

### Chechen Parliament Asks Defense Minister to Deal with Vostok Battalion

Chechnya's parliament on April 17 adopted a resolution calling on Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov either to dissolve Vostok, the elite Chechen-manned battalion that answers to the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Russian Armed Forces' General Staff, or to replace its leaders, including its formal commander, Sulim Yamadaev. A road collision between Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's motorcade and a Vostok convoy that occurred near the Chechen town of Argun on April 14 was followed by an armed confrontation between Vostok fighters, including Sulim Yamadaev's younger brother, Badrudin, who commands one of the battalion's platoons, and fighters loyal to Kadyrov. According to Reuters, 18 or more people were killed in a shootout that followed the traffic accident (see Andrei Smirnov's article).



Vostok battalion commander Sulim Yamadaev

"The events that took place in the city of Gudermes could lead to a large-scale armed conflict which, in the end, would render null and void all of our combined successes in achieving peace and tranquility in the region," the statement by the Chechen parliament read, according to Interfax. The Chechen legislators added that the worst-case scenario which could have played out was avoided "mainly thanks to the self-control and composure of the President of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov."

The statement added that neither "the formal commander of the [Vostok] battalion, Sulim Yamadaev, nor its de facto leader, Badrudin," whom the Chechen legislators described as "a drug addict and criminal who for incomprehensible reasons was released from prison" can be included in "the peaceful life of the republic," given that their "unlawful actions" are "destabilizing the situation" and "provoking armed conflicts." Kommersant reported on April 17 that Badrudin Yamadaev was convicted in May 2003 of trying to kill Aleksandr Melnikov, the deputy sanitary inspector of the city of Moscow, and sentenced to 12 years in prison, but was somehow freed soon after being sent to prison.

The Chechen deputies concluded their statement by saying that only the removal of Sulim and Badrudin Yamadaev from the Vostok battalion's command will allow the unit to function the way it should. "The situation demands, in our view, cardinal decisions for preventing attempts to destabilize the situation," the statement read. "There are still forces in Chechnya and around it they have not managed to realize their ambitions. Their claims to influence in the republic are invariably stirred up by some central media and Internet resources, which continue to play the Chechen card. As a result, the true situation often does not even reach the leadership of the country." According to Interfax, the deputies' appeal to Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov expressed hope for "an objective assessment of the situation" and called for "corresponding measures" to be taken immediately.

As Kommersant reported on April 17, Sulim Yamadaev has been implicated in an armed raid on the Samson-K meat-processing plant in St. Petersburg in 2006, during which its general director, Khazat Arsamakov, was severely beaten (Chechnya Weekly, September 21 and October 05, 2006), and in the disappearance and possible murder of Yunus and Yusup Arsamakov, the brothers of Samson-K's owner, Abubakar Arsamakov. The Vostok unit has also been implicated in the 2005 raid on the village of Borozdinovskaya, in which two people were killed and 12 were abducted (Chechnya Weekly, June 22, 2005).

The Moscow Times reported on April 17 that in separate statements posted on the Chechen government's website on April 26, Vostok commanders were accused of multiple kidnappings, murders and torture, including the abduction of the republic's human rights ombudsman. In a local television interview on April 16, Kadyrov accused the Yamadayev brothers of a number of crimes and demanded that they be brought to justice. "The Yamadaev brothers are linked to a number of serious crimes, including murders and abductions, as well as the events in the Borozdinovskaya [village]," RIA Novosti quoted Kadyrov as saying. "A criminal must be in a jail. The law is universal for everyone."

Yet as the Moscow Times noted, it is unclear why Kadyrov, "whose own loyalists are regularly accused of similar crimes by human rights groups such as Memorial," chose to unveil the accusations against Vostok only in the wake of the April 14 road accident and subsequent clashes.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374110>**

### Observers Put Their Money on Kadyrov

Several leading Russian political analysts have weighed in on the confrontation between the GRU's (Russian military intelligence) Vostok battalion, led by Sulim Yamadaev, and forces loyal to Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov. Reuters on April 16 quoted Moscow-based defense analyst Pavel Felgenhauer as saying that armed units on both sides of the current stand-off in Chechnya, while nominally belonging to Chechnya's Interior and Defense ministries, are in reality private armies containing some of the toughest and most battle-ready soldiers in Russia. "They may fight under the Russian flag but their loyalty is with their commanders," Felgenhauer told Reuters. The news agency noted that while the two forces have a long history of mutual distrust and dislike, it has usually remained out of public view. "This is more serious as it's out in the open and publicly embarrasses the Kremlin at a time when Putin is leaving and one of his achievements is being touted as making Chechnya peaceful once more," Felgenhauer said.



The Moscow Times on April 17 quoted Aleksei Malashenko, senior expert on the Caucasus at the Carnegie Moscow Center, as saying that the standoff is a signal to Kadyrov from those in Moscow who oppose him. "This standoff, and the fact that the Yamadaevs are not giving ground easily, is a signal to Kadyrov that he should not think he is the only one calling the shots in the republic," Malashenko told the English-language daily. "There are powerful people in [federal] power agencies that do not like the way he runs things, and they will side with the Yamadaevs." Malashenko said that one of the two sides may have decided to make a move during the transition period in which President Vladimir Putin, Kadyrov's patron, is preparing to transfer power to President-elect Dmitry Medvedev. Both Putin and Medvedev support Kadyrov but are currently preoccupied with the handover ahead of Medvedev's May 7 inauguration, the Moscow Times quoted Malashenko as saying.

Forum.msk.ru political observer Ruslan Saidov wrote on the website on April 17 that "to remove Ramzan Kadyrov from his post with a decree from Moscow is impossible." Saidov added: "More precisely, it is possible to issue a decree but impossible to ensure that it is carried out without getting into a third Russian-Chechen war, which Dmitry Medvedev absolutely does not need. On the threshold of establishing the Putin-Medvedev diarchy in Moscow after May 7, the Chechen leadership is consolidating state power in order to avoid 'the Chechen factor' being used in Kremlin score settling. Under these conditions, the existence of feudal armed formations on the republic's territory that are not under the control of the country's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, [and] which are carrying out criminal-political and criminal-economic activities in Chechnya, is completely intolerable. No self-respecting state—which the Chechen Republic, de facto, is—would allow this. And so there can be no doubt that the GRU's Vostok and Zapad battalions will be disbanded."

Likewise, the journalist and political commentator Yulia Latynina wrote that Kadyrov is defeating Sulim Yamadaev and his brothers, methodically and strategically. "The GRU's 'Vostok' spetsnaz battalion, which ... is subordinated to the Defense Ministry but historically originated from the former unit of the former [rebel] field commander Sulim Yamadaev, was probably the most serious opponent of Kadyrov," Latynina wrote in a commentary posted on Gazeta.ru on April 17. "Yamadaev is neither an appointee nor a thug nor a person brought in on the carts of the federal forces. He was one of the most outstanding field commanders, who was the first to look for contacts with the federal forces after his own conflict with the Wahhabis—a conflict which in fact grew into a civil one and then into the second Chechen war. And Kadyrov has besieged the Yamadaevs strategically. First of all, he built his residence in Gudermes, and the Yamadaevs turned gradually from the bosses of Gudermes into the residents of a kind of high-security district fenced off by barriers. Secondly, Kadyrov drove Frants Klintsevich, a loyal ally of the Yamadaevs, out of the [leadership position in the] Chechen United Russia [chapter], which allowed [Kadyrov] subsequently to drive Sulim's brother, Ruslan Yamadaev, out of the [State] Duma. And ... Kadyrov rebuilt Chechnya. That, is he became the boss of Chechnya, and Yamadaev simply remained a field commander."

Find this article at:

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374111>

### Gunmen in Ingushetia Target Police, Kill Supreme Court Deputy Chairman

Newsru.com, citing the Ingushetiya.ru website, reported on April 16 that a “pitched battle” was taking place in the Ingush town of Karabulak. Ingushetiya.ru quoted local residents as saying that gunfire, machinegun bursts and explosions could be heard in the area of a base belonging to the Ingush Interior Ministry’s OMON special police unit, at which a mobile unit of the federal Interior Ministry from Moscow is deployed. The websites reported that the base was attacked by assailants armed with guns and grenade-launchers and that several fires broke out in various areas inside the base’s perimeter.

The following day, April 17, RIA Novosti, quoted a local police source as saying that six officers from a special purpose police unit had been injured in a rocket attack on the base and that the rockets had been fired by unidentified attackers from a nearby forest. One of the rockets hit the house of a local resident, the news agency reported. The source said that the police returned fire and that a local resident was subsequently detained on suspicion of involvement in the attack. Kavkazky Uzel on April 17 quoted a Russian military source as saying that among those wounded were the commander of the mobile Interior Ministry unit deployed from Moscow, a police colonel and four policemen deployed from Perm Krai, the Tula and Belgorod oblasts and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. According to Interfax, the mobile unit commander was gravely injured.

The rebel Islamist Kavkaz-Center website posted a report dated April 16, which stated that the attack on the base was carried out by “mujahideen” using machineguns and grenade launchers. The report gave no further details.

Another incident took place in Karabulak on April 13, when unidentified gunmen shot and killed Khasan Yandiev, deputy chairman of Ingushetia’s Supreme Court. “The Moscow Times” on April 14 quoted a law-enforcement official as telling RIA Novosti that Yandiev was driving his Mercedes through Karabulak when the assailants fired automatic weapons at his vehicle. The official said the gunmen fled immediately and that Yandiev died at the scene from multiple gunshot wounds. RIA Novosti’s source said that Yandiev had presided over a number of high-profile trials of local rebels and officials charged with corruption and that investigators believe he was murdered because of his work. An item posted to the rebel Islamist Kavkaz-Center website on April 13 called Yandiev a “murtad” (apostate) who had handed down “punitive” sentences against captured “mujahideen” and ordinary citizens in Ingushetia. The posting, however, did not include a claim of responsibility for the assassination.

A policeman was killed and three local residents were wounded late on April 11 when an unidentified attacker opened fire on a car in the Ingush village of Sagopshi. The policeman died at the scene of the attack and other man in the car and two persons nearby were hospitalized with wounds, Itar-Tass quoted a source in Ingushetia’s Interior Ministry as saying. Kavkazky Uzel, citing the independent Ingushetiya.ru website, identified the dead police officer as Islam Dzagiev and reported that the three people wounded in the attack were also police officers. According to Kavkazky Uzel, 5.45 mm and 7.62 mm shell casings were found at the scene of the crime along with shell casings from a Makarov PM pistol.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374112>**

### Briefs

#### - Reputed Chechen Crime Boss Reportedly Abducted

Kommersant reported on April 14 that a reputed Chechen crime boss whose partner has been linked to the murder of Novaya Gazeta correspondent Anna Politkovskaya and Russian Forbes editor Paul Klebnikov was abducted in Moscow earlier this year. The Moscow Times reported on April 15 that Movladi Atlangeriev, founder of the so-called Lazanskaya crime group, was seized at gunpoint by two unidentified men as he left a restaurant in central Moscow on the evening of January 31 and has not been heard from since. Together with Khozh-Akhmed Nukhaev, another reputed Chechen crime boss, Atlangeriev, known alternately by the nicknames "Lord," "Lenin" and "The Italian," is thought to have organized Moscow's fragmented Chechen groups into a unified gang, the Moscow Times reported. Authorities have accused Nukhaev of ordering the 2004 murder of Klebnikov and the 2006 murder of Politkovskaya. In an interview published in Izvestia on April 3, senior Investigative Committee official Dmitry Dovgy accused Nukhaev and self-exiled businessman Boris Berezovsky of ordering Politkovskaya's murder. Last year, however, Berezovsky accused Atlangeriev of attempting to carry out a plan to assassinate him in London on the orders of Russia's special services.

#### - Dagestani Rebel Killed in Special Operation

A leader of one of Dagestan's "illegal armed formations," Ismail Yangizbiev, was killed during a special operation in the republic's Khasavyurt district on April 13. "Yangizbiev had been on the Federal Wanted List for several years for committing grave crimes, including assassinations of police officers and terror acts," the acting head of the press service of Dagestan's Interior Ministry, Mark Tolchinsky, told Itar-Tass. The news agency, citing Dagestan's Interior Ministry, reported that Yangizbiev and two associates were stopped during a special operation aimed at rebel gunmen in the villages of Pokrovskoye and Kondauraul. The three reportedly began firing at the police when their car was stopped on the road between the two villages and then tried to escape into a nearby forest. Yangizbiev was killed in the shootout while the two other gunmen managed to escape, Itar-Tass reported.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374113>**

### Yamadaev vs. Kadyrov: The Kremlin's Quandary with Chechnya

By Andrei Smirnov

On Monday 14, a large-scale gun battle broke out in the Chechen city of Gudermes between forces of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov and the Yamadaev brothers —Sulim Yamadaev, who is the commander of the Vostok battalion, and Ruslan Yamadaev, who is a deputy in the Russian parliament. The Kavkaz-Center rebel website reported that 16 “kadyrovtsy” and “yamadaevtsy” were killed in the fighting, while Reuters put the number of those killed at about 18, including several civilians. Kavkaz-Center and the Regnum news agency both said that the shootout lasted the whole day and that heavy-machine guns and grenade launchers were used by both sides. Kavkaz-Center also reported that armored vehicles could be seen on the battlefield.



Russian media have provided differing versions of what took place, and their casualty counts have been vague. Even the question of where the battle took place has not really been clarified. According to reports by the official news agencies RIA Novosti and Itar-Tass on April 14, the first clash between members of Kadyrov’s guards and Vostok battalion fighters took place near the Chechen town of Argun, followed by the shootout in Gudermes. The official agencies quoted anonymous sources in the Chechen police who said that a motorcade of Kadyrov’s guards came face to face with a motorcade of a Vostok unit led by Badrudin Yamadaev, the youngest brother in the Yamadaev family, on the road and that neither wanted to give way. Kadyrov personally solved the controversy and the two convoys moved on in different directions. Badrudin told the Gazeta newspaper that Kadyrov had hugged him and called him a “brother” (Gazeta, April 16).

Nevertheless, after that, Ramzan Kadyrov ordered that Gudermes be surrounded and the main base of the Vostok battalion in the city blocked. Official reports mentioned very little about the events that took place in Gudermes after the incident near Argun. According to the Regnum news agency, the fighting was centered on Tereshevka Street and near the railroad bridge. Kavkaz-Center reported that when Kadyrov ordered his forces to take control in Gudermes and when Chechen policemen loyal to Kadyrov started to detain members of the Vostok battalion, the “yamadaevtsy” attacked the barracks of Kadyrov’s guards near the railroad station, the place where the heaviest battles have traditionally been fought within the city. The “kadyrovtsy” then started to deploy additional troops to Gudermes from other parts of Chechnya.

Since Vostok is officially a part of the Russian army’s 42nd Motorized Rifle Division that is stationed in the republic, the “yamadaevtsy” asked the command of the division for help. Colonel Fomichev, the division’s chief of staff, however, was detained at a checkpoint in Gudermes that had been set up by Kadyrov’s guards. The “kadyrovtsy” arrested all drivers who identified themselves as Vostok fighters. A total of ten members of the Yamadaev group were detained and taken to the Vega Base of the “kadyrovtsy” on the outskirts of Gudermes. At the same time, the “yamadaevtsy” took eight members of Kadyrov’s guards as hostages (Gazeta, April 16). A Vostok officer told the Rosbalt news agency that the “kadyrovtsy” outnumbered the “yamadaevtsy” by evening of April 15 and that 300-500 police officers and members of the Sever (North) and Yug (South) battalions loyal to Kadyrov surrounded the Vostok base and the Yamadaev family’s private house (Rosbalt, April 15).

Nevertheless, Russian officials, including the commander of the Russian forces in Chechnya, a deputy head of the Military Prosecutor’s Office for the Southern Federal District, the head of the Chechen branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the head of the Russian military intelligence (GRU) staff in Chechnya, among others, accompanied by federal motorized rifle units, prevented Kadyrov’s men from attacking the Vostok base. An officer from Vostok told Gazeta that General Sergei Mininkov, the commander of the 42nd division, promised to help the battalion if Kadyrov started the assault (Gazeta, April 16).

On April 15, the Russian security officials ordered Kadyrov’s squads to move back from the Vostok base and from the Yamadaev family’s house. Kadyrov was enraged but unable to do anything about it. He publicly accused the Yamadaev brothers of kidnappings, torture and murders, and demanded that Badrudin Yamadaev be handed over to him. Kadyrov’s accusations were supported by Chechen Interior Minister Ruslan Alkhanov, who also called Badrudin Yamadaev “a criminal” (RIA Novosti, April 15). Kadyrov pushed the republican human rights ombudsman, Nurdi

Nukhazhiev, to accuse the Vostok commanders of numerous crimes and human rights violations. Some Chechen non-governmental organizations and human rights activists loyal to Kadyrov in turn publicly supported the Chechen president in his standoff with the Yamadaev brothers and threatened to organize street protests if Vostok is not disbanded (RIA Novosti, April 16).

Ruslan Yamadaev demanded that Kadyrov's forces be moved out from Gudermes in order to permit the military prosecutor's office to investigate whether members of Vostok committed any crimes (Vremya Novostei, April 16).

While both sides of the conflict in the Chechen pro-Russian camp were making one public statement after another, federal officials remained silent. On April 14, Maryam Nalaeva, an aide of the head of the Investigation Committee of the Prosecutor's Office in Chechnya, told the media that a Vostok unit headed by Badrudin Yamadaev was responsible for the traffic incident near Argun that provoked the fighting in Gudermes. Nalaeva said that criminal proceedings had been initiated under the article of the Russian Criminal Code "Violence against representatives of the authorities." At the same time, an official in the Chechen branch of the federal Prosecutor General's Office spoke about two criminal proceedings, including one against Vostok and one against the pro-Kadyrov policemen that shot dead two Vostok battalion members at a checkpoint in Gudermes. The official said that if it turned out that any Vostok members violated the law, their case would be handed over to the Military Prosecutor's Office to investigate (Regnum, April 15). In practice, this means that the civilian Prosecutor General's Office wants to wash its hands of the conflict and not get involved. This could also mean that it is trying to support the Yamadaev brothers, since handing over the case to the military in fact means a victory for the brothers.

There were no comments about the conflict between Kadyrov and the Yamadaev brothers from federal political leaders from April 15 and through the first part of the day on April 16. The first comment from a high-rank official in Moscow appeared in the media only on the afternoon of April 16. Vladimir Shamanov, head of the Russian Armed Forces' Main Directorate for Combat Training and Service, said that there had been no clashes in Gudermes and no casualties. "It was just a warlike gesture," Shamanov told journalists (Grani.ru, April 15). That Shamanov was lying was clear to everybody, but by issuing this statement the general came down firmly on the side of the Vostok battalion and this could be a good sign for the Yamadaev brothers. It means that there is a hope for them that their fate will not be like that of Movladi Baisarov, another pro-Russian Chechen warlord, who was liquidated by Kadyrov's agents in 2006.

When analyzing the events that took place in Argun and Gudermes on April 14 closely, one cannot help but conclude that this was a clear provocation on the part of Ramzan Kadyrov. It is Kadyrov, not the Yamadaev brothers, who is interested in an armed conflict now. Kadyrov did not attend the rally of the Kremlin's United Russia party that took place in Moscow on April 14 and remained in the republic that day, while the commander of Vostok was not in Chechnya that day. Kadyrov apparently hoped that he could destroy the battalion by a sudden attack while Sulim Yamadaev was absent. Kadyrov apparently thought that the Russian authorities, who are currently preoccupied as power is handed over from incumbent President Vladimir Putin to President-elect Dmitry Medvedev, would not interfere in the conflict fast enough and he had time to achieve his goal of destroying Yamadaev's clan.

Kadyrov miscalculated, since he failed to disarm Vostok quickly, and his main mistake was that his people used violence against Colonel Fomichev, a senior officer of the Russian army. This fact only spurred the Russian military command to help the Yamadaev brothers more actively.

Now the Kremlin faces the very difficult decision of how to resolve a conflict that has gone too far. Any decision the Kremlin makes will have an adverse effect on Russian policy in Chechnya. If Vostok is disbanded, Kadyrov will think that he can do anything he wants, and it will not be easy to replace him when the need arises. The Kremlin is not happy with Kadyrov's policy because he cannot defeat the insurgency and is simply lying about there being no rebels left in Chechnya. Nevertheless, however dissatisfied the Russian authorities are with Kadyrov's policy, there is no better alternative at this point, and if Vostok remains intact, this will damage Kadyrov's image as a strong leader.

How the Kremlin decides to resolve this quandary remains to be seen.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374114>**

### Oil in Chechnya: A Brief History

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

The first reports of oil deposits in Chechnya surfaced in the writings of travelers who noted streams of a peculiar black substance gushing out from under the ground in some parts of Chechnya that nearby villagers used as lubricant. As early as in the late nineteenth century, after Russia's conquest of Chechnya, small-scale home-based oil production was already underway, and in 1893 the first commercial oil well was commissioned in the north Grozny suburb of Starye Promysla.



Prior to the Soviets' rise to power, the oilfields in Chechnya were developed by Belgian, British, German, Russian, Chechen and Azeri firms. After the Bolshevik nationalization, it took fifteen years to restore the production volume back to the levels of the early twentieth century levels. By the beginning of World War II, Checheno-Ingushetia produced approximately 4 million tons of high-quality crude oil annually, a prize that lured Hitler in his pursuit of control over the Grozny and Baku oil reserves.

Grozny's refining industry reached its peak in 1971, when its three refineries processed 21.3 million tons of crude (over 7 percent of Russia's total production), which includes a portion of the Baku oil fields' output in addition to the local production. Yet after the upgrade of the Baku refineries and the construction of new facilities elsewhere in the USSR, the output of Chechnya's refineries began to decline: by 1980, the oil production levels in Checheno-Ingushetia shrank to 7.4 million tons, and by 1985—to 5.3 million tons (Strana.ru, March 25). The reduction also triggered the first massive wave of migration of ethnic Russians, who left Chechnya primarily to resettle in the new oil-producing regions in Urengoi, Tyumen and others.

Nevertheless, during the period of the Soviet Union, Chechnya became home to a highly developed petroleum industry infrastructure. The complex included 54 facilities, a specialized university-level educational establishment (the Oil Institute named after Academy of Sciences Member Dr. Mikhail D. Millionschikov), a research and development entity and three refineries that employed tens of thousands of people, including highly qualified manpower ([www.nefte.ru/person/mbaz5.htm](http://www.nefte.ru/person/mbaz5.htm)).

Before World War II, Chechnya had three large refining facilities—the Lenin refinery that handled primary oil processing, the Anisimov refinery for sour crude and the Sheripov plant designed for primary processing and straight petroleum products. These facilities had a maximum aggregate capacity of up to 20 million tons of Chechen and Kazakhstani crude. The presence of three different types of refineries ensured the capability to process virtually any type of crude, and this critical asset made them a choice nugget for those who wanted to acquire control over them during the collapse of the USSR. The shortsighted policies of the Chechen leadership forced Russia to search for alternative scenarios, and pipeline routes bypassing Chechnya for the transport of oil produced in Russia and Azerbaijan built after the first Chechen war.

Oil deposits in Chechnya are found at shallow depths (as little as 5 to 6 meters below the surface), which often leads to oil spurting or seeping into the soil and resulting in contamination. In some parts of Chechnya, the topsoil became oversaturated with oil; in some locations petroleum products have infiltrated the earth over 2 meters deep and the water table at depths of up to 250 meters contains as much as 15 times the maximum allowable concentrations of oil products ("The Chechen Republic: Economic Potential and Strategic Development," LKI Publishing, Moscow 2007).

This close proximity of oil deposits to the surface in Chechnya prompted the mushrooming of private businesses churning out petroleum products. These businesses quickly came to dominate the Chechen markets, given that they priced oil two to three times cheaper than what was sold by state-owned producers based elsewhere in Russia. According to the federal Interior Ministry, even during the warfare in Chechnya, 500,000 to 700,000 tons of were stolen in Chechnya every year and up to 30,000 people were involved in illegal oil production (Prague Watchdog, November 7, 2003). During the first Chechen war, this author accompanied a British delegation on a visit to Chechnya, and one of the delegation members requested a stop to see how Chechens were making petrol out of crude oil using simple home-based methods. After a long look, the member of the British House of Lords said: "Yes, I



see that this is true; but it can't possibly be so simple." Chechen resourcefulness stripped sophisticated oil-refining technology down to its bare bones.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the current government of Chechnya expected Moscow to rebuild Chechen refineries, so the news of the plan to build a new oil refinery in Kabardino-Balkaria (Chechnya Weekly, April 8) came as something of a shock. The speaker of the Chechen parliament described this development as "a manifestation of an insulting policy toward the entire Chechen people" (Regnum, March 12). The deputies representing Chechnya in the Russian parliament produced a joint statement expressing their dismay over this project (Nohchi.vu, March 19). The most intriguing part was that even Chechnya's human rights ombudsman took it upon himself to make an official statement protesting the construction of an oil refinery in the nearby republic, even though this has little to do with the issue of human rights in Chechnya (Novoteka.ru, March 14).

Prime Minister Odes Baisultanov was urgently dispatched to Moscow to start negotiations, and the state oil company Rosneft permitted him to present a feasibility study in support of building a refinery in Chechnya (Vesti Respubliki, #23, March 21). Yet while the Chechen government tried to present this development as a resounding victory, the final decision will be made by Moscow without any input from Grozny. Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov took things one-step further when he announced in a televised statement that he spoke to the president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, and warned him not to get his hopes up because the Chechen government would do everything in its power to make sure the site of the proposed refinery was moved to Chechnya. The report made no mention of a response from Kanokov, yet the manner in which the presidents of two North Caucasus regions chose to communicate is certainly of great interest.

The main form of legal employment in Chechnya today makes use of the remnants of the petroleum refining industry. Nonetheless, after the intense warfare in Grozny and its environs in 1999 and 2000, these remnants do not amount to much. During the first military campaign of 1994-1996, the Russian army avoided striking the petroleum industry sites; however, all three refineries, along with a petrochemical plant and all auxiliary structures located in Grozny and its suburbs, were the first targets during the second war in 1999, including a plant located outside of the conflict zone 20 kilometers north of the capital.

The objectives of the struggle for power tend to shift as time goes on: prior to the start of his presidency, Ramzan Kadyrov made no demands of Russia and claimed that the Chechens were fully capable of solving their own problems. Although Kadyrov asked neither for independence nor for a free economic zone, his statements were purely a political ploy designed to convince Moscow of his unadulterated loyalty (Komsomolskaya Pravda, February 21, 2007). That was then; today, there is no doubt that Ramzan Kadyrov does indeed need the oil, sovereignty and a free economic zone. In a meeting with the Russian president's envoy to the Southern Federal District, Grigory Rapota (successor to Dmitry Kozak, who left this job for a government position), during Rapota's recent two-day official inspection visit to Chechnya, Kadyrov decided he could wait no longer and made an official request to consider establishing a special-status port economic zone in Chechnya (Kavkaz.memo.ru, April 10, 2007; Chechnya Weekly, April 10).

Kadyrov is not satisfied with being a vassal indefinitely: his ambitions are expanding in proportion to his need for more and more money for his projects. In all likelihood, his main demand is still to come, and it will come at a time when he feels capable of giving Moscow an ultimatum. It may not happen today or tomorrow; however, as soon as he realizes that his support base is declining and his position is no longer secure, he is quite likely to play the ultimate stakes.

**Find this article at:**

**<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374115>**