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CIA ordered reporter killed, Soviet publication suggests

Moscow (Reuter) — An official Soviet journal yesterday suggested one of its reporters had been murdered in Italy on the orders of the CIA in connection with the plot to kill the pope.

Literaturnaya Gazeta made the allegation in a statement by its editorial staff calling on the Italian authorities to provide an explanation for the disappearance of journalist Oleg Bitov September 9.

Mr. Bitov was on a 10-day assignment to cover the Venice film festival when he vanished.

The journal discounted suggestions he might have defected and recalled that Mr. Bitov had been following the case of Emanuella Orlanda, kidnapped daughter of a Vatican official.

Her alleged kidnappers have been demanding the release of Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turk convicted of shooting Pope John Paul II.

The weekly said the kidnapping was linked with the pope's attempted assassination and noted that it had previously published proof of CIA involvement in the plot.

"In Italy the CIA has more than once done away with unwanted people, delivering them into the hands of hired terrorist-kidnappers," it said.

"Revenge against a newspaper? Let's not forget Oleg Bitov represented *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, which has recently carried out a series of investigations of a very political nature in Western countries, and the last was in Italy," it said.