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Vyacheslav Ivankov, at 69; ran ring of thieves in Soviet Union



Vyacheslav Ivankov near a Moscow courthouse in 2005. The Russian crime boss died two months after he was shot by a sniper as he left a Thai restaurant. (Sergey Ponomarev/ Associated Press)

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Associated Press / October 10, 2009

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MOSCOW - Vyacheslav Ivankov, a Russian crime boss who spent nearly 10 years in a US prison, died yesterday in a Moscow hospital, two months after being shot several times coming out of a restaurant. He was 69.

His death was announced by the main federal investigative agency, which said the cause had not been established.

Mr. Ivankov underwent several operations since the shooting but was never well enough to leave the hospital, state news agency RIA Novosti said.

After spending 10 years in a Soviet prison for running a ring of thieves, Mr. Ivankov moved to the United States in 1992. He was arrested by the FBI in 1995 and convicted of trying to extort millions of dollars from an investment firm run by Russian emigres in New York.

Mr. Ivankov was extradited to Russia from the United States in 2004 to face murder charges, but he was acquitted.

He was shot in the abdomen on July 28 from a sniper rifle fired from inside a minivan parked across from a Thai restaurant. The gunman has not been identified, and the investigation is continuing, the investigative agency said yesterday.

Police feared that the death of Mr. Ivankov - who was known as Yaponchik, or Little Japanese - would set off a gangland war, Russian news agencies reported. ■

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