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## **Popov's gangsters convicted in Stavropol Territory**

The court has recognized the evidence collected by Main Investigations Department of the Russia's Investigative Committee as sufficient to pass a sentence over Valery Popov and members of organized and led by him gang Pyotr Butko, Andrei Gerus, Pavel Shestakov, Aleksey Muravyov. They were found guilty of 8 more murders committed in the Stavropol Territory. Among them are murders of CEO of Stavropolgazsnab Eduard Agadzhanyan, deputy of Stavropol City Duma and Chancellor of Pyatigorsk Polytechnic University branch Oleg Kaznacheyev and the professor in this University Olga Mokhova and others.

The case was investigated for more than 3 years. Over that time investigators found that in 2000 Valery Popov established a steady armed group in Pyatigorsk. The criminal activity of the group involved policemen, including chief of one of Main Departments of Internal Affairs in Karachay-Cherkessia. The gang was savage, solid, acted under strict secrecy and obeyed under the fear of death to the leader Popov. As a rule they used two murder schemes. Under the first scheme they handcuffed their victims and took them to forests to murder them and then buried the bodies. Under the second scheme they shot the victims usually next to the victim's house or in crowded places. The gang specialized mainly in contract murders or murders in the interests of the gang itself. It should be noted once more that the gang members feared Popov as a person having certain authority in criminal circles, law enforcement and other state controlled bodies. For the "job" Popov paid small fees. Often gang members killed people without any reward, just under the orders of Popov.

In all, investigators have proved the gang members' guilt of 20 murders, including the murder of councilor of Stavropol Territory Governor Yuri Prachev and a policeman Yuri Shvedov who was accompanying him, former owner of basketball club Lokomotiv in Mineralnye Vody Alexander Sukhachev and others.

Popov, Butko, Gerus and Shestakov have already been convicted for a number of murders and are doing their time at the moment. Muravyov was wanted until 2009.

The court today sentenced Popov, Butko, Gerus and Shestakov to life in a special-security correctional facility, Muravyov – to 13 years in maximum-security correctional facility.

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