



# Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments

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## Summary

Terrorist attacks in Russia's North Caucasus—a border area between the Black and Caspian Seas that includes the formerly breakaway Chechnya and other ethnic-based regions—have appeared to increase in recent months. Moreover, civilian and government casualties are reaching levels not seen in several years and terrorist attacks again are taking place outside the North Caucasus. Illustrative of the new level of violence, the Nevskiy Express passenger train was bombed after leaving Moscow in late November 2009, resulting in over two dozen deaths and dozens of injuries.

Before the recent rise in terrorist attacks, it seemed that government security forces had been successful in tamping down their range and scope by aggressively carrying out over a thousand sweep operations (“zachistki”) in the North Caucasus. During these operations, security forces surround a village and search the homes of the residents, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the searches are illegal and that troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnapping for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians. Through these sweeps, as well as through direct clashes, most of the masterminds of previous large-scale terrorist attacks were killed.

Some observers suggest that the increasing scope of public discontent against zachistki and deepening economic and social distress are contributing to growing numbers of recruits for terrorist groups and to increasing violence in the North Caucasus. Inter-ethnic and religious tensions are also responsible for some of the increasing violence. Many ethnic Russian and other non-native civilians have been murdered or have disappeared, which has spurred the migration of most of the non-native population from the North Caucasus. Russian authorities argue that foreign terrorist groups continue to operate in the North Caucasus and to receive outside financial and material assistance.

The United States generally has supported the Russian government's efforts to combat terrorism in the North Caucasus. However, successive Administrations and Congress have continued to raise concerns about the wide scope of human rights abuses committed by the Russian government in the North Caucasus. The conference agreement on Consolidated Appropriations for FY2010 (P.L. 111-117), calls for \$7.0 million to continue humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society and relief and recovery assistance programs in the North Caucasus. It also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

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## Most Recent Developments

On January 19, 2010, Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev announced that he was appointing Krasnoyarsk Territory Governor Aleksandr Khloponin as the presidential representative of a newly created North Caucasus Federal District. Khloponin was also appointed a deputy premier, which placed him more directly under the authority of Premier Vladimir Putin. Medvedev stated that Khloponin would wield authority over economic development and would work to combat “mass unemployment, economic crime, cronyism and bribery.”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Terrorist attacks in Russia's North Caucasus<sup>2</sup> have appeared to increase in recent months. Moreover, civilian and government casualties are reaching levels not seen in several years and terrorist attacks again are taking place outside the North Caucasus.<sup>3</sup> Illustrative of the new level of violence, the Nevskiy Express passenger train was bombed after leaving Moscow in late November 2009, resulting in over two dozen deaths and dozens of injuries.

Before the recent rise in terrorist attacks, it seemed that government security forces had been successful in tamping down their range and scope by aggressively carrying out over a thousand counter-terrorism operations (termed “zachistki” or “cleaning-up” operations) in the North Caucasus. During these operations, security forces surround a village and search the homes of the residents, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the searches are illegal and that troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnapping for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians. Through these sweeps, as well as through direct clashes, most of the masterminds of previous large-scale terrorist attacks were killed and terrorist groups appeared unable to mount attacks on the scale of the September 2004 attack at the Beslan grade school (in North Ossetia), where 300 or more civilians, police, and troops were killed, or the October 2005 attack on the town of Nalchik (in Kabardino-Balkaria), where 50 or more were killed.

The rise in terrorist attacks is being met by an increase in zachistki and in reported human rights abuses linked to security forces, such as abductions for ransom or “disappearances.” The increased conflict also is placing human rights and aid workers in renewed jeopardy. Some observers suggest that the increasing scope of public discontent against zachistki and deepening economic and social distress are contributing to growing numbers of recruits for terrorist groups and to increasing violence in the North Caucasus. Inter-ethnic and religious tensions are also responsible for some of the increasing violence.

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<sup>1</sup> The Kremlin. President of Russia. *Beginning of Meeting with Aleksandr Khloponin, Newly Appointed Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to North Caucasus Federal District and Deputy Prime Minister of Russia*, January 20, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Russia's North Caucasus as used here includes the “republics” of Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabarda-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. Some sections of the Krasnodar and Stavropol “territories” also are usually included as parts of the North Caucasus.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Violence in the North Caucasus: Summer 2009*; Open Source Center. Open Source Center Report. *North Caucasus Incidents December 2009*, January 11, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-46001.

The violence in the North Caucasus has spurred migration from the North Caucasus of some of the native population and most of the non-native population. Unlike in most other federal subunits of Russia, eponymous or other native ethnic groups have strengthened their majority status in all the North Caucasian republics except Adygea, and ethnic Russians are a declining minority (even in Adygea). In Chechnya and Ingushetia, few ethnic Russians reportedly remain as residents, except for military personnel.<sup>4</sup>

In February 2009, President Medvedev stated that “the situation in the North Caucasus remains strained. Extremists are stepping up their subversive terrorist activities and at the same time are trying to conduct a campaign to discredit the government bodies of the North Caucasus republics.”<sup>5</sup> Anatoly Safonov, the presidential representative for international cooperation on combating terrorism and organized crime, also warned in February 2009 that al Qaeda and its affiliates were increasing their influence in the North Caucasus.<sup>6</sup> The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a U.S. think tank, has estimated that the incidence of violence started to increase in the North Caucasus in early 2007 and was much higher in 2009.<sup>7</sup> On January 14, 2010, Russian Deputy Interior Minister Arkadiy Yedelev reported that there had been 637 terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus in 2009, a 19% increase over the previous year.<sup>8</sup>

Seeming to contradict his earlier concern about ongoing terrorism, President Medvedev argued in April 2009 that “the situation [in Chechnya] has to a substantial degree normalized, life there is becoming normal,” and declared an end to the counter-terrorist operations regime in Chechnya (declared nearly 10 years ago and later extended to other areas of the North Caucasus). He specified that security agencies could still impose “if need be individual provisions of the counter-terrorist operation regime ... in Chechnya and the other republics in southern Russia.”<sup>9</sup> Some observers viewed this caveat as indicating that the formal lifting of the regime would not substantially improve the human rights situation. They also speculated that budgetary pressures associated with keeping sizable forces in Chechnya might have spurred Medvedev’s decision. However, in the face of rising terrorism, the numbers of policemen and soldiers serving in the United Contingent of Forces in the North Caucasus reportedly have not been reduced.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the counter-terrorist operations regime in Chechnya was formally lifted, dozens of *zachistki* against alleged terrorists have continued to be carried out or have even increased in the

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<sup>4</sup> Valery Dzutsev, “North Caucasus’ Ethnic Russian Population Shrinks as Indigenous Populations Grow,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, November 13, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), February 6, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950260.

<sup>6</sup> *RIA Novosti*, February 17, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Violence In The North Caucasus: Trends Since 2004*, 2008; *Violence in the North Caucasus: 2009, A Bloody Year*, 2010. CSIS estimates that there were 795 violent incidents in 2008 and 1,101 in 2009. CSIS defines violent incidents as including “abductions of military personnel and civilians, bombings, assassinations of key civilian and military leaders, rebel attacks, police or military operations against suspected militants, destruction of property by militants, and the discovery of weapons.” An estimate by the Open Source Center—that there were 1,362 violent incidents in 2009—appears to broadly track with that by CSIS. *North Caucasus Incidents December 2009*. Both the CSIS and OSC data were compiled from Russian and other media reports.

<sup>8</sup> *CEDR*, January 14, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950323. The Open Source Center similarly estimated that there had been 659 rebel attacks in the North Caucasus in 2009. *North Caucasus Incidents December 2009*.

<sup>9</sup> President of Russia. *Beginning of Working Meeting with Director of the Federal Security Service Alexander Bortnikov*, March 27, 2009, at [http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2009/03/27/2210\\_type82913\\_214418.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2009/03/27/2210_type82913_214418.shtml).

<sup>10</sup> *CEDR*, January 19, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-546001.

republic as well as elsewhere in the North Caucasus, involving the declaration of counter-terrorist operations areas in villages and rural areas where civil rights were curtailed.<sup>11</sup>

Among prominent recent terrorist incidents:

- Dagestani Internal Affairs Minister Adilgerey Magomedtagirov was killed on June 5, 2009. Partly in response to this murder, President Medvedev flew to Dagestan and convened a session of the Russian Security Council to discuss regional counter-measures against terrorism. He stated that during the first half of the year, over 300 acts of terrorism had taken place in the North Caucasus (including over 100 bombings), that 75 police and other local government officials had been killed, that 48 civilians had died, and that 112 terrorists had been “eliminated.”<sup>12</sup>
- The president of Ingushetia, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, was severely wounded by a bomb blast on June 22, 2009.
- In July 2009, prominent human rights advocate Natalia Estemirova was abducted in Chechnya and, after passing through police checkpoints, was found murdered in Ingushetia.
- In August 2009, Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov, who ran a child rehabilitation center in Chechnya, were murdered.
- A suicide truck bombing in Ingushetia killed 21 policemen and wounded 150 civilians in August 2009. President Medvedev fired the republic’s Interior Minister and at a meeting of the Security Council in Stavropol he admitted that “some time ago, I had an impression that the situation in the Caucasus had improved. Unfortunately, the latest events proved that this was not so.” He reportedly ordered a purge of corrupt policemen throughout the North Caucasus, called for rotating policemen into and out of the North Caucasus to combat corruption and inefficiency, and urged legal and judicial changes that would reduce procedural rights and streamline the prosecution of “bandits.”<sup>13</sup>
- In October 2009, Ingush opposition leader and human rights activist Maksharip Aushev was killed in Kabardino-Balkaria.<sup>14</sup>
- The Nevskiy Express railway train was bombed outside of Moscow on November 27, 2009, killing 27 passengers and injuring 90. Some of the victims were high-ranking Russian officials, including a member of the Federation Council (upper legislative chamber). The same train had been bombed in 2007, allegedly by Pavel Kosolapov (an associate of Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov and the late Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev). Other explosions

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<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe. Commissioner for Human Rights. *Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Following His Visit to the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia) on 2 -11 September 2009*, November 24, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> President of the Russian Federation. *Russian president addresses Security Council meeting on Caucasus*, June 10, 2009, at <http://www.kremlin.ru>.

<sup>13</sup> *CEDR*, August 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950185; and August 25, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-546006.

<sup>14</sup> Philip P. Pan, “Opposition Figure Maksharip Aushev Gunned Down in Russia's North Caucasus,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 2009.

targeted trains in Dagestan the day before and the day after the Nevskiy Express bombing, although no casualties were reported. Russian media termed the Nevskiy Express bombing the worst terrorist act outside of the North Caucasian region since the August 2004 bombing of two airliners that had taken off from Moscow, killing 89. On December 2, Umarov allegedly took responsibility for ordering the Nevskiy Express bombing and warned that “acts of sabotage will continue for as long as those occupying the Caucasus do not stop their policy of killing ordinary Muslims.”<sup>15</sup>

- On January 6, 2010, a suicide bomber killed six policemen and wounded 20 in Dagestan.

In his annual address to the Federal Assembly on November 12, 2009, President Medvedev stated that terrorism in the North Caucasus was Russia’s “most serious domestic political problem.” He averred that terrorist attacks against local government and law enforcement officials were still hindering economic recovery, admitted that corruption and “cronyism” among officials also were factors retarding recovery, and warned that such opposition would “be dealt with.” He reported that federal economic assistance to the region had totaled \$888.1 million in 2009, but criticized local officials for “shamelessly stealing” some of the aid “at a time when unemployment and therefore mass poverty in the Caucasus has reached alarming levels.” He raised concerns about unemployment rates of more than 50% in Ingushetia and more than 30% in Chechnya, and rates even higher among young people, and announced that investment projects in energy, construction, tourism, healthcare, agriculture, and small business would soon be launched to combat unemployment. He announced that he would soon appoint “someone with enough authority to effectively coordinate” development programs in the region.<sup>16</sup> On January 19, 2010, he appointed Aleksandr Khloponin as the presidential representative of a newly created North Caucasus Federal District.

## **Impact of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia Conflict**

Several Russian policymakers and others have suggested that the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict contributed to increased instability in the North Caucasus. In August 2009, President Medvedev stated (as mentioned above) that terrorism had not abated. Similarly, Russian analyst Viktor Nadein-Raevsky has claimed that “external forces and the so-called Wahhabi underground ... aiming to weaken Russia and to sever the Caucasus from it laid great hopes on Georgia’s attack.” These groups “had planned a large-scale offensive in the Russian Caucasus in the wake of Georgia’s aggression. When it proved to be a failure these forces changed tactics,” and launched terrorist attacks instead.<sup>17</sup> Dagestani President Mukhu Aliyev also asserted in late November 2009 that the activity of foreign terrorists had increased in the republic since August 2008. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, there was a “lull in violence” in the North Caucasus during the Russia-Georgia conflict, but “following the conflict, the level of violence in the North Caucasus rose sharply, particularly in Ingushetia.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Reuters*, December 2, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> The Kremlin, Moscow. *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*, November 12, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> “Wave of Terror Looming Over the Caucasus?” *Russia Today*, November 7, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Violence in the North Caucasus.

Several observers have accused Russia of hypocrisy in recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia while suppressing separatism in Chechnya. These observers warn that separatists in the North Caucasus could be encouraged by the example of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>19</sup> Attempting to refute such a linkage, Prime Minister Putin claimed in September 2008 that before the conflict, some groups in the North Caucasus had advocated separatism because they felt that Russia was not defending the rights of South Ossetians. He asserted that by defending South Ossetia, Russia averted destabilization of the North Caucasus.<sup>20</sup> Offering what may be a more plausible rationale, Russian analyst Aleksey Malashenko has argued that Russia's use of overwhelming force against Georgia served as a potent example to the North Caucasus (as was the recent case of Chechnya) that Russia would continue to use force to safeguard its interests in the Caucasus. He has suggested that this example will constrain separatism, as will the fear of civil conflict and the fear of breaking what are regarded as essential economic ties with Moscow. He has warned, however, that Russia's ongoing civil rights abuses in the North Caucasus are spurring the growth of Islamic terrorism.<sup>21</sup>

Some residents of the North Caucasus have criticized Russia's economic assistance to Abkhazia and South Ossetia—which ostensibly are foreign countries after being recognized by Moscow in the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict—while the North Caucasus remains mired in poverty. Russian analyst Alexey Malashenko has warned that the global economic downturn and Russia's boosted financial commitments to Abkhazia and South Ossetia could result in fewer Russian subsidies to the North Caucasus, perhaps triggering more discontent.<sup>22</sup> President Medvedev's pledge in late 2009 to allocate at least \$1.1 billion over the next few years to address unemployment in Ingushetia might be part of an effort to assuage the local population, after promising but failing to deliver a similar allocation a year before.

## Recent Developments in the North Caucasus

### Chechnya

Some observers have argued that Russia's efforts to suppress the separatist movement in its Chechnya region have been the most violent in Europe in recent years in terms of ongoing military and civilian casualties.<sup>23</sup> In late 1999, Russia's then-Premier Putin ordered military, police, and security forces to enter the breakaway Chechnya region. By early 2000, these forces occupied most of the region. High levels of fighting continued for several more years, and resulted in thousands of Russian and Chechen casualties and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. The character of the insurgency changed, with Chechen separatism being replaced by Islamic extremist goals. In 2005, then-Chechen rebel leader Abdul-Khalim Saydullayev decreed

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<sup>19</sup> *The Economist*, August 28, 2008-September 3, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> *Interfax*, September 11, 2008; "Chairman of the Government of Russia Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the International Discussion Club Valdai," at <http://www.government.ru/content/governmentactivity/mainnews/archive/2008/09/11/8225672.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> *CEDR*, October 8, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-8015.

<sup>22</sup> Alexey Malashenko, "The North Caucasus Today: The View on the Ground and from Moscow," Event Summary, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 21, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> For background information, see CRS Report RL32272, *Bringing Peace to Chechnya? Assessments and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.



the formation of a Caucasus Front against Russia among Islamic believers in the North Caucasus, in an attempt to widen Chechnya's conflict with Russia.

The high levels of conflict in Chechnya appeared to ebb markedly after mid-decade with the killing, capture, or surrender of leading Chechen insurgents. However, Russian security forces and pro-Moscow Chechen forces still contend with residual insurgency. Remaining rebels have split into two basic groups, one led by Doka Umarov, who emphasizes jihad, and the other a more disparate group represented by Akhmed Zakayev, who stresses independence for Chechnya more than jihad. Reportedly, Zakayev has little or no influence over paramilitary operations. Umarov allegedly attempted to replace Zakayev as Chechnya's European emissary with the father of the terrorist who led hostage-taking at a Moscow theater in 2002. In late 2007, Umarov declared himself the amir of the Caucasus Emirate and declared an end to the rebel Chechen Republic of Ichkeriya. Umarov allegedly called for establishing Sharia (Islamic law) in "all lands in Caucasus, where mujahidin who gave oaths to me wage Jihad ... including Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ossetia, the Nogai steppe and the combined areas of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia." In August 2008, a colleague of Umarov's declared that the Caucasus Emirate could include other areas of Russia where mujahidin had given oaths to Umarov, such as Tatarstan.<sup>24</sup>

Russia's pacification policy has involved setting up a pro-Moscow regional government and transferring more and more local security duties to this government. An important factor in Russia's seeming success in Chechnya has been reliance on pro-Moscow Chechen clans affiliated with regional president Ramzan Kadyrov. Police and paramilitary forces under his authority allegedly have committed flagrant abuses of human rights, including by holding the relatives of insurgents as hostages under threat of death until the insurgents surrendered. Another technique has been the torching of relatives' homes and crops.

Russia's efforts to rebuild the largely devastated region have been impressive but are undermined by rampant corruption. Some types of crimes against civilians reportedly have decreased, such as kidnapping and disappearances, according to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental organization (NGO). Many displaced Chechens still fear returning to the region, and a sizeable number have emigrated from Russia.

In late June 2008, Colonel-General Gennadiy Troshev, adviser to the Russian president and former commander of the Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, stated that "all large organized armed groups in Chechnya have been eliminated, defeated or dispersed. The remaining small disconnected armed groups [have moved to] Dagestan and Ingushetia." Nonetheless, he warned that "it is too soon to say that the situation in [Chechnya] as well as in the entire North Caucasus has completely normalized."<sup>25</sup> In a summing up of results in 2008, Lt. Gen. Mikhail Shepilov, Director of the Operational Group of the Interior Ministry, praised police for preventing any large-scale terrorism in Chechnya, and Kadyrov and other Chechen officials claimed that terrorism and other violence had declined during the year.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "The Official Version of Amir Dokka's Statement of Declaration of the Caucasian Emirate," *Kavkaz Center*, November 22, 2007, at <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2007/11/22/9107.shtml>; "We Have Taken Up Arms to Establish Laws: Interview with Movladi Udugov, Part I," *Prague Watchdog*, July 24, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> *CEDR*, June 25, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950138.

<sup>26</sup> *CEDR*, January 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-546001.

In contrast to these views, Major General Nikolay Sivak warned in May 2008 that a new generation of Chechen youth were becoming rebels and were receiving help from the population, so that Russia's national security continued to be threatened.<sup>27</sup> Analyst Gordon Hahn similarly suggested in late 2008 that after popular support for the Chechen insurgents declined following large-scale terrorist attacks such as at Beslan, it may have increased recently, contributing to a spurt in the numbers of youth joining the mujahedin.<sup>28</sup> According to data from the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, the decline in violent incidents in Chechnya in 2008 was reversed in 2009 and included a rising number of violent deaths. The Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, reported after a September 2009 trip to Chechnya that the number of terrorist acts, killings, and abductions in the region apparently had increased during 2009 compared to 2008.<sup>29</sup>

## Ingushetia

According to some observers, Ingushetia in recent years has threatened to become the "new Chechnya" of disorder and violence in the region, a "mini-failed state."<sup>30</sup> The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, divided in the late Soviet period into separate Chechen and Ingush Republics, has proven unable to demarcate a common border. This has contributed to tensions between Chechens and Ingushes. Stalin's deportation of the Ingush during World War II and their return in the 1950s to find that some of their lands had been ceded to the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic, has contributed to Ingush-Ossetian clashes. In October 1992, hundreds of Ingush reportedly were killed and over 60,000 forced from their homes in the Prigorodny District of North Ossetia.

According to Congressional testimony by Russian human rights advocate Gregory Shvedov in June 2008, there are up to 200 terrorists based in Ingushetia.<sup>31</sup> Small-scale rebel attacks intensified in 2007 and 2008, prompting Russia to deploy more and more security, military, and police forces to the republic. Since 2007, there allegedly have been more killings, attacks, and abductions in Ingushetia—perpetrated by government and rebel forces, criminals, and others—than in any other republic in the North Caucasus.<sup>32</sup> Ingushetia prosecutor Usman Belkharoyev has reported that more than 70 security personnel were killed in armed attacks in Ingushetia in 2008, compared to 32 in 2007. He also reported that 167 police and troops were injured in such attacks

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<sup>27</sup> CEDR, May 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-548001.

<sup>28</sup> Gordon J. Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate and Its New Tactics," *Mideast Monitor*, December 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Council of Europe. *Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Following his visit to the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia) on 2-11 September 2009*, CommDH(2009)36, November 24, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> "Commentators See Ingushetia as a 'Failed State' Where an Uprising Could Occur," *Chechnya Weekly*, Vol. 8, Issue 34 (September 6, 2007); "Ingushetia Takes Chechnya's Place as the North Caucasus Hot Spot," *Chechnya Weekly*, September 6, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Andrei Smirnov, "Kremlin Adopts New Counter-Insurgency Methods in Ingushetia," *Chechnya Weekly*, September 27, 2007. U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in 2007*, March 11, 2008. According to testimony by Magomed Mutsolgov, the Director of the Ingush Mashr Human Rights Organization, kidnappings in Ingushetia have decreased over the past year or so from previously high levels, but murders by the police have increased. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

in 2008, compared to 80 in 2007.<sup>33</sup> According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the level of violent incidents in Ingushetia, particularly violent deaths, continued to increase in 2009.

What Russian analyst Sergey Markedonov termed a “loyal opposition” movement in Ingushetia—that supports Russian rule in the republic—increasingly opposed the leadership of Federal Security Service official Murat Zyazikov, who became governor in 2002 after an election that many observers viewed as manipulated by Moscow. Another group, the Islamic extremists, wants to evict “kafirs” (infidels) and “murtads” (apostate Muslims) and create a North Caucasus emirate.<sup>34</sup> This “loyal opposition” organized several rallies in 2007 and 2008 to protest local government corruption, extrajudicial killings, and other alleged abuses by security forces. On August 31, 2008, opposition figure Magomed Yevloyev was shot by police and dumped along the road. The Ingush opposition appealed to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, condemning the killing as a sign of the “genocide” against the Ingush that was prompting more and more Ingush to seek independence from Russia.<sup>35</sup>

After Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, an opposition People’s Assembly of Ingushetia—composed of emissaries from nearly two dozen clans—called for Ingushetia’s secession from Russia if Zyazikov was not removed from office. Opposition activist Magomed Khazbiyev likewise stated that “We must ask Europe or America to separate us from Russia.”<sup>36</sup> On 18 October, 2008, a Russian military convoy came under grenade attack and machine gun fire near Nazran. Russia officially reported that two soldiers had been killed, but other reports were that as many as 40-50 Russian soldiers were killed. On October 30, 2008 President Zyazikov was removed from office and Army Col. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was nominated by President Medvedev and quickly approved by the Ingush legislature. Yevkurov declared that he would suppress the local insurgency while reducing abuses against civilians by federal forces.

Analyst Mairbek Vatchagaev has reported that in 2009, “bombings and armed attacks are everyday occurrences in Ingushetia, with several such incidents sometimes taking place during a single day.”<sup>37</sup> In May 2009, federal security forces—assisted by Chechen units—launched large-scale *zachistki* aimed at eliminating terrorists. Yevkurov was severely wounded by a car bomb in June 2009. In August 2009, a bomb devastated Nazran’s police department, resulting in dozens killed or wounded. In October 2009, human rights advocate Maksharip Aushev was killed, who had supported Yevkurov’s efforts to get security forces to commit fewer human rights abuses. President Yevkurov denounced the killing and suggested that security forces might have been involved in the killing.

Some observers have warned that since Russia has strengthened ethnic Ossetian influence by recognizing the “independence” of South Ossetia, this ethnic group will be even less amenable to Russia’s encouragement of their conciliation with ethnic Ingush, including by encouraging North Ossetia to permit some Ingush to resettle in Prigorodny.

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<sup>33</sup> *CEDR*, December 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950098.

<sup>34</sup> *CEDR*, June 17, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-379001. See also *CEDR*, November 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-25007.

<sup>35</sup> Open Source Center. *Open Source Feature*, September 18, 2008, Doc. No. FEA-775593.

<sup>36</sup> Adrian Blomfield, “Russia Faces New Caucasus Uprising In Ingushetia,” *The Telegraph* (London), September 1, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Moscow Struggles to Stabilize Ingushetia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 26, 2009.

## Dagestan

The majority of the citizenry in Dagestan, a multi-ethnic republic, reportedly support membership in the Russian Federation rather than separatism. In August 1999, however, some Islamic fundamentalists—with the support of Chechen rebels—declared the creation of an Islamic republic in western Dagestan. Russian and Dagestani security forces quickly defeated this insurgency. There has been some growth in Islamic extremism in recent years, and terrorist attacks have occurred in northern and central areas bordering Chechnya. In late 2007, thousands of security personnel were deployed for a *zachistka* against the village of Gimry in central Dagestan, which continued for several months and resulted in the arrest of dozens of villagers on charges of terrorism. During 2008, attacks on government offices have spread to southern Dagestan. Some of these attacks allegedly were triggered by a local government crackdown on practicing Muslims.<sup>38</sup> The International Crisis Group NGO has claimed that the extremist Islamist group Sharia Jamaat is responsible for a large share of the rising violence that has resulted in the killing of hundreds of local officials in Dagestan. The recruitment efforts of Sharia Jamaat benefit from the allegedly arbitrary and corrupt actions of local police and security forces. In 2007, Sharia Jamaat endorsed Umarov's goal of establishing a North Caucasian Emirate.<sup>39</sup>

In mid-March 2009, Dagestani Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Adilgerey Magomedtagirov estimated that there remained only about 50-70 militants in Dagestan, because of intensified counter-terrorist efforts during 2008. He pointed out that “we recently killed Omar Sheykullayev [on February 5, 2009], the emir of Dagestan who was appointed by Doku Umarov. Before him there was [Ilgar Mollachiyev, who was killed on September 7, 2008], also an emir and the closest associate of Doku Umarov and Khattab. He was killed along with ten other people. I think all we need right now is a bit more time, and we will deal with these groups as well.”<sup>40</sup>

Appearing to belie Magomedtagirov's assessment of the situation, counter-terrorism operations legal regimes were declared at least four times in February 2009. In March 2009, one was declared in mountain areas of Dagestan, where several insurgent groups—allegedly including some foreign mujahedin—engaged in fierce fighting with security forces. A mujahedin killed in April 2009 was claimed to be an emissary of Al Qaeda who had arrived from Turkey, and another Al Qaeda emissary killed in August 2009 was said to have been an organizer of jihad in Dagestan who worked under Al Qaeda's North Caucasian regional leader Mohammed. In December 2009, the Dagestani Interior Ministry reported that attacks on police had increased from 100 in 2008 to 193 in 2009, and that 76 police had been killed and 155 wounded in 2009. It also reported that 15 civilians had been killed and 30 wounded in 2009.<sup>41</sup>

## Other Areas of the North Caucasus

The influence of Islamic fundamentalism that embraces jihad reportedly has spread throughout the North Caucasus, leading to the formation of terrorist groups in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabarda-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia.<sup>42</sup> According to testimony by Shvedov,

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<sup>38</sup> “North Caucasus: Instability In Dagestan Spreads To South,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 15, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, International Crisis Group, June 3, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> *CEDR*, March 20, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-4001.

<sup>41</sup> *CEDR*, December 10, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950292.

<sup>42</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “The Truth about the ‘Kataib al-Khoul’ Ossetian Jamaat,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 20, (continued...)

700 to 900 rebels are active in various areas of the North Caucasus, even though there are parts of Northern Caucasus where there are almost no rebels. He warns that “the most important point [is not] the number of active rebels nowadays. It’s an issue of the number of supporters among the civilian population.” Shvedov states that the civilian population has become widely radicalized and is able to quickly mobilize to join the rebels in attacks.<sup>43</sup>

In October 2005, Chechen guerrillas were joined by dozens of members of the Yarmuk Islamic extremist group and others in attacks on government offices in Kabarda-Balkaria’s capital of Nalchik and other areas. The president of Kabarda-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, criticized local law enforcement officials for “not taking timely preventive measures with regard to representatives of religious organizations on the one hand, and [for treating] ordinary believers in an unjustifiably harsh manner on the other.”<sup>44</sup> By mid-2008, however, he voiced concern that “Wahhabism” (a label attached by many officials to Islamic extremism and disfavored Islamic religious practices) was increasing among the youth and might contribute to a rise in terrorism.<sup>45</sup> In February 2009, a firefight resulted in the deaths of seven alleged terrorists, and in March 2009, security forces killed four alleged terrorists. In March 2009, Prosecutor Oleg Zharikov claimed that a well-organized Islamic extremist group that was responsible for the 2005 Nalchik attack continued to operate in Kabarda-Balkaria. In late November 2009, the al-Garb jamaat in Adyghea issued a call for Muslims in the republic and elsewhere to join the jihad to establish the Caucasian Emirate.<sup>46</sup>

Gregory Shvedov has claimed that Islamic extremists in North Ossetia have been targeting gambling clubs (which were banned but are still operating surreptitiously), while in Karachay-Cherkessia they mostly have been targeting government-appointed religious leaders.<sup>47</sup>

## Contributions to Instability

Former President Putin has claimed that terrorism in the North Caucasus has been caused mainly by foreign forces, but President Medvedev recently has appeared to stress domestic factors. Former President Putin claimed in a speech to the State Council in February 2008 that foreign elements had been responsible for the guerrilla attack on Dagestan in late 1999 that started the second Chechnya conflict. According to Putin, the conflict “was a case of the undisguised incitement of separatists by outside forces wishing to weaken Russia, and perhaps even to cause its collapse.”<sup>48</sup> While he remained vague, a “documentary” aired on a Russian state-owned television channel in April 2008 alleged that France, Germany, Turkey, and the United States

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(...continued)

2007.

<sup>43</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> “Kabarda-Balkaria: Leader Blames Law Enforcement Agencies for Harsh Treatment of Devout Muslims,” *Caucasus Reporting Service*, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, April 13, 2006.

<sup>45</sup> *CEDR*, June 18, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950445.

<sup>46</sup> *North Caucasus Weekly*, March 20, 2009; *CEDR*, March 24, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950169; November 30, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950153.

<sup>47</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> *CEDR*, February 8, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950541.

instigated and supported Chechen separatism.<sup>49</sup> Putin also has in recent years blamed “international criminal networks of arms and drug traffickers,” for supporting Chechen terrorists, and has been careful to assert that “terrorism must not be identified with any religion or cultural tradition,” in order to sidestep criticism from the Islamic world for his actions in the North Caucasus.<sup>50</sup>

In June 2009, President Medvedev argued that “no doubt, the situation [in the North Caucasus] is partially influenced by ... extremism brought from abroad,” but he appeared to shift the responsibility for the conflict by stressing that the “problems in the North Caucasus ... are systemic. By saying that I am referring to the low living standards, high unemployment and massive, horrifyingly widespread corruption...”<sup>51</sup> In his address to the nation in November 2009, President Medvedev similarly reiterated that Russia would defeat international terrorists operating in the North Caucasus, but also emphasized that “it is obvious that the source of many problems lies first and foremost in economic backwardness and the fact that the majority of people there lack normal life prospects. Let us speak frankly: the level of corruption, violence and cronyism in the North Caucasus republics is unprecedented. Therefore, we will give priority attention to resolving the socio-economic problems of our citizens there.”<sup>52</sup>

Evidence of economic distress as a factor in the rise of terrorism in Kabardino-Balkaria Republic includes the closure of the main industry, the Tyrnyauz Mining Complex, as well as the shuttering of many defense-related factories, and the decline of the agricultural sector. Infrastructure such as roads and airports also is in disrepair, and social services are inadequate.<sup>53</sup> Dagestan and Ingushetia have the most unemployment and poverty in Russia, and major income inequality has fueled attacks against corrupt and wealthy officials.<sup>54</sup> Ingushetia’s economy suffered greatly during the Chechnya conflict, mainly from the influx of displaced persons which in effect doubled the population during intense periods of fighting in 1995 and 2000. According to Shvedov, the educational system in much of the North Caucasus is getting worse and unemployment is increasing. Shvedov warns that the lack of career prospects has contributed to growing support for “Wahhabi agendas” among the population.

Ethnic tensions are another factor contributing to violence in the North Caucasus. Besides those between Ossetians and the Ingush (mentioned above), in early 2006, the Putin administration abolished the Dagestani State Council, which represented the 14 largest ethnic groups, and whose chairman (an ethnic Dargin) served as the chief executive of the republic. The State Council had helped to mollify ethnic tensions. Putin then appointed an ethnic Avar as the president of the republic. Ahead of the expiration of the president’s term in early 2010, some Dagestanis are

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<sup>49</sup> “Documentary Alleges West Sought Chechen Secession,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, April 23, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Lévesque, “Russia and the Muslim World: The Chechnya Factor and Beyond,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> President of the Russian Federation. *Russian president addresses Security Council meeting on Caucasus*, June 10, 2009, at <http://www.kremlin.ru>. Perhaps reflecting a desire to provide a different explanation to a Western audience, at a joint news conference with visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Sochi, President Medvedev claimed that the murders of human rights workers and officials were carried out by enemies of Russia financed and supported from abroad. See Voice of America. Press Releases and Documents. *Medvedev: Caucasus Murders Aim at Destabilizing S. Russia*, August 14, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> The Kremlin, Moscow. *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*, November 12, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> “Kabardo-Balkaria Seeks To Break Out Of Economic Stagnation,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 01, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> *Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, p. 12; *CEDR*, November 4, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-548006.

calling for re-establishing the State Council. Nonetheless, ethnic tensions have not yet led to large-scale ethnic conflict in Dagestan.

Increasing Circassian nationalism has contributed to tensions and violence in Adyghea, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Kabardino-Balkaria, three republics with large numbers of ethnic Circassians (termed Adyghe, Kabardin, and Cherkes in the three republics), where they have clashed with Karachay and Balkar ethnic groups. In November 2008, a Congress of the Circassian People called for unifying Circassians in a new federal republic, even though Russian officials had warned it against issuing such a call. On November 26, 2009, reportedly about 3,000 Circassians demonstrated for ethnic rights in Karachay-Cherkessia. Some Circassians from Kabardino-Balkaria took part in this demonstration. Two days later, officials in Kabardino-Balkaria denounced leaders of the demonstration as terrorists. On November 30, some Circassian rights advocates issued an appeal to create an independent Circassian state. The next day, the legislature of Kabardino-Balkaria called for Circassian rights advocates to be arrested as terrorists and spies, and unidentified attackers beat some of the Circassian rights advocates.

Russian analyst Aleksey Malashenko suggests that the North Caucasus region is undergoing “re-traditionalization,” which will result in the consolidation of Sufi<sup>55</sup> and other traditional forms of Islam as part of the political and social fabric of the region. While Moscow and its local agents focus on combating visible elements of “Wahabbism,”<sup>56</sup> the region is becoming broadly Islamic and less integrated politically and socially with the rest of Russia, Malashenko warns. He also suggests that to the extent that sitting officials and favored Islamic leaders try to retain their unrepresentative control in the North Caucasus and ignore economic problems, Islamic extremist violence will continue.<sup>57</sup> Analyst Mark Kramer likewise suggests that disaffection among youth in the North Caucasus is so deep and widespread that they are prone to distrust such favored Islamic leaders and institutions and to be receptive to underground Islamic extremism.<sup>58</sup>

Reportedly, authorities have enlisted the assistance of Sufi Imams in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya to identify “Wahabbi” Muslims, who are then arrested, killed, or disappear. Young Muslims may be targeted as “Wahabbis” if they end their prayers at the mosque too soon (Sufis pray longer), attend the mosque frequently, or attend early services at the mosque. In Kabarda-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adyghea, where there are few Sufis and Islam does not have such deep roots as elsewhere in the North Caucasus, Muslims allegedly may be targeted as

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<sup>55</sup> According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, July 8, 2008, Sufism is a “mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of man and God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.” Central concepts of Sufism were developed in the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. Three denominations (or Tariqahs) of Sufism—the Naqshbandiya, Qadiriya, and Shazaliya—are prominent in the North Caucasus.

<sup>56</sup> Wahabbism is a term used by some observers to identify a form of Sunni Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and Qatar that calls for a return to fundamental or pure principles of Islam. The term is often used interchangeably with Salafism. As used in a derogatory sense by some in Russia, it can refer to any non-approved practice of Islamic faith. Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Aleksey Malashenko, “Islam and the State in Russia,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008. See also Vakhit Akayev, “Conflicts Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Islamic Trends: Reasons, Dynamics, and Ways to Overcome Them (Based on North Caucasian Documents),” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2008. Unlike Malashenko, Akayev does not view the counter-Wahabbism alliance of Russia’s central authorities with the traditionalists as eventually unraveling.

<sup>58</sup> Mark Kramer, “Prospects for Islamic Radicalism and Violent Extremism in the North Caucasus and Central Asia,” *PONARS Eurasia Memo*, No. 28, August 2008.

“Wahabbis” merely for attending the mosque or praying in public.<sup>59</sup> There are some reports that foreign Sunni Salafi terrorists operating in the North Caucasus in turn are targeting Sufis.

Analysts Emil Souleimanov and Ondrej Ditrych have urged students of events in the North Caucasus not to fail to consider the role of clans, members of which may become radicalized by zachistki and repression by Moscow-installed authorities. According to these analysts, “in the North Caucasus, there has occurred over time a mutual intertwining of ... jihadist ideology and the mechanism of blood feud.... It is the young people in particular who ... are the ones who are physically able [to take revenge. They were] not raised in the established traditions in these regions of traditionalist Sufi Islam and is thus more susceptible to absorbing the extremist ideologies of jihad.” These analysts caution that “rather than vague ideas of global jihad, the resistance in the North Caucasus is far more driven by the ideas of North Caucasian, mountain dweller Muslim solidarity and the necessity of a joint struggle in the name of a common religion (Islam) and the liberation of holy ground from the yoke of the ‘infidels’.”<sup>60</sup>

## Implications for Russia

Ethnic prejudice by Russians against North Caucasian migrants reportedly has increased and has contributed to a rise in hate crimes. In the southern and eastern parts of the Stavropol region, several riots targeting these migrants have been reported. In late June 2008, the Congress of Peoples of the Caucasus sponsored a rally in Moscow to combat what they claimed were racist views of Caucasians propagated in the Russian press.<sup>61</sup> The Moscow Human Rights Bureau estimated that about 300 xenophobic attacks occurred in Russia in 2008, leaving 122 people dead and about 380 injured. Some hate crimes in Moscow and elsewhere against North Caucasians have been linked to military and police veterans of the Chechnya conflict.<sup>62</sup> Reacting to the hate crimes, Caucasian youths in Moscow formed a group they termed “Black Hawks” to carry out revenge attacks. Members of the Congress of the Peoples of the Caucasus have attempted to intercede between the “hawks” and Slavic ultranationalist groups.

As Russia reduces its security forces in Chechnya, terrorist incidents might become (even) more frequent, some observers warn. Other factors, such as the effects of the global economic downturn, could facilitate (more) terrorism in other areas of the North Caucasus and beyond, including in the Volga River area of Russia.<sup>63</sup> Kadyrov’s harsh methods of combating terrorism have contributed to vendettas. Kadyrov’s reportedly widespread human rights violations have received the acquiescence, if not support, of central authorities, and his methods have been used to certain degrees by other leaders in the North Caucasus. As a recent sign of such support, Vladimir Vasilyev, head of the Duma Security Committee, stated during a late March 2009 visit to Chechnya that the region “could be an example to other regions of how terrorism should be countered. The experience and positive practice employed here in the fight against terrorism are

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<sup>59</sup> Andrei Smirnov, “The Kremlin Intensifies Reprisals against Muslims in the North Caucasus,” *Chechnya Weekly*, October 4, 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Emil Souleimanov and Ondrej Ditrych, “The Internationalization of the Russian–Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, September 2008, pp. 1199 – 1222.

<sup>61</sup> *BBC Monitoring*, June 23, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> *Interfax*, March 10, 2009; *CEDR*, March 11, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-25004.

<sup>63</sup> Neil J. Melvin, *Building Stability in the North Caucasus: Ways Forward for Russia and the European Union*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 16, May 2007.



of great interest, particularly against the background of the unstable situation that remains tense in some regions of the North Caucasus.”<sup>64</sup>

Some observers warn that Russia's encouragement and support for individuals from the North Caucasus to travel to Abkhazia and South Ossetia to fight against Georgia in 2008 may have future unfavorable repercussions in Russia. These individuals might have gained sentiments that Caucasian guerrillas can defeat government forces. Personnel from Chechnya's Vostok (East) Battalion served in South Ossetia, and “the Adyge and Cherkes formed groups of fighters and, alongside Chechens, participated in removing the Abkhaz government-in-exile from the Kodori gorge. They also temporarily patrolled Georgian villages in the Gali region of Abkhazia.” Among other repercussions, surreptitious arms transfers from Georgia through South and North Ossetia to other North Caucasian areas could increase.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, a perhaps favorable repercussion—from Russia's viewpoint—might be the easing of population pressures in North Ossetia if some residents move to South Ossetia, where there is more arable land.<sup>66</sup>

U.S. analyst Gordon Hahn has warned that the Caucasus Emirate proclaimed by Chechen Doku Umarov in 2007 forms the hub of Islamic terrorism in Russia and receives substantial material and ideological support from the global terrorist network. The Caucasus Emirate provides ideological, financial and weapons support and loose guidance and some coordination for the activities of perhaps up to three dozen republic/regional and local combat jamaats (assemblies or groups of believers) in the North Caucasus and Volga areas, Moscow, and elsewhere. The Caucasus Emirate may take the lead when major terrorist operations are planned. In April 2009, Umarov announced that the former ‘Riyadus Salikhin’ Martyrs’ Battalion (which had taken responsibility for attacking the grade school in Beslan in September 2004 and which appeared defunct after its leader, Shamil Basiyev, was killed in 2006) had been revived and was carrying out suicide bombings across Russia. It reportedly was responsible for the August 2009 bombing of the police station in Ingushetia and the November 2009 bombing of the passenger train outside of Moscow. Hahn reports that major ideologists of the global jihadi movement have praised these bombings and have urged greater material and other support for the Caucasus Emirate.<sup>67</sup>

## International Response

The United States and several other countries and international organizations have maintained that while Russia has the right to protect its citizenry from terrorist attacks, it should not use “disproportionate” methods that violate the human rights of innocent bystanders. They have objected to Russia's 2006 counter-terrorism law, which permits police and other security forces to declare a “counter-terrorism operations regime” in a locality and to detain suspects for up to 30 days, search homes, ban public assemblies, and restrict media activities without any pre-approval

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<sup>64</sup> CEDR, March 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-21002.

<sup>65</sup> C W Blandy, *Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Day War*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, March 2009; Stacy Closson, “The North Caucasus after the Georgia-Russia Conflict,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, December 4, 2008.

<sup>66</sup> *Provocation, Deception, Entrapment*.

<sup>67</sup> *Russia's Islamic Threat*, pp. 59-66; Gordon Hahn, “The Caucasus Emirate's Return to Suicide Bombing and Mass Terrorism,” *Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report*, November 30, 2009, reported on *Johnson's Russia List*, November 30, 2009; Gordon Hahn, “Abu Muhammad Asem al-Maqdisi and the Caucasus Emirate,” *Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report*, January 2010, reported on *Johnson's Russia List*, January 8, 2010.

by the courts or legislative oversight. As a result of this and other permissive laws and government actions, HRW has argued that Russia's security forces "believe they may act with impunity when carrying out any operation related to counter-terrorism."<sup>68</sup> The U.N. Human Rights Committee in October 2009 reflected these concerns when it urged Russia to "take stringent measures to put an end to enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment and abuse committed or instigated by law enforcement officials in Chechnya and other parts of the North Caucasus; ensure the prompt and impartial investigations by an independent body of all human rights violations allegedly committed or instigated by state agents, [and] prosecute perpetrators," among other measures.<sup>69</sup>

The European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe (COE) has ruled in dozens of cases brought by Chechens that the Russian government used indiscriminate force that resulted in civilian casualties and failed to properly investigate and prosecute Russian personnel involved. Hundreds of cases remain to be adjudicated. According to Russian human rights advocate and jurist Karinna Moskalenko, the Russian government has paid damages awarded by the Court to the plaintiffs, but has not taken the verdicts into account by reforming the justice system.<sup>70</sup> In many cases, the plaintiffs have been attacked and even killed by unknown assailants in Chechnya and elsewhere before their cases are adjudicated.

In June 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly of the COE appointed Dick Marty a rapporteur on the North Caucasus to prepare a special report on the human rights situation in the region. The findings are to be incorporated into a report on Russia prepared by the Committee on the Honoring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the COE (Monitoring Committee). He has prepared two progress reports about the situation in the region. In the second report in September 2009, he stated that the North Caucasus "seems to offer the worst example, at least in Europe, of the pernicious effects of anti-terrorism measures implemented without regard for the law. As could already be observed with regard to the so-called global war on terror, injustice—torture, abductions and extrajudicial secret detentions—simply strengthens terrorism."<sup>71</sup> After COE Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, visited Chechnya and Ingushetia in September 2009, he recommended that the Russian government adopt an approach "which combats terrorism effectively while ensuring full respect of human rights standards; guarantees effective investigations into killings, abductions and past disappearances, ending the pattern of impunity for the perpetrators of such crimes; fosters the rule of law by strengthening the judiciary and the law enforcement system; [and] creates a propitious environment for human rights activists," among other measures.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> HRW. 'As If They Fell From the Sky': *Counterinsurgency, Rights Violations, and Rampant Impunity in Ingushetia*, June 2008, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations. Human Rights Committee. *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee [Regarding] Russia*, CCPR/C/RUS/CO/6, October 29, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Karinna Moskalenko, "Civil and Human Rights and the Judicial System in Today's Russia: A Legal Practitioner's View," Carnegie Endowment, September 28, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> PACE. Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. *Legal Remedies For Human Rights Violations In The North Caucasus: Supplementary Introductory Memorandum*, AS/Jur (2008) 21, April 11, 2008; *Situation in the North Caucasus Region: Security and Human Rights*, AS/Jur (2009) 43, September 29, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Council of Europe. *Report by Thomas Hammarberg*, November 24, 2009.

## Implications for U.S. Interests

The former Bush Administration appeared to increasingly stress the threat of terrorism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, although there continued to be criticism of Russian government human rights abuses in the region.<sup>73</sup> Russian analyst Igor Obdayev has stated that U.S. worldwide anti-terrorism efforts were instrumental in reducing terrorist financing in the North Caucasus.<sup>74</sup> In keeping with such an Administration stress, the State Department in April 2008 reported that “the majority of terrorist attacks [in Russia during 2007] continued to occur in the North Caucasus, where the pacification of much of Chechnya has correlated with an increase in terrorism in Dagestan and Ingushetia.... There was evidence of a foreign terrorist presence in the North Caucasus with international financial and ideological ties.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, in June 2008 at the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism, the two sides mentioned that they had cooperated on a case involving financial support for terrorist activity in Chechnya.<sup>76</sup>

In a “get acquainted” meeting on April 1, 2009, Presidents Obama and Medvedev pledged to cooperate in countering terrorism, although the North Caucasus was not publicly singled out. In the first few days of the Obama Administration, the State Department issued its annual human rights report for 2008, which contained (as in 2007) lengthy descriptions of human rights abuses in the North Caucasus.<sup>77</sup> In July 2009, the State Department called for bringing the killers of Natalia Estemirova in Chechnya to justice, and in August 2009, it called for bringing the killers of Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov in Chechnya to justice. The U.S. Mission to the OSCE also has raised concerns about these killings, as well as about the killing of Dagestani journalist Abdulmalik Akhmedilov in August 2009 and Ingush opposition politician and government human rights council member Maksharip Aushev in October 2009. During her October 2009 visit to Moscow, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reportedly did not stress U.S. concerns about human rights problems in the North Caucasus, although she did mention “attacks against human rights defenders” in Russia as a concern.<sup>78</sup> During her visit, a civil society working group, set up as part of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, held an initial meeting, but no details were released.

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<sup>73</sup> The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *President Commemorates Veterans Day, Discusses War on Terror*, November 11, 2005. President Bush stated that some “militants are found in regional groups, often associated with al Qaeda—paramilitary insurgencies and separatist movements in places like Somalia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and Algeria.” The last Bush Administration report on its efforts to advance human rights stated that “senior U.S. officials expressed concern to government leaders about the conduct of Russian security services and the government of the Chechen Republic, which was linked to abductions and disappearances of civilians. In meetings with federal and local officials during a visit to the North Caucasus in December [2006], the ambassador conveyed US concerns and expressed US willingness to assist in ways that promote respect for the rule of law.” U.S. Department of State. *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006*, April 5, 2007.

<sup>74</sup> Olga Shlyahina, “Igor Obdayev on the Origins And Meaning of North Caucasian Terrorism,” at <http://www.kavkazforum.ru>.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, April 2008. The Report stated that it was “often difficult to characterize whether [violence in Ingushetia and Dagestan was] the result of terrorism, political violence, or criminal activities” (p. 87).

<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of State. The United States-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism: Joint Press Statement and Fact Sheet, June 20, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*, February 25, 2009.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Secretary Clinton's Remarks at Town Hall Meeting at Moscow State University*, October 14, 2009.

Omnibus Appropriations for FY2009 (P.L. 111-8), signed into law on March 11, 2009, called for \$9.0 million for the North Caucasus for humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society, and relief and recovery assistance. The Administration's budget request for FY2010 called for \$6.0 million for conflict mitigation and reconciliation activities in the North Caucasus, "to help stem the spread of violence and instability." The request also called for unspecified amounts of assistance for the North Caucasus to promote economic opportunities, youth employment, health, sanitation, and community development, and to discourage "the spread of extremist ideologies."<sup>79</sup> The conference agreement on Consolidated Appropriations for FY2010 (H.R. 3288), signed into law on December 16, 2009, called for not less than \$7.0 million for the North Caucasus, slightly less than that provided in FY2009 but still above the Administration's budget request. The conference agreement also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons. See **Table 1** for a breakdown of spending by program for the North Caucasus for FY2007-FY2008.

In Congressional testimony on February 25, 2009, Russian human rights advocate Andrey Illarionov urged that Obama Administration efforts to "reset" relations with Russia should not mean soft-pedaling Moscow's democratization and human rights abuses.<sup>80</sup> According to the Obama Administration, some human rights issues were discussed during President Obama's April 1, 2009, meeting with President Medvedev.

According to some international NGOs and the State Department, all foreign NGOs face constraints by the authorities on their access and operations in Chechnya. While almost all NGOs operating in Chechnya have offices there with local staff, most continue to retain their main or at least branch offices outside the region. However, if the security situation continues to improve in Chechnya and deteriorate in Ingushetia and elsewhere in the North Caucasus, NGOs may consider moving more operations to Chechnya. Access to Chechnya by international staff is strictly controlled by the regional branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), according to reports, and NGOs must provide detailed monthly information on activities and travel to the FSB and other authorities. At times, the local authorities have limited or refused access, although reportedly the FSB has been more cooperative in recent months. Local authorities in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan closely oversee the finances and programs of foreign NGOs. In addition, the Russian Migration Service and other federal offices require financial and program information. Chechen officials repeatedly have turned down requests by UNHCR to open an office in Grozny to monitor whether returnees are ensured international standards of safety and dignity.

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<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of State. Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2010, May 12, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Hearing on from Competition To Collaboration: Strengthening The U.S.-Russia Relationship. *Statement of Andrei Illarionov, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute*, February 25, 2009.

**Table I. U.S. Assistance to Russia's North Caucasus Region, FY2007 and FY2008**  
(U.S. dollars)

Program Area	Activity	Implementer	FY2007	FY2008
Conflict Mitigation & Reconciliation	Socio-Economic Recovery	IRC	929,211	2,200,000
	Poverty Reduction	World Vision	565,000	200,000
	Improved Community Infrastructure	CFNO	100,000	500,000
	Youth Exchange & Development	IREX	1,050,000	1,300,000
	TBD & Prog. Support		—	748,000
Rule of Law & Human Rights	Judicial Reform	Chemonics	30,000	
	Human Rights	Faith, Hope, Love	100,000	
	Human Rights	Perspektiva	15,000	
	Tolerance Regional Councils	Bay Area Council	75,000	
Good Governance	Local Governance	IUE	250,000	400,000
	Public Finance & Budgeting	CFP	235,000	230,000
	Policy Advocacy	CIPE	—	30,000
Political Competition	Election Monitoring	Golos	20,000	—
Civic Participation	Sustainable Community Development	FSD	400,000	400,000
	Community Connections	World Learning	50,000	400,000
	Civil Society Development In Southern Russia	SRRC	350,000	400,000
	Civic Education	JAR	15,000	
	Key Stone Program in the Region	Key Stone	340,000	
	Civil Society Support Program	IREX	70,000	
	Program Support			122,000
	Health	TB Control	IFRC	300,000
Social Services	Psycho-Social Support for Children in the NC	UNICEF	200,000	
	Program Support			15,000
Economic Opportunity	Microfinance Support	RMC	332,000	500,000
	Rural Credit Coops and Agric. Business Development	ACDI/VOCA	1,167,000	1,100,000
	Economic Opportunity/Program Support		60,000	
Total			6,653,211	8,845,000

**Source:** U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia.

**Note:**

ACDI/VOCA—Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance

CFNO—Children's Fund of North Ossetia  
CFP—Center for Fiscal Policy  
CIPE—Center for International Private Enterprise  
FSD—Foundation for Sustainable Development  
IFRC—International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent  
IRC—International Red Cross  
IREX—International Research and Exchanges Board  
IUE—Institute for Urban Economics  
JAR—Junior Achievement Russia  
RMC—Russian Microfinance Center  
SRRC—Southern Regional Resource Center

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