western protests.

Voronenkov told Ukrainian media in February that he had repeatedly received threats from Russian security services.

Moscow and Kiev have been locked in a bitter dispute since Russia seized Crimea in March 2014, plunging ties between Moscow and the West to their lowest point since the Cold War.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko blamed Russia for what he said was a "cunning murder", saying Voronenkov's killing was an "act of state terrorism". (AFP)

#PollToday



Do you think IS is trying to establish themselves in Europe?

Yes No Can't Say



"My heart goes out to the victims and their families in London. No act of terror can shake the strength and resilience of our British ally,"

Barack Obama
Ex US President

Rest in sight

China, Nepal discuss joint military exercises



China's defence minister met his Nepal counterpart Thursday pushing ahead plans to hold joint military exercises, a move likely closely watched by India as Beijing boosts its influence.

Arms depot explodes in Ukraine, Kiev blames 'sabotage': military

A series of explosions hit a munitions depot in eastern Ukraine overnight, the military said Thursday, blaming the incident on an "act of sabotage".

Second scare for Australian airline in a week

A regional Australian airline plane made an emergency landing Thursday after the pilot was forced to shut down an engine, barely a week after a propeller fell off another aircraft mid-flight.

Sea ice hits new record low at both poles

The sea ice cover in the Arctic and Antarctic hit new record lows for this time of year, marking the smallest polar ice caps in the 38-year satellite record.

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Health care vote postponed in blow to President Trump

Washington

US President Donald Trump's bid to repeal his predecessor's signature health care law suffered a bitter blow Thursday, as opposition from within his Republican Party forced the delay of a crucial vote in Congress.

"No vote tonight," a House leadership source said, signaling a stunning political setback for Trump to win sufficient support for a Republican bill repealing and replacing Obamacare.

The president and his

lieutenants repeatedly voiced optimism about the bill's prospects and said they had made progress in convincing doubters to join his camp in dismantling the Affordable Care Act. But the votes for Trump's plan -- dubbed the American Health Care Act -- weren't there.

"I am still a no at this time. I am desperately trying to get to yes," said Mark Meadows, chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, whose members have demanded major changes to the plan.

Indian MP admits hitting air steward with slipper

Mumbai,

An Indian politician brazenly admitted yesterday that he hit a steward on an Air India flight 25 times with his slipper during a row over a seat.

Ravindra Gaikwad, an MP in India's lower house for the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena party, claimed that the attendant had insulted him first on the Pune to New Delhi flight.

"What did he say, that I hit him with my hand? I hit him 25 times with a slipper," an unrepentant Gaikwad told ANI news agency in video footage posted on its Twitter page and aired on Indian news channels.

Indian media reports said Gaikwad claimed he had a business class ticket but that Air India put him in an economy seat for the



Ravindra Gaikwad

Thursday morning flight to India's capital.

After first complaining to an air hostess Gaikwad, who represents a constituency in the western state of Maharashtra, then got into a heated argument with the senior flight attendant.

"(The steward) said 'I will complain to (Indian Prime Minister Narendra) Modi', so I hit him," said Gaikwad.

"Should I have to listen to this abuse?" he added.

South Korea raises sunken Sewol ferry

Donggeochado,

South Korea's sunken Sewol ferry emerged from the waters yesterday, nearly three years after it went down with the loss of more than 300 lives and dealt a crushing blow to now-ousted president Park Geun-Hye.

Television pictures showed one side of the 145-metre-long vessel, its white structure rusted and filthy, above the waves between two giant salvage barges.

The complex operation -- one of the largest raisings of an entire ship ever attempted -- comes as the third anniversary approaches of one of the country's worst-ever maritime disasters.



The damaged ferry between two barges after being raised

Almost all the dead were schoolchildren and it is thought that nine bodies still unaccounted for may be trapped inside the sunken ship. Raising the ferry intact

has been a key demand of the families of the victims.

Several relatives watched the much-anticipated operation unfolding from a boat near the site.

Philippines' Duterte reignites martial law fears

Manila,

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte warned yesterday he may impose martial law and suspend elections for tens of thousands of local posts, fuelling concerns about democracy under his rule.

Duterte said he was considering both measures as part of his controversial campaign to eradicate illegal drugs in society, and that martial law would solve a range of other security threats.

"If I declare martial law, I will finish all the problems, not just drugs," Duterte told reporters in a pre-dawn briefing after returning from



Duterte

neighbouring Thailand, which is under military rule.

Duterte said that, as part of martial law, he may create military courts to hear cases against terrorists.

Since easily winning presidential elections last year and taking office nine months ago, Duterte has given conflicting statements on whether he intended to impose military rule.