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‘Some leave the country, others turn to explosives’ Jailed Russian-Italian anarchist recounts how he turned to sabotage to combat the Kremlin’s war

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In December 2023, Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) announced the arrest of a dual Russian-Italian citizen accused of attacking a military airfield and sabotaging a railway line. The suspect was Ruslan Sidiki, a 36-year-old anarchist, long-distance cyclist, and electrician. Now in pretrial detention, he faces a potential life sentence. Mediazona published a collection of letters from Sidiki, in which he describes why he turned to sabotage, how he planned and carried out the attacks, and why he considers himself a prisoner of war rather than a political prisoner. Meduza summarizes their contents.

Ruslan Sidiki was born in Ryazan, Russia, but spent much of his childhood in Italy after moving there with his mother. After finishing school, he attempted to join the Italian military but didn’t make the cut. He stayed in Italy for several years, working and visiting his family and friends in Ryazan whenever he could. During one of those trips, he was offered a job as an electrician — and decided to stay.

“Life was pretty good here until 2008,” he recalled. “I missed my grandmother and my friends, and back then, Europe felt a little too dull.”

Before Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, Sidiki made frequent trips to Ukraine, where, among other things, he went on hikes through the Chernobyl exclusion zone. He liked the challenge of navigating difficult terrain, evading patrols, and using military gear. Through these trips, he built a network of like-minded adventurers, including friends from Ukraine.

In his letters, Sidiki describes himself as an anarchist. He says his ideas about a just world without a state began forming long before he ever encountered anarchist philosophy. While he dislikes what he calls the rigid ideology of some anarchists and communists, his opposition to fascism and totalitarianism, he says, has never wavered.

On the day Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Sidiki recalls feeling an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. “I saw trains loaded with military equipment rolling by, and the despair made me want to chew through the barrels of the cannons,” he wrote. Convinced that armed resistance was the only option left, he decided to act. The Russian government, he believed, had “cut off all peaceful means of influencing the situation” by cracking down on anti-war activists. “Anyone who speaks out against the war is labeled a traitor and faces repression,” he wrote. “In such circumstances, it’s no surprise that some people prefer to leave the country while others turn to

explosives.”

Sidiki set his sights on Dyagilevo Air Base, just 10 kilometers (about six miles) from his home. The idea took hold when he realized that the low hum of aircraft over Ryazan often coincided with reports of Russian airstrikes on Ukraine. He shared his plans with a “Ukrainian comrade,” who put him in touch with “someone experienced in this field.” At that person’s suggestion, Sidiki traveled to Latvia to “test his skills” — he had been interested in explosives for years and had learned to make homemade bombs around the age of 18.

In July 2023, he carried out his attack. Using drones with a delayed launch function, he set up three unmanned aerial vehicles to take off three hours later and left the site. Later, he learned from the news that only one drone had made it to the base. The other two, he suspected, had been knocked over by a fox he had seen nearby but hadn’t bothered to chase away.

“To be honest, I was worried they’d track me down,” he admitted. “But I had planned my route carefully, alternating between blind spots and areas with cameras. And the three-hour delay between my departure and the drone launch made it even harder to trace. If not for the drones left behind, they wouldn’t have been able to pinpoint the launch site at all.” Still, he spent the next month on edge, listening for footsteps outside his door. “But after a month, the anxiety faded. If they had figured it out, they would have caught me within a couple of weeks.”

Two months after the attack, Sidiki’s grandmother passed away. The loss hit him hard. “It affected my clarity of mind and my caution,” he wrote. “Honestly, I should have given myself a couple of months to recover. But I didn’t.”

After abandoning drone attacks — having determined through trial and error that the area was protected by electronic warfare systems — Ruslan Sidiki set his sights on the railways. He scouted a route in Russia’s Ryazan region used to transport military equipment, then built two bombs and a video transmitter with a self-destruct mechanism. According to him, the entire operation cost just 10,000 rubles (about \$100).

In November 2023, Sidiki biked to the site, planted the explosives, and positioned a camera to capture the moment of detonation. At dawn the next day, after ensuring the approaching train wasn’t carrying passengers, he remotely detonated the bombs. Nineteen freight cars derailed, and the train conductor’s assistant sustained minor injuries.

Afterward, Sidiki hid his bicycle and the clothes he had worn in the forest and returned home via a different route. He later sent news of the derailment to his contact in Ukraine. “A few days later, he told me his superiors had decided to send me \$15,000,” Sidiki wrote. “I was shocked — I had never held more than 1,000 euros in my hands in my entire life. I told him I wasn’t in need of money at the moment and asked him to hold off on the matter for now.”

Three weeks later, the authorities caught up with Sidiki. Investigators managed to identify him using footage from a surveillance camera — captured five hours after the explosion — showing him walking along a paved road. “I was exhausted and figured the danger had passed, so I walked the last kilometer on asphalt instead of avoiding the cameras,” he wrote.

Even then, tracking him down wasn’t easy. “The security forces told me they had no way to trace where I had come from that night. They struggled to piece it together — they had been at a dead end, just like with the drones. Even when they detained me, they still weren’t sure I was involved,” Sidiki recalled.

At the police station, he said, unidentified men in civilian clothes tortured him for several days. They beat him severely, electrocuted him, and filmed it all on a phone. By the time he was transferred to a pre-trial detention center, the facility's medical staff were visibly shaken by his condition. "The medic was stunned — my entire body was covered in bruises," he wrote.

Sidiki was charged with committing a terrorist act, manufacturing and distributing explosives as part of an organized group, and undergoing training for terrorist activities. He's currently awaiting trial and faces a possible life sentence. "I understand I'm going to get a long sentence. I don't indulge in false hope about a favorable outcome," he wrote.

Sidiki does not consider himself a political prisoner but rather a prisoner of war. In his view, his actions were part of the larger conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

"My actions fall under the definition of 'sabotage,' not 'terrorism,'" he argued. "I never intended to instill fear in civilians. My goal was to destroy aircraft so they couldn't be used to bomb, to destroy railways so they couldn't be used to transport weapons."

Despite his capture, Sidiki said that he has no regrets. "The war is over for me — I've been caught. But I'm genuinely grateful to the Ukrainians who trusted me. If anyone is to blame for my imprisonment, it's me alone," he wrote. "I hope Ukrainians endure every trial with resilience. I wish everyone peaceful skies."

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https://meduza.io/en/feature/2025/02/10/some-people-leave-the-country-others-turn-to-explosives?utm_source=email&utm_medium=briefly&utm_campaign=2025-02-10

Source: [Mediazona](#)