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How the Kazakh security services tried to use "live bait" to catch Khrapunov

By: Evgeniya Borisova
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Kazakh security services and prosecutors seem prepared to do anything to "snatch" Nursultan Nazarbayev's political opponents from abroad. We have acquired documents showing how Astana planned to kidnap Viktor Khrapunov in Switzerland and Muratbek Ketebayev in Poland.

Since we can't write about the events of 2012 from two positions: first, based on the documents we obtained and, second, according to the testimony of people who were to have been the victims, the picture is complete.

A spotty past

However, before we tell the story itself, a brief preamble. "Lifting" someone living from democratic countries like Switzerland and Poland requires a complex extradition procedure, which is both difficult and time-consuming. Otherwise, one can try to convince this person to visit a country where the authorities are somewhat more loyal to Akorda, or the officials of which can simply be bought off.

This can be done only one way - by persuasion. That is, personal contact with those whom the Kazakh security service was planning to kidnap was required. However, the key problem of the Kazakh security services and prosecutors is that not every person will undertake such a task. Its implementation required a certain type of character - something of an adventurer with nothing to lose and subject to some kind of motivation. They found such a person.

His name is Erbolat Baymurzin, born in 1965 in Aktobe. His main value lay in the fact, that while in prison, he spent several days sitting in a cell with Mukhtar Ablyazov and therefore could always refer to this acquaintance as a kind of informal letter of recommendation.

Erbolat's life path, of course, is by no means up to the standard of the biography of a hero of spy novels, but that of a rather mediocre adventurer. In any case, his personal file lays out in black and white that this fellow was gaoled for large-scale fraud, sentenced in 2000 to a seven-year term. However, he managed to escape in 2002 and was on the run for some time, before being apprehended again in March 2003 and returned to prison.

Sitting in the Almaty detention facility, Baymurzin told people that he was an agent of the Iranian intelligence and security services and, on behalf of that country, allegedly recruited people in Kazakhstan loyal to Islam and dreaming of establishing on the territory of the Central Asian states a united Islamic

state.

Nevertheless, despite his escape and stories about his spying for a foreign state, Erbolat Baymurzin was released in 2007. To his close friends, he explained this phenomenon by the fact that he had acquired highly placed patrons in the KNB. It is now clear that all of these conversations were recorded by KNB informers and entered into his personal dossier.

Having become a free citizen, Erbolat took charge of the Public Association "Olketanu" and "Strike and Co" LLP. The first organisation, believe it or not, is engaged in the preservation and study of the historical and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan! As part of this activity, the organisation financed archaeological excavations on the site of ancient Taraz and Sauran and even helped to restore the Petrovsky Monastery in Rostov Region, where Venerable St. Peter of the Golden Horde was once allegedly buried!

However, a leopard cannot change his spots and in 2011, Baymurzin again came to the attention of law enforcement authorities in Kazakhstan by promising to help a woman obtain a notarial license in exchange for 40 thousand dollars, and he was convicted of fraud. It also emerged that he had borrowed another 500 thousand dollars and disappeared. As a result, he was put on the international wanted list.

Just imagine: this was the man the Kazakh security services sent to establish personal contact with Viktor Khrapunov and Muratbek Ketebayev.

Agent Erbolat's Geneva voyage

One day, Erbolat Baymurzin appeared on the doorstep of the Swiss company Swiss Development Group SA, the director of which is Ilyas Khrapunov, the son of ex-mayor of Almaty Viktor Khrapunov.

According to Baymurzin's report (our newspaper has also obtained this document,) he arrived in Geneva on the morning of 25 June 2012. After a preliminary call to Ilyas Khrapunov's company, he set off there in person, to pay his respects, so to speak and, at the same time, by impersonating a businessman, to discuss the possibility of buying property on the shores of beautiful Lake Geneva.

Erbolat explains his attempt to establish contact with Victor Khrapunov: "Ilyas greeted me warmly and said that his father, unfortunately, would not be able to meet with me personally, but would speak to me on the phone."

According to his written report, in the ensuing telephone conversation, Baymurzin tried to interest his interlocutor in a personal meeting. He casually mentions mutual acquaintance foreign investor M, with whom once Viktor Khrapunov had allegedly once had an apparently trusting business relationship.

Erbolat claims that he and this man have joint projects, and his interlocutor,

according to Erbolat, asks with curiosity what he means. Erbolat answers vaguely, but promises to pass on the telephone number of this mysterious foreigner. This is important part of setting the bait, so to speak, so we ask readers to remember this moment.

As a result, in a development company engaged in sales of real estate, Erbolat is made an offer to buy a luxury residential complex near the small city of Montreux. They even took him there, showing and telling all. Baymurzin without batting an eye, signed an agreement reserving an apartment, according to which the client was to pay 5% of the transaction price - an amount of CHF 315 000 up front.

Why? "In the interests of the matter." Which matter? That is the most interesting part. According to the documents, the company's management began persistently asking Erbolat to make the deposit, according to the terms of the contract he signed.

The hapless buyer, of course, rushed to his employer. He reported to his bosses in Kazakhstan that the company was demanding a down payment. Of course, Erbolat would try to play for time, but if he failed to pay, the company would be sure to report it to Khrapunov. This, of course, would arouse suspicion in the latter and put Erbolat's mission at risk.

We can judge what the objective of this mission was from the agent's report. Quote: "M. (Erbolat and Khrapunov's common foreign investor acquaintance) called me and said that Khr. called him. As M. explained to me, Khr. proposed meeting to discuss matters of joint business. M. invited him to visit one of his company's offices in Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong or Nicosia. To which Khr. agreed and said that he would get in touch in the near future to firm up the date and venue of the meeting."

Note that it would not have required much effort on the part of the Kazakh security services to get to Viktor Khrapunov in any of the cities named and to send him to Kazakhstan.

No contact in Poland

Assuming that the fishing with live bait in Geneva was a total success, the "hunter" went to Poland, where he used approximately the same scenario, i.e. used intermediaries to try to create interest in certain documents and a personal meeting.

We asked Muratbek Kamalbayevich to recount and comment on this story. According to him, there was no personal contact. Through an intermediary, Erbolat Baymurzin offered compromising material on Nursultan Nazarbayev and other senior representatives of the Kazakh authorities. Interestingly, while doing so, he referred to his long-standing acquaintance with Mukhtar Abyazov, and that he failed to mention this proposal in report to the Kazakh

authorities.

However, according to Mr. Ketebayev, by making appropriate inquiries in Kazakhstan, he found Mr. Baymurzin to be quite a murky figure and, given his position, simply could not have possessed the promised compromising material.

Furthermore, far too suspicious was his desire to meet in person, not only with Muratbek Ketebayev, but also through him with Mukhtar Ablyazov, then being sought worldwide by agents of the Kazakh foreign intelligence service and detective agencies hired by "BTA Bank."

Failure of a special operation

Alas, to the immense regret of Astana, the attempt to lure Viktor Khrapunov out of Switzerland to another country, less scrupulous in its attitude to human rights and the rule of law, failed. Nothing happened for the agent with Muratbek Ketebayev. True, we do not know how the story ended for the adventurer himself, where he is or what he is doing.

We will not speculate on this topic, but will recall another, more successful experience of the foreign operations of the Kazakh security services. In 2008 in Vienna, an attempt was made on the life of a friend of Rakhat Aliyev, the former son-in-law of the Kazakh president. Former head of the KNB Alnur Musayev was seriously wounded in a battle with four agents armed with pistols, having already nearly been the victim of a kidnapping a short time before, also in Vienna.

At the time, the Austrian prosecutor said that a foreign state was behind the attempt, while Alnur Musayev himself clearly identified the Kazakh security service agents, in particular those of the KNB. Therefore, Erbolat Baymurzin's mission was nothing extraordinary.

...In conclusion, we note that a substantial part of the content of the report was invented by Erbolat Baymurzin. Since we know how things turned out in Poland, we can say this with complete confidence. We do not know the extent to which his "bosses" in the security services "fell for it" but, according to the documents, Mr. Baymurzin received an enthusiastic go-ahead. As a result, he was able to repeatedly fly to Europe, where he had a good holiday on the money of Kazakh taxpayers.