

### Chechen Rebels Step Up Operations

Kavkazky Uzel reported on April 8 that Chechnya's rebels have stepped up their activities and even taken control of villages on at least two occasions during the last month. With the arrival of spring and the appearance of foliage, which works to the advantage of guerrilla fighters, rebel units have noticeably stepped up their actions in the republic's foothills and mountainous regions, the website reported. While last month's incident in the village of Alkhazurovo, in which a large contingent of rebel fighters took over the village and held it for several hours, killing five policemen and burning down the local administration building before leaving (Chechnya Weekly, March 20 and April 3), received significant press coverage, a similar rebel operation in the village of Yandi-Kotar in Chechnya's Achkhoy-Martan district received none.



Kavkazky Uzel correspondent Muslim Ibragimov quoted an anonymous Yandi-Kotar resident as saying: "On the evening of April 3, a small group of people in military uniforms with weapons entered the village. There were 10-15 of them. They made the rounds of the homes, mainly those in which police staff live, and asked whether they were home or not. After finding no one, they left. They conducted themselves confidently and calmly. Essentially Yandi-Kotar was under their control for several hours. People say they were fighters of the field commander Tarkhan Gaziev, who is the commander of the militants in this district. Not finding policemen in the village, they simply went back into the woods. The next morning the military and police came and combed the forest tract on the outskirts of the village but didn't find anyone."

Kavkazky Uzel reported that Chechnya's Interior Ministry refused to comment on the incident, saying only that there had been no armed confrontations with members of "illegal armed formations" in southwestern Chechnya at the time the incident reportedly took place. "Naturally, with the arrival of spring and the appearance of vegetation, the bandits step up their activities somewhat - although, as in all of the recent years, they have neither the strength nor the funds to conduct any kind of large-scale actions; but they are still capable of petty tricks in the form of minor sorties, attacks and ... terrorist attacks," an unnamed Chechen Interior Ministry source told the website. "The situation around the republic in general is rather peaceful and is under the complete control of the power structures."

Still, according to Kavkazky Uzel, many policemen, especially those working in villages in the mountainous and foothill districts, are taking precautions while traveling in cars, especially after dark. "The militants sometimes set up checkpoints on the roads," an unnamed policeman in the mountainous Vedeno district told the website. "They stop cars and ask for documents. In general, they behave like real MVD employees. But if someone shows them a [police] ID, then they pull him out of the car and kill him. That's their new tactic." The Vedeno policeman said incidents of rebels setting up checkpoints occur infrequently but "rather periodically." He added: "Therefore, I, like other employees of our ROVD [police department], never show IDs to soldiers standing on the roads. There is no guarantee that the person before you won't turn out to be a disguised militant."

As Kavkazky Uzel noted on April 9, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov claimed at the end of January that only 60-70 rebels remained in Chechnya and promised to wipe them out before the start of spring. "This is their last winter, I assure you," Kadyrov said (Chechnya Weekly, February 7).

Meanwhile, one officer was injured on the evening of April 7 when a police station in the Chechen capital Grozny came under fire from unknown assailants armed with automatic weapons. "The incident took place around midnight," a police source told RIA Novosti on April 8. "A senior police official was hospitalized with a gunshot wound." Kavkazky Uzel on April 9 quoted an unnamed Chechen Interior Ministry source as saying the target of the attack was a police station in the village of Kirov in Grozny's Zavodsky district and that a Capt. Mausarov was wounded in the attack. The source said that 50 spent Kalashnikov shell casings were found at the site of the attack.

Kavkazky Uzel on April 10 quoted an unnamed Chechen police officer as saying that Interior Ministry Internal Troops had discovered a small rebel base on the outskirts of the village of Komsolmolskoe (Saadi-Kotar) in Chechnya's Urus-Martan district. The source said that the base consisted of seven huts and that 560 grenade-launcher rounds were discovered there. The same anonymous police officer reported that a rebel weapons cache was discovered on the outskirts of the town of Shatoi. The arms cache, which consisted of around a thousand rounds for small arms, a

large-caliber mortar round and two anti-tank rounds, reportedly belonged to rebel Amir Ruslan Seriev, who was killed near the Shatoi district village of Sharo-Argun in February (Chechnya Weekly, February 21).

Kavkazky Uzel also reported on April 10 that security forces had captured a man in Grozny's Zavodsky district who earlier belonged to the group headed by the notorious rebel field commander Arbi Baraev, who was killed in 2001. A Chechen Interior Ministry source identified the captured former rebel as a 33-year-old Zavodsky district resident named Yusupov. The same source said that on April 8, security forces in the town of Vedeno had captured a local resident suspected of having aided and abetted fighters under the command of Shamil Basaev, the rebel military leader killed in Ingushetia in the summer of 2006.

According to RIA Novosti, the federal Interior Ministry reported on April 8 that troops from the Combined Group of Forces in the North Caucasus destroyed 14 "terrorist bases" and 22 arms caches in Chechnya in March. The ministry said in a press release that the Combined Group of Forces conducted "over 100 special operations, which resulted in the seizure of 20 firearms, six grenade launchers, about 3,000 rounds of ammunition and over 280 kilograms (617 lbs) of explosive material." The ministry also reported that federal forces last month inspected over 11,000 kilometers (6,837 miles) of roads and during those inspections discovered and destroyed six home-made explosive devices and over 700 "highly explosive objects." Earlier, Chechen First Deputy Interior Minister Nikolai Simakov said law enforcement bodies had arrested or killed over 100 militants in Chechnya since the start of this year and that the number of terrorist attacks in the republic declined by almost 72 percent last year.

For his part, Deputy Russian Interior Minister Colonel-General Arkady Yedelev, who is in charge of the operational headquarters in Chechnya, told a meeting of the anti-terrorist commission in Grozny on April 10 that a total of 192 militants and armed gang members were killed and more than 700 arrested in anti-terrorist operations in Russia's North Caucasus last year, RIA Novosti reported. Yedelev said that a total of 17 armed criminal groups were eliminated and 28 leaders killed in the region during the year. Citing police reports from March, RIA Novosti reported that some 103 militants have been arrested or killed in Chechnya since the start of this year. Yedelev also said that the number of terrorist attacks had significantly dropped, from 39 in 2006 to 11 last year, adding that the number of abductions in the republic had also significantly dropped over the past two years, signaling a breakthrough in the situation related to kidnappings. "Eighteen criminal cases were launched for the abduction of 21 people in 2007, while in 2002, 845 people were abducted in Chechnya, with 611 cases opened," he said.

Yedelev also said that a danger from divided militant groups and "religious extremist structures" remains, Interfax reported on April 10 (see Andrei Smirnov's article below). Kavkazky Uzel reported on April 8 that Chechnya's first deputy mufti, Daud Semurzaev, has called for a stepped up campaign against "Wahhabism." He told a meeting of district religious officials that it is necessary not only to disseminate anti-Wahhabi propaganda in the mosques, but also in rural assemblies and schools.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374088>**

### Rights Activists Want EU to Pressure Moscow over Chechnya Abuses

On April 7, a coalition of leading human rights groups called on the European Union to press Russia to end human rights abuses in Chechnya and other parts of the North Caucasus and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), La Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Human Rights Watch, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Pax Christi Flanders called on the EU to implement "a robust foreign policy toward Russia that prioritizes ending impunity for human rights abuses in Chechnya as key to preventing further abuses in the region," Human Rights Watch said in a press release.



Inter Press Service (IPS) reported on April 8 that human rights activists want Chechnya to be considered as paramount in the EU's dealings with Dmitry Medvedev, who will succeed Vladimir Putin as Russia's president on May 7. According to IPS, while relations between Putin and several EU governments have been "frosty" on issues ranging from food safety to alleged espionage, the EU has indicated it wishes to be on better terms with Medvedev. Following a recent telephone conference with Medvedev, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa, current holder of the Union's rotating presidency, stated that he wished to see the bloc's ties with Moscow being deepened.

"The EU can play a crucial role in pressuring the Russian government," IPS quoted Tanya Lokshina of Human Rights Watch as saying in a seminar held in the European Parliament. "Russia finds its relationship with the EU to be very important. So the European Union has a lot of leverage."

In its April 7 press release, Human Rights Watch quoted Annemarie Gielen of Pax Christi Flanders as saying: "The EU must resist any inclination to relax its engagement with Russia. The EU really has the credibility and the mechanisms to insist that Russia make concrete improvements in the human rights situation in Chechnya." The press release noted that in the last three years, the European Court of Human Rights has found Russia responsible for grave human rights abuses in Chechnya, including executions, disappearances, and torture in 25 cases. In every case adjudicated to date, the court has found that Russia failed to conduct an effective investigation into the alleged abuses.

"The European Court rulings on Chechnya provide the EU with a unique platform for calling on Russia to end ongoing abuses in Chechnya and the North Caucasus and ensure accountability for past violations," said Holly Cartner, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The EU has a responsibility to make Russia's full compliance with the European Court's judgments a high priority in all dialogues with Moscow."

The Human Rights Watch press release also quoted Souhayr Belhassen, president of FIDH, as saying: "Reconstruction of parts of Grozny must not mislead the EU. To ensure an end to ongoing human rights abuses, the EU should urge Russia to end impunity in Chechnya and Northern Caucasus by bringing to justice the perpetrators of all crimes committed today and in the past."

According to Human Rights Watch, authorities are stifling civil society, independent media, and free expression across the North Caucasus. "Only a handful of nongovernmental organizations are allowed to function in Chechnya and face frequent government harassment," the group said in its press release. "Independent media have been banned. In neighboring Ingushetia, police and other government forces have arbitrarily detained and ill-treated journalists, human rights activists, and peaceful demonstrators in recent months."

The Human Rights Watch press release quoted Svetlana Gannushkina, chair of the Russian Civic Assistance Committee, as saying that while the number of disappearances and executions in Chechnya have decreased in recent years, the EU should not "turn a blind eye to continuing abuses," including "very serious pressure" on human rights activists and journalists in the North Caucasus. "There can be no real discussion of progress in Chechnya so long as independent voices have no chance of making themselves heard," she said.

Human Rights Watch also noted that thousands of residents of Chechnya displaced during the conflict continue to live without permanent housing, and many have been pressured to leave temporary accommodation centers in Chechnya

and in other locations. Many of these internally displaced people (IDPs) who fled to other regions of Russia have been pressured to return to Chechnya. "Local authorities throughout Russia are pressuring IDPs from Chechnya to return to Chechnya, even just to obtain a passport, which under Russian law any citizen should be able to obtain at his or her current place of residence," the Human Rights Watch press release quoted Christophe Beau, acting head of the NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, as saying. "Given the ongoing human rights abuses, forcing anyone to return to Chechnya at this time places them at serious risk of physical harm."

The Memorial human rights group said in a statement that Chechen authorities have grossly violated the rights of IDPs by shutting down temporary accommodation centers for IDPs located inside Chechnya, Kavkazky Uzel reported on April 8. Efforts to close down the temporary accommodation centers in Chechnya have been ongoing since April 2006, when Ramzan Kadyrov, who was then Chechnya's prime minister, demanded that they be closed, reportedly calling them "a nest of criminality, drug addiction and prostitution." According to Memorial, the Chechen administration's main argument for closing them has been that the "refugee milieu" is having "a degrading effect on Chechen culture."

According to Human Rights Watch, many IDPs choosing to leave the region and settle elsewhere in the Russian Federation regularly face serious discrimination and hostility, including physical violence. "IDPs from Chechnya still struggle to lead a normal life in Chechnya and anywhere else they have tried to settle," it quoted Bjarte Vandvik, secretary-general of ECRE, as saying. "It is time for the EU to insist that Russia do its utmost to protect this very vulnerable population."

On April 7, the European Commission approved a grant of 11 million euros (\$17.3 million) to aid victims of the war in Chechnya, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA) reported. "Chechnya finally seems to be recovering after a long period of devastation, darkness and despair," said EU Aid Commissioner Louis Michel. "The commission wants to show its solidarity with those people who are still in need of humanitarian assistance." The EU's executive body said in a statement that the aid money will chiefly be used to provide shelter, protection and support to refugees and health treatment to mothers and children.

DPA, citing "commission sources," reported that some 22,100 Chechens are still living "under dire conditions" as refugees in Ingushetia and Dagestan as well as Georgia and Azerbaijan.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374089>**

### Kadyrov Meets with Presidential Envoy

President Vladimir Putin's envoy to the Southern Federal District, Grigory Rapota, has visited Chechnya and met with the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov. During a meeting in Grozny on March 9, Kadyrov asked Rapota to consider the possibility of creating a port special economic zone in the republic. "We don't have the basis to get investments to come into the Chechen Republic," Interfax quoted Kadyrov as saying. "Tax preferences, a banking system and international status for the Grozny Airport are needed. We are asking for a decision on the creation of a port special economic zone."



Presidential envoy  
Grigory Rapota

Upon his arrival in Chechnya on April 8, Rapota said that "the leadership of the republic has ambitious plans for development" and that "we must together examine how to realize them." Kavkazky Uzel on April 9 quoted Rapota as saying that Grozny Airport could receive the status of an international airport by the end of this year.

According to Interfax, Kadyrov also spoke to Rapota about the need to settle relations with Grozneftegaz, the Chechen state energy company that is 51 percent owned by the Russian state oil company Rosneft. Kadyrov claimed that Chechnya is not receiving proceeds from the sale of oil extracted on its territory needed for rebuilding its economy. On March 21, Chechnya's parliament appealed to the authorities in Moscow to "change the existing mechanism for forming and distributing profits from oil extracted on the territory of the Chechen Republic." Chechen officials have also denounced Rosneft's decision to build a new oil refinery in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (Chechnya Weekly, April 3).

On April 4, a day before he celebrated his first anniversary as Chechnya's president, Kadyrov declared that relatives of police and military servicemen stationed in Chechnya should not worry about the fate of their loved ones. "There is no war in Chechnya now, and the relatives of police staff and military servicemen serving in our republic can be calm about their fate," he said in a meeting with visiting Komi Republic head Vladimir Torloпов and Komi Interior Minister Gen.-Maj. Vladimir Yeremchenko.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374090>**

### Ingushetia: APC Collides with a Civilian Car, Again

An automobile belonging to a member of the local police force in the Ingush city of Malgobek was blown up on April 7, Interfax reported. The explosion took place after the policeman parked the car outside his apartment building and went inside. No one was hurt in the blast. Another bombing took place in Ingushetia on April 7, when an explosive device went off in the Nasyr-Kortovsky municipal district of the city of Nazran. Citing law enforcement sources, Itar-Tass reported that the bomb, which had a force equivalent to as much as a half kilogram of TNT, was planted near the bridge across the Nazranka River. The blast left a hole a half meter in diameter and 30 centimeters deep, but nobody was hurt.



On April 5, unidentified gunmen fired on a column of police and military servicemen traveling in a KamAZ truck and an armored personnel carrier in the village of Neseterovskaya, located in Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district. According to Kavkazky Uzel, two policemen were lightly wounded in the attack. The following day, April 6, an armored personnel carrier collided with a small car in Nestersovskaya, badly injuring the driver. According to the Associated Press, about 200 angry villagers surrounded the APC and agreed to disperse only after police arrived at the scene. The news agency reported that the car's driver, Khusein Yevloyev, who works as an ambulance driver, was hospitalized in serious condition. Last November, an Ingush woman was killed when she was run over by an APC as she was returning home from shopping. As the AP noted, in that incident the APC stopped only after people who had witnessed the killing gave chase in three cars.

Kavkazky Uzel on April 8 quoted Magomed Mutsolgov, head of Ingushetia's Mashr human rights group, as saying that since 2002, there have been five accidents involving armored military vehicles and civilian transport in which civilians have been killed or seriously injured.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374091>**

## Chechnya Weekly

Volume 9, Issue 14 (April 10, 2008)

### Briefs

#### Nurgaliev to Dagestan Law-Enforcement: Work "Preemptively"

In a meeting held in Makhachkala on April 9 devoted to the work plans of Dagestan's internal affairs bodies for this year, Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev told the leadership of Dagestan's Interior Ministry that it needs to work preemptively to counteract threats. "I would like to know what changes have taken place in the crime situation in the republic and what measures are being taken to act in a preemptive manner, react to the existing threats both from terrorist and extremist organizations, as well as against general crimes," Itar-Tass quoted Nurgaliyev as saying.

#### Chechnya Could Face TB Epidemic

Chechen Health Minister Shakhid Akhmadov warned that tuberculosis in the republic could reach epidemic levels, RIA Novosti reported on April 5. "The rate of tuberculosis infection and illness in Chechnya is two times higher than that of Russia in general," he said. "And if the rate of infection of that disease maintains its current levels, it may take on the character of an epidemic." Akhmadov said that more than 20,000 people in hospitals and other facilities are registered as being infected with tuberculosis, with more than a quarter of those having the "active form" of the disease and 65-70 percent of the republic's children infected. He said that actual rates are much higher because in 90 percent of the cases the disease comes to light only during a visit to the doctor.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374092>**

### Chechen Rebels' Split has not Hampered their Activities

By Andrei Smirnov

Last October, the Chechen/Caucasian rebel leader Dokka Umarov declared the Caucasian Emirate, an Islamic state uniting all peoples of the North Caucasus. In his statement, which was posted on rebel websites, Umarov said that all governing structures of the independent Chechen state should be disbanded and replaced by new bodies of the Emirate, which is, the rebel leader believes, a state not only for Chechens, but for all Caucasian Muslims.

The declaration of the Emirate was condemned by some Chechen separatist leaders, including Akhmed Zakaev and others. Those separatists who now live abroad and protested against Umarov's declaration established a new government of Ichkeria (the name of independent Chechnya), headed by Zakaev.

Zakaev reportedly organized a meeting in Turkey last fall of separatists and field commanders opposed to the idea of the Emirate. Among the rebels who reportedly attended the meeting, the most famous and influential figure was Uvaise Akhmadov, a Chechen field commander who now lives in Turkey. Dokka Umarov could not simply ignore the meeting at which the establishment of the Emirate was condemned. It was attended not only by pro-Western separatist-democrats like Zakaev, but also by Islamic fundamentalists, including religious scholars, field commanders and other active supporters of the idea of having a Sharia state in Chechnya.

Umarov posted a video statement on the Kavkaz-Center website in which he repeated his arguments as to why the Emirate had been declared and warned that if anybody tried to organize any rebel structures in the Caucasus independent of his command, they would be beheaded as traitors according to Sharia law.

Such threats did not stop Akhmed Zakaev and his followers. Supported by such field commanders like Uvaise Akhmadov, Isa Munaev and Said Askhabov, Zakaev said his aim was to set up an armed resistance in Chechnya fighting under the flag of Ichkeria that would not be subordinate to Dokka Umarov's commanders. On March 3, Zakaev told the Chechen-Online website that "the parliament of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and the new government will do everything necessary to continue organized armed resistance against the occupiers. The ministers of the security bloc of the government are in Chechnya now and they are establishing coordination and links between fighters of different fronts. Coordination has been ruined as a result of the declaration of the Caucasian Emirate by Dokka Umarov. We believe a further split of the Chechen resistance is intolerable. Afghanistan can serve as an example: after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the country, the enemies of Afghanistan easily managed to separate and set against each other such famous commanders as Ahmed Shah Massoud, [Burhanuddin] Rabbani, [Gulbuddin] Hekmatyar and others."

Zakaev's stand was supported by some rebel commanders in Chechnya, including Abubakar Yelmuradov, the leader of a Chechen rebel group called "the Islamic Jamaat of Chechnya," Amir Khamza, the head of the so-called "Islamic Brigade of Chechnya," and Amir Surkho, the commander of Staraya Sunzha Sabotage Group. These commanders started to send reports to the Chechenpress agency, a rebel website controlled by Zakaev, about their successful military operations against Russian troops and pro-Russian local police in the region.

Moreover, Zakaev appointed new rebel envoys to different Muslim states and said that all rebel squads in Chechnya should be subordinate to the rebel Chief of Staff appointed by him.

These moves by Zakaev enraged Dokka Umarov. On March 8, Umarov issued a decree that listed the names of the envoys of the Caucasian Emirate to various countries and stressed that "those who are not mentioned in the list have no authority to represent the Caucasian mujahideen and the leadership of the Caucasian Emirate is not responsible for their activity." Umarov also prohibited any rebel envoys abroad from providing any information from Chechnya to Chechenpress or any other websites controlled by Zakaev (Kavkaz-Center, March 8). Moreover, the leader of the Caucasian Emirate fired the head of the Chechen-Online website for publishing an interview with Zakaev.

The most important question is how this standoff between the various factions of the Chechen insurgency could affect the strength of the insurgency in the North Caucasus. As for the rebel groups in such Caucasian regions like



Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, all of them have already declared their loyalty to Dokka Umarov as the new leader of the Caucasian Emirate. In the case of Chechnya, Zakaev may indeed be supported by some groups and commanders who are not happy with the idea of the Emirate and would like to establish a separate armed resistance. It should be noted that the Council of Chechen Ulema (Islamic scholars) headed by Mansur Yelmurzaev did not support the establishment of the Emirate and Umarov had to disband the Council. Instead of Yelmurzaev, Umarov appointed the leader of the rebels in Kabardino-Balkaria, Anzor Astemirov, to head the Sharia Court of the Caucasian insurgency.

However, it is unlikely that Zakaev has sufficient capabilities and financial resources to unite all those in the rebel camp unhappy about the Emirate around his government. Those commanders and leaders in Chechnya who support Zakaev are too weak to confront Umarov and at the same time conduct a guerrilla war against the numerous Russian troops and forces of Ramzan Kadyrov. The recent increase in the number of rebel attacks in Chechnya demonstrates that the split has not significantly affected the rebel command's military plans.

There are no signs that any senior Chechen rebel commanders in the republic intend to break with Dokka Umarov. Given the current situation in Chechnya, that would be tantamount to suicide. There is only one option for those who are not satisfied with Umarov's policy - to wait for the day that Russian troops withdraw from Chechnya, when Chechens are able to choose their own future.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374093>**

### Russia Attempts to Draft Chechens into the Army

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Twice each year, all Chechen mothers with sons aged 18 to 27 start worrying about their children's future as news of the draft into the Russian army begins to circulate. Every spring and fall Chechnya's Military Commissar Sedim Tsunaev starts talking about the need for voluntary service in the Russian Army. However, the Chechen populace, which still faces war-like conditions, believes that their children are being recruited to face a certain death: almost all Russian regions today have army officers who have served in Chechnya, lost friends or were themselves wounded or broken by what they saw there during the last nine years. The army recruitment initiative dates back to 2002, when President Vladimir Putin decided that the war was over and Chechens therefore should be required to perform military service in the ranks of the same army that kept fighting in Chechnya. The government thought it could control the anti-Chechen sentiments fermenting within the army, but failed to realize that the young Chechen recruits drafted from the armed conflict zone in Chechnya would not behave like other conscripts. They made the Russians understand that in addition to combat operations, the war was also a battle of wills, which the conscripts fought by resisting everything required of them by the Russian army officers.



The first post-USSR attempt to organize a Russian army draft in Chechnya took place in 1995, when the government decided to show that the federal troops had complete control of the republic. However, Shamil Basaev's operation in Budyonnovsk foiled these plans, and the issue became moot.

After the second Chechen campaign in the fall of 2001 it was decided to reinstate the practice of recruiting young Chechens into the Russian army. In truth, instead of the targeted number of several thousand conscripts, the draft netted only a few hundred Chechens, who were lured by promises of a bright future in sports and hefty (by Chechen standards) paychecks for each month of military service (Izvestia, November 23, 2001). A majority of Chechen recruits were sent to serve in the districts near the city of Moscow to provide them with an opportunity to contact prominent Chechen businessmen and politicians if need be. The latter consideration was not completely unwarranted – at the time the new conscripts took their oath, a group of 18 Chechen soldiers refused to swear loyalty to the Russian army. The scandal became public after the oath debacle was followed by the large-scale scuffles within the army unit, and the army brass was forced to appeal to the Chechen community in Moscow for assistance. Later it became known that the army command, driven by the fear of Chechen outrage, allowed them, for the first time since the period of the Tsarist army, to perform five daily prayers. Each Chechen was issued a personal prayer mat, the division's mess meals never featured pork and the Chechen recruits were allowed to have tea instead of fruit compote and athletic practice instead of military drills (Novoye Vremya, January 28, 2002).

Therefore, when the group of 18 conscripts decided to return home to Chechnya, no one tried too hard to stop them because it was thought to be better for the army to keep the numbers of Chechens in each individual army unit as low as possible (Izvestia, January 9, 2002). The fact that these recruits came from the Nadterechny district of Chechnya, which was untouched by the armed conflict and historically considered to be more loyal to the Russian state, did nothing to change the situation: the Nadterechny draftees shattered the illusory hopes of Russian politicians who wanted to use their example to show that the draft covered the entire territory of Chechnya.

Further developments put the government in an uncomfortable position, with no way out in sight. Not to draft Chechens would have been incompatible with the official party line that the Chechen war was over, while proceeding with the draft would have led to trouble with rebellious Chechen youths that would have been impossible to conceal from the mass media.

This is the reason why the army recruitment campaign in Chechnya is replayed every six months and accompanied by highly public events to call up the Chechen youth into the army. However, at the very last moment, the republic fails to receive any requests for Chechen conscripts from army units stationed elsewhere in Russia as no one is willing to deal with the highly politicized Chechen issue.

No draft took place between 2002 and 2004; thereafter, it was decided that Chechen army recruits would serve in

Chechnya's military commandant offices but that new conscripts would not participate in any combat operations conducted by the army or the police - that is, their role was mostly to provide support services to the home front inside Chechnya. However, this position put the leadership of pro-Moscow Chechnya at odds with Russian law, which by that time had banned new recruits from serving in Chechnya ([www.utro.ru/articles/2004/08/17/341159.shtml](http://www.utro.ru/articles/2004/08/17/341159.shtml)). It was then decided that following a brief training period, Chechen draftees would be offered military service contracts for a term of 12 to 18 months, making them de facto mercenaries instead of new recruits (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, October 4, 2006). Therefore, the Chechen military commissar was forced to make apologetic statements that the army recruitment campaign in Chechnya was not completed for reasons that were purely technical - although it was not difficult to understand that the real reasons were political rather than technical (Strana.ru, October 25, 2005) - notwithstanding the government-led propaganda campaign in Chechnya that had been claiming until the very last moment that Chechens would indeed be drafted. That is, the Chechen leadership was the last to find out from their Russian colleagues that the Chechens would once again be excluded from conscription ([www.grani.ru/War/Draft/p.87141.html](http://www.grani.ru/War/Draft/p.87141.html)).

Between 2006 and 2007, conscripts who volunteered to serve in the Chechen units of the Russian army under the command of Magomed Kakiev and Sulim Yamadaev were listed as new recruits of the Russian army (Kavkaz-memo.ru, October 11, 2007). However, this group numbered only in the dozens, while the Russian army recruitment goals called for drafting over 6,000 conscription-age Chechen recruits.

In 2007 Russia made another attempt to stage a large-scale army recruitment campaign in Chechnya. This was met with public resistance that took the form of street protests and garnered the support of Nurdi Nukhazhiev, the so-called human rights ombudsman of the Chechen Republic, who claimed it was too early to send Chechen Russian army conscripts to serve outside of Chechnya (Kavkaz-memo.ru, May 23, 2007). A major motivation of the protest was to keep Chechen draftees away from remote Russian regions in order to protect them from the likely hostility of the many Russian officers who were veterans of the Chechen war (Kavkaz-memo.ru, April 24, 2007).

As far as the next draft season, Chechen military commissar Selim Tsuev was again not prepared to answer definitively whether the Chechen conscripts will be sent to serve elsewhere in Russia, although he did allow that while no requests for Chechen conscripts were pending today, they could arrive at any time (<http://www.yuga.ru/news/119772>).

Therefore, every attempt to draft Chechens into the army over the last eight years has failed, and the likelihood that the Russian army recruitment targets will be met this time around is no higher than before.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374094>**

### Kremlin Backing of Cossacks Heightens Tensions in the North Caucasus

By Fatima Tlisova

Moscow is boosting its programs to support Cossack communities in the Caucasus. The Russian president's advisor for Cossack affairs, General Gennady Troshev, recently toured the republics of the North Caucasus and met with their respective presidents. The discussions focused on the issues related to government support for the Cossack communities, providing them with office space, government jobs, and involving Cossack troops in protecting the state borders of the Russian Federation (adjoining Georgia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus) and in combating terrorism and extremism (<http://www.adygheya.ru/press/news/show/?newsid=300>).



The visit also included discussions about a large-scale Cossack military parade planned for April 21 in Krasnodar. It was reported that over 7,000 Cossacks of the Kuban Army from Krasnodar Krai, Adygeya and Karachaevo-Cherkessia will take part in the parade ([http://09.rossia.su/2007/04/24/kazaki\\_iz\\_karachaevocherkesii\\_primut\\_uchastie\\_v\\_kazachem\\_parade\\_v\\_krasnodare.html](http://09.rossia.su/2007/04/24/kazaki_iz_karachaevocherkesii_primut_uchastie_v_kazachem_parade_v_krasnodare.html)).

The itinerary of Troshev's spring visits is a clear indication that Moscow plans to strengthen Cossack communities residing along the "Cherkes Arc," or within the historical Cherkessian territory that is currently split between the republics of Adygeya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria.

It is worth noting that the original mission of the Cossacks was to create a demarcation line between Cherkessia and Russia. In the words of the notable Russian historian Vassily Potto, "the Russian Cossacks who were brought to the Kuban shores by their historical destiny encountered extraordinary opponents among the Cherkes, and the boundaries of two countries soon became an arena drowned in blood from one side to the other" (The Caucasus War, Vassily Potto, Volume 2, p. 285).

The program to build up the Cossack communities in Cherkessian republics was launched well before Troshev's visit. In January 2008 the Russian government issued a special decree earmarking 5 million rubles in Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeya to develop the local Cossack communities. These republics hosted Cossack parades and military trainings of the young Cossacks (see Chechnya Weekly, January 31).

Adygeya and Karachaevo-Cherkesia are parts of the area covered by the Kuban Cossack Army headquartered in Krasnodar. Kabardino-Balkaria is a part of the Terek Army headquartered in Stavropol. The Adygeya division is called the Maikopski division and Karachaevo-Cherkessia is known as the Batalpashinski district.

Cossacks are the only social and ethnic community of the Caucasus which the Kremlin has granted the official and exclusive right to bear firearms and knives. According to the first version of the Law on the Public Service of the Russian Cossacks signed by President Putin in 2005, the Cossacks were charged with "providing assistance to government agencies in organizing military records, patriotic and military education of conscripts, physical education, participating in emergency prevention and liquidation measures and protecting the public rule of law and order." However, amendments made to the law in 2007 also permitted the Cossacks to be involved in the fight against the extremism and terrorism ([http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow\\_DocumID\\_106233.html](http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_106233.html)).

These amendments may lead to potentially dangerous changes considering Moscow's custom of branding any undesirable movement or person, and especially its opponents in the Caucasus, as terrorists and extremists. Therefore, Cossacks automatically become a potential weapon against the

local populace that is constitutionally and physically ready to deploy whenever the need arises. It is evident that the Kremlin desires to return the Cossacks to their original mission in the Caucasus: historically, they were resettled in the Caucasus by Catherine the Great as a retaliatory and defensive force against the mountain peoples.

Recent history also offers some precedents for the effective use of Cossacks against population groups disfavored by the government. For instance, the Krasnodar Krai government program "Cossack Participation in Protecting Public Order" allowed Cossacks to be used as the main force for displacing the targeted ethnic minority of Meskhetian Turks. The Cossacks were not too picky about the means they used to do their job: ethnic Turks were subjected to mass beatings and ambushes, their gardens were destroyed, homes looted, and the goods and market stalls of Turkish traders were confiscated.

The Cossacks' efforts turned out to be successful, and the Turks left Krasnodar Krai after the U.S. government granted them asylum en masse in America. However, the exercise in displacing the Turkish minority became an example of how effective Cossacks may be in dealing with the sensitive task of making people's lives hell while maintaining the appearance of law and order and non-involvement on the part of the Russian government (<http://www.hro.org/editions/press/0502/23/23050213.htm>).

The role of the Terek Cossack Army in both Chechen campaigns is well known. For instance, Putin's advisor Gennady Troshev was previously commander of the North Caucasus Military District. He served in both wars and was one of the most effective Russian Army generals, due mostly to his roots as an ethnic Terek Cossack and a native of Grozny.

Military training of young Cossacks is one of the priorities of the government program. Cossack army troops participate in all training activities conducted by the Russian Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service (FSB). Cossack troops also conduct their own regular training.

The Cossack Lyceum of South Russia recruits approximately 500 adolescent boys and girls every September. Cadets give an oath of loyalty to the Cossack flag and Russia. The faculty of cadet schools includes retired officers of the Russian Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry and FSB. According to the Krasnodar Krai administration, the Kuban Cossack Army numbered over 140,000 troops as of late 2007.

The Kuban Cossack Army is headquartered in Krasnodar, in a two-story building surrounded by a restricted-access area. The headquarters hosts routine weekly troop meetings and important army-wide events.

The Cossack army is financed by the krai's public funds. In 2007, Krasnodar Krai's state budget allotted 70 million rubles (around \$2.8 million) for the needs of the Cossacks; in 2008, Governor Aleksandr Tkachev earmarked 170 million rubles (around \$6.8 million) for the same purpose.

The Kuban Cossacks plan to launch their own newspaper and television channel in 2008 ([http://www.brandmedia.ru/news\\_\\_new\\_2847.html](http://www.brandmedia.ru/news__new_2847.html)).

The Cossacks of Karachaevo-Cherkessia or the Batalpashinsky district (led by ataman Pavel Zaporozhets) also enjoy a privileged standing in their republic. The government of Karachaevo-Cherkessia includes a department for Cossack affairs and starting in 2006 Cossacks were given jobs as first deputy heads of town and village administrations across the republic. Cossacks also have a priority right for obtaining government contracts to provide security services.

The Batalpashinski district of the Kuban Cossack Army is also financed by the public funds of Karachaevo-Cherkessia.

In early 2000, after the enactment of the law permitting Cossacks to bear arms, ethnic Cherkes and Abazins attempted to join the Kuban Army and establish a Cherkessian regiment within the army.

Their elected ataman was an ethnic Abazin activist, Kambiz Evgamukov, who remained in the job until his sudden death in 2006. Currently, the Cherkessian regiment continues to exist on paper only and is virtually inactive (<http://www.regnum.ru/news/675271.html>).

A similar regiment, successfully operating in Vladikavkaz, was established by ethnic Ossetians. The real Cossacks were very uneasy about including Ossetians in their ranks, and they felt the same way about the Cherkes and the Abazins. However, in contrast to the Cherkessian regiment, the Ossetians were able to gain complete control over the Terek Cossacks in Ossetia ([http://www.darial-online.ru/2003\\_5/kireev.shtml](http://www.darial-online.ru/2003_5/kireev.shtml)).

The Ossetian Cossacks are a part of the Terek Army, which during the last decade suffered significant losses as thousands of Cossack families left Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan – the territories formally included in the Terek Cossack catchment area. A small community remains in the Dagestan city of Kizlyar. Terek Cossacks are also somewhat active in the eastern part of Kabardino-Balkaria – in the ethnic Russian district of Prokhladnensky.

The Maikopsky Cossack district is headed by Anatoly Tarasov. Their proximity to Krasnodar explains closer ties of the Maikop (Adygeya) Cossacks with the headquarters in Krasnodar and the lesser degree of independence they enjoy. All activities of the Maikopsky district are tied to Krasnodar and conducted jointly with headquarters-led operations, including military training. The annual Cossack cultural festival in Adygeya is held under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Culture, the Krasnodar Krai administration and the Congress of Russian Communities of Moscow.

The role of protector of Russia and Russians in the Caucasus seemingly granted to the Cossacks, as well as the special privileges and perks they enjoy, are having mixed results. The Cossacks are indeed becoming a powerful universal weapon in the hands of the state. On the other hand, the growth in their privileges is taking place against the backdrop of increasing oppression against the local ethnicities, especially the Cherkes, who are locked in an uncompromising conflict with the Russian government to defend their status and even their ethnic cultural rights in their own republic. The unconditional support of Russian-speaking Cossacks cannot fail to produce anxiety and suspicion among the non-Russian populace of the Caucasus, who understand how and against whom this weapon is directed and respond with distrust as well as frequently open hostility.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374095>**