

Kadyrov Keeps the Heat on the Yamadaevs

By [Andrei Smirnov](#)

In what appears to be an ongoing campaign by Chechnya's pro-Moscow administration against the Vostok Battalion of the GRU (Russian military intelligence), investigators with the republic's law-enforcement bodies are looking into the battalion's possible involvement in the murder of the Arsamakov brothers (Chechnya Weekly, April 17 and 24; May 1). Kavkazky Uzel on May 8 quoted a Chechen law-enforcement source as saying that investigators who are looking into the Vostok Battalion's activities have information about the possible involvement of battalion members in the kidnapping and subsequent brutal murder of Yusup and Yunus Arsamakov and their driver, who disappeared in early February of 2007.



"Investigators have testimony from several former servicemen of the GRU's spetsnaz battalion Vostok that sheds light on the fate of Yusup and Yunus Arsamakov, brothers of the Moscow Industrial Bank president Abubakar Arsamakov, and their driver Khamzat Magomadov, who disappeared last year on the territory of the republic's Shatoi district," a Chechen law-enforcement source told Kavkazky Uzel. "They [the ex-Vostok servicemen-CW] claim that the Arsamakovs and Magomadov were murdered by spetsnaz and that their bodies were taken out of Vedeno district and burned. That information is being checked."

As Kavkazky Uzel reported, in addition to the disappearance and murder of the Arsamakov brothers and their driver, investigators this past week charged that Vostok Battalion members were involved in several other crimes. On May 7, the website quoted a Chechen law-enforcement source as saying that remains found the previous day on the outskirts of Gudermes were those of a Vostok serviceman who had been killed by other battalion members on suspicion of "treason." The unnamed police officer said that there was strong reason to believe that the Vostok serviceman was killed by his fellow battalion members on suspicion that he had a hand in the death of Dzhabrail Yamadaev, a brother of the Vostok Battalion's current commander, Sulim Yamadaev, who earlier headed the unit and then became Chechnya's deputy military commandant before being killed in a bombing in the Chechen village of Dyshne-Vedeno in March 2003.

"Yesterday, the remains of a person were found during operational-reconnaissance activities on the outskirts of Gudermes around two kilometers from the grounds of the city hospital," the source said. "The location of the remains was learned from a former serviceman with the battalion. According to available information, the deceased was Vakhsarolt Zakaev, who several years ago was a contract serviceman in the unit of Dzhabrail Yamadaev and headed a platoon. Lt. [Dzhabrail] Yamadaev (he was posthumously awarded the rank of Hero of Russia) was killed in March 2003 in a private home in the village of Dyshne-Vedeno by an explosion caused a homemade bomb that had been placed under a couch. The spetsnaz had for a long time tried to figure out who was involved in that murder which, it is believed, was organized by Shamil Basaev. In 2004, Zakaev disappeared. According to available information, Vakhsarolt Zakaev was killed on suspicion of having been involved in the death of Dzhabrail Yamadaev, since only a few specially trusted associates of the murdered [commander], one of whom was the platoon commander Zakaev, could have placed the bomb in the carefully guarded home."

On May 4, a mass grave was discovered in Gudermes containing the remains of people whom Chechen authorities believe were victims of extra-judicial killings by the Vostok Battalion. According to one report, the mass grave included the remains of a young woman. Kavkazky Uzel on May 5 quoted a Chechen law-enforcement source as saying that the grave contained the remains of six people. On May 6, Kommersant quoted investigators as saying that they had been led to the mass grave site by a former member of the Vostok Battalion who was removed from the unit in the wake of the conflict between its commander, Sulim Yamadaev, and Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov that erupted on April 14 following an armed confrontation between members of the unit and forces loyal to Kadyrov. Kommersant also reported that a total of seven bodies were in the mass grave and that the deceased were all males. The newspaper quoted Sulim Yamadaev's brother, former State Duma deputy Ruslan Yamadaev, as saying in reaction to the latest allegations against the Vostok Battalion: "I am tired of commenting on all of this nonsense coming out of Chechnya. In actual fact, the whole republic knows where the real graveyards of victims of zachistki [security sweeps] and repression are located."

In an interview broadcast by Ekho Moskv radio on April 19, Sulim Yamadaev charged that 75 percent of the amnestied rebels who are working for the Chechen police force under Ramzan Kadyrov are still rebels and involved in murders and kidnapping in the republic (Chechnya Weekly, April 24). Kadyrov, for his part, has accused Vostok members of involvement in a number of murders and kidnappings, including the case of the Arsamakov brothers and the murder of the well-known Chechen singer Milana Balaeva and her mother.

Kavkazky Uzel on May 7 quoted an anonymous Chechen political scientist as saying that the latest accusations against the Vostok Battalion are part of the ongoing battle between Kadyrov and the Yamadaev brothers. "After Movladi Baisarov (former commander of the FSB's Gorets special unit, who was killed in Moscow in November 2006 by officers of the Chechen MVD), got into a conflict with the president of the republic and ran off to Moscow, the same scenario played out," the source said. "Baisarov—who, by the way, had the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Russian special services—was also accused of murdering civilians; graves were found where some of his victims were buried and he was put on the wanted list. He was then shot practically in the center of the Russian capital, supposedly for attempting to resist [arrest]. Something similar is being repeated with the Yamadaevs."

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Vladimir Ustinov Named Presidential Envoy to the Southern Federal District

President Dmitry Medvedev has named Vladimir Ustinov, who previously held the post of Justice Minister, to be presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, replacing Grigory Rapota, who has been switched to the post of presidential envoy to the Volga Federal District. Ustinov is widely viewed as a member of the hardline faction of Kremlin "siloviki" - his son Dmitry is married to Inga Sechina, a daughter of Igor Sechin, the reputed de facto "siloviki" chief who was appointed deputy prime minister in charge of industrial and energy policy in the latest round of appointments.



Ustinov is not without experience in southern Russia and the North Caucasus in particular. He was Sochi's chief prosecutor from 1992 to 1994 and from 1994 to 1997 also held the post of first deputy prosecutor of Krasnodar Krai. From June 1998 until April 1999, he headed the Main Directorate for the North Caucasus of the Prosecutor General's Office with the rank of Deputy Prosecutor General. In August 1999, then President Boris Yeltsin promoted Ustinov to the post of Prosecutor General.

As the analyst Vladimir Pribylovsky pointed out on his website, Antikomproamat.ru, that same month - August 1999 - Ustinov "approved the actions of the leadership of Dagestan in handing over weaponry to the inhabitants of the republic," following an incursion by Chechen-based rebels led by the field commander Shamil Basaev and Khattab. In November 2001, Ustinov participated as a prosecutor in the trial of Chechen rebel field commander Salman Raduev.

The late Yury Shchekochikhin reported in Novaya Gazeta in March 2003 that President Vladimir Putin had awarded Ustinov - along with then Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Nikolai Patrushev and Kremlin Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo - the Hero of Russia medal for "successes in the Chechen war."

In an address to the State Duma on October 29, 2004, Ustinov suggested a policy of "counter-hostage taking," stating: "The detention of relatives of terrorists while a terrorist act is being carried will unquestionably help us preserve and save people." As Pribylovsky wrote: "Since Ustinov did not specify that 'counter-seizure' applies only to adult relatives of participants in terrorist acts, since the proposal was made immediately after the tragedy in Beslan, when around a thousand children wound up being hostages of terrorists and nearly three hundred of them died, and also since the federal forces had earlier taken adult family members of militants as hostages, the prosecutor general's proposal was in fact an innovation - the 'counter-seizure' of the CHILDREN of Chechen militants as hostages." Pribylovsky also noted that in December 2004, Ramzan Kadyrov's security service took eight relatives of rebel leader Asian Maskhadov hostage and that while the wife of one of those seized appealed to Ustinov in January 2005, seven of the eight remained hostages until May 2005, several months after Maskhadov was killed by security forces, while one of Maskhadov's relatives was officially arrested for alleged membership in "illegal armed formations."

Ustinov also presided over the official investigation of the explosions in residential buildings in Moscow and Volgograd in September 1999 that helped justify the second war in Chechnya. This investigation ignored accusations about the purported role of the security services in the bombings. In addition, Ustinov presided over the prosecution of Yukos founder Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Ustinov tendered his resignation as Prosecutor General in June 2006 following a meeting with Putin, but within weeks was named Justice Minister. As the Moscow Times noted at the time, Russian media speculated that Ustinov was forced out as Prosecutor General because of allegations that his office had shielded officials accused of participating in a smuggling operation through the Moscow furniture retailers Tri Kita and Grand that involved millions of dollars in unpaid import duties. Soon after Ustinov's departure, prosecutors arrested Sergei Zuyev, the head of Tri Kita and Grand, as well as four others, for alleged involvement in the smuggling ring (see Moscow Times, June 19, 2006).

The fate of two other officials who have been involved in North Caucasus policy - Aslambek Aslakhonov, who has been Putin's adviser on the North Caucasus, and Gen.-Col. Gennady Troshev, the former commander of Russian forces in Chechnya who has been serving as presidential adviser for Cossack affairs - remains uncertain. On May 15, Gazeta quoted Aleksei Malashenko of the Moscow Carnegie Center as saying that the delay in an announcement

about the bureaucratic fate of Aslakhonov and Troshev suggests that Chechnya policy will be "corrected" to some degree. "In general the course will remain unchanged and will be directed at supporting Kadyrov, despite the story with the Yamadaevs, however there will be some clarifications," Malashenko told the newspaper. He added that such changes in policy could also result from the appointment of Aleksandr Bortnikov, who headed the economic security department of the Federal Security Service (FSB), to replace Nikolai Patrushev as FSB director. Patrushev, who has been appointed secretary of the Security Council, a presidential advisory body, also headed the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, which was involved in North Caucasus policy.

Dmitry Badovsky, deputy director of the Institute for Social Systems, told Gazeta that he believes the Kremlin will give increased attention to the situation in the North Caucasus and that he did not share the view of many observers that Ustinov's appointment as presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District was simply a prelude to his retirement from government service. "This nomination is additional proof that the situation in the Southern Federal District is of principle importance to the federal center," Badovsky said. "Ustinov will continue the rotation of regional leaders and strengthen the fight against crime. He will become the eye of the sovereign in the south."

Vz.ru on May 15 quoted Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov as saying that Ustinov's appointment as presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District would have a positive effect on the region given that, in Kadyrov's words, "this person knows the situation in the North Caucasus well." Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, said that Ustinov would stabilize the situation in the region and help solve socio-economic problems. "Vladimir Ustinov is a well-known person, an authoritative and pragmatic politician with much experience in managerial and leadership activity," Zyazikov's press service quoted him as saying. Zyazikov's statement also cited Ustinov's experience in the area of "realizing national projects," adding that he will work effectively with region's leaders.

RIA Novosti on May 15 quoted the vice speaker of the parliament of North Ossetia, Stanislav Kesaev, as saying that Ustinov's appointment continues a policy oriented toward "a triumph of law in the region" and that "all of the actions that will be taken by the new team of the president will above all be kept in a strict legal position." Kesaev said that the transfer of Grigory Rapota out of the position of presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District is evidence that the North Caucasus is no longer being looked at "through the prism of the special services."

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Ingushetia: Attacks Continue, as do Charges of Official Lawlessness

Gunmen in Ingushetia killed three policemen on May 14. Reuters quoted a police source as saying that the three officers were found shot dead in a forested area outside Nazran. The Associated Press quoted the Interior Ministry's branch in Ingushetia as saying that the officers were killed by unknown gunmen who ambushed their patrol car on a highway. RIA Novosti reported that the attackers were traveling in two cars and opened fire on a traffic police patrol, killing the head of the local traffic police department and two officers. Also on May 14, a couple and their landlord were killed during a special operation in Nazran. RIA Novosti quoted local prosecutors as saying that police had cordoned off a house in Nazran the previous day following reports that a militant wanted for a number of serious crimes and his wife had been renting a basement there. The militants refused to surrender and shot their landlord before being killed when police returned fire. An assault rifle, a gun and a grenade were discovered at the scene. On May 15, Nezavisimaya Gazeta identified the slain couple as Adam Bogatyrev and Madina Plieva, who had been hiding in the basement of Yakha Izmailova. The newspaper reported that an opposition website in Ingushetia claimed Izmailova was killed by gunfire from security forces but that law-enforcement sources had categorically denied this claim.



RIA Novosti on May 14 quoted a police source as saying that an arms cache containing an automatic weapon, three Kalashnikov assault rifles, a grenade launcher round and 865 cartridges was found in a forest near the town of Karabulak, northeast of Nazran.

On May 12, a home-made explosive device equivalent to around 300 grams of TNT was found in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya in Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district. According to RIA Novosti, the device, which consisted of a plastic bottle packed with explosives, was disarmed after being discovered in a pile of gravel near a street. Police said the bomb would have been detonated by a cell phone.

On May 10, security forces completed a special operation in the village of Troitskaya in Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district, killing two alleged members of "illegal armed formations" who had been hiding in one of the village's houses and wounding another, Kavkazky Uzel reported. A republican Interior Ministry source told the website that a car which had been stolen from Kambulat Zyazikov, the republic's deputy mufti, at gunpoint the previous day was found at the house along with four grenade launchers, two automatic rifles a pistol and "extremist" literature. Earlier that day, the website had reported that a motorized regiment in Troitskaya had been attacked with grenade launchers. However, the republic's Interior Ministry subsequently denied that such an attack had taken place.

"The authorities continue to claim that they completely control the situation in Ingushetia and the official website of the republic reports nothing either about incidents or heightened alert on the part of the security services," Nezavisimaya Gazeta noted on May 15. The newspaper also quoted the press service of Ingushetia's Interior Ministry as saying that special operations were bringing "positive results" and that the situation in the republic is not deteriorating, but that "in the republic there are forces interested in destabilizing the situation" (see Mairbek Vatchagaev's piece in this issue).

Meanwhile, Kavkazky Uzel on May 10 identified the two alleged militants killed in Troitskaya as Timur Uzhakov, a resident of the village of Barsuki, and Movsar Osiev, a resident of the city of Malgobek. The opposition Ingushetiya.ru website quoted Troitskaya residents as saying that the two were killed as they were getting out of a sauna and had not offered armed resistance, as officials claimed. According to the website, on April 22, relatives of Movsar Osiev and his brother Dzhamaal appealed to the Memorial human rights group for legal aid. They claimed that the previous day, April 21, 30 officers belonging to Russian "power structures" and the Malgobek police force had gone to a home owned by the brothers' grandmother with the goal of apprehending them. All of the officers except for one, a Malgobek police inspector Magomed Bekbuzarov, were reportedly wearing masks. The brothers were not found but, according to their relatives, the visiting law-enforcers carried out an illegal search of the home and insulted their grandmother, a survivor of two heart attacks.

The brothers' sister told Memorial that they were first detained on February 28 of this year, taken off in an unknown direction and beaten during a stop on the roadway, after which they were taken to the Malgobek police station,

where they were further beaten as their interrogators demanded that they confess to various crimes. Kavkazky Uzel had earlier quoted Dzhamal Oziev as saying that those who detained him had beaten him in the neck, back and head with a rifle butt and demanded that he confess to the murder of a law-enforcement officer, Asian Kodzoev, in the Village of Srednie Achaluki in Ingushetia's Malgobeksky district this past January. Movsar Oziev, for his part, said he was beaten in turn by seven or eight people.

Movsar Oziev was remanded in custody for alleged participation in Kodzoev's murder while his brother Dzhamal was released. Movsar said he was continually beaten over a period of four days by his captors, who demanded that he confess to the murder. He was released after signing an agreement not to leave the area, but, according to his sister, did not subsequently appear for interrogation because he feared even worse treatment, and as a result was placed on the wanted list on April 9. The brothers' sister said that neither brother was involved in the murder and that she seriously feared for their lives, adding that they were willing to come in for questioning if they were guaranteed they would not be tortured.

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Kadyrov "Suspends" Sulim Yamadaev

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov announced the suspension of Vostok battalion commander Sulim Yamadaev on May 12 and called on Chechen and military prosecutors to investigate whether Vostok troops, including Yamadaev, were linked to murders and kidnappings in Chechnya and Dagestan. The move was the latest step in a power struggle between Kadyrov and the Yamadaev brothers following an armed confrontation between Vostok members and forces loyal to Kadyrov last month (Chechnya Weekly, April 17 and 24, May 1 and 8). The Moscow Times on May 14 quoted Kadyrov's adviser Timur Aliev, as saying by e-mail that prosecutors had decided to suspend Yamadaev after Kadyrov repeatedly urged federal military commanders to investigate Yamadaev and his troops. Aliev said this latest move meant no commanders or security agencies capable of challenging Kadyrov remained in Chechnya. The newspaper also reported, however, that the Defense Ministry, whose Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) is formally in charge of Vostok, declined to comment on Kadyrov's announcement.

Kommersant on May 14 quoted former State Duma Deputy Ruslan Yamadaev, who is Sulim Yamadaev's brother, as saying: "Absolute power in Chechnya today is concentrated in the hands of one person, who can suspect, accuse and then punish or pardon at his own personal discretion. This is abnormal, and I am convinced that the federal authorities and military command understand the full danger of the situation and will take corresponding measures. I am convinced that the Vostok battalion will remain in the republic and that my brother, who is currently undergoing medical treatment in Moscow, will remain its commander. If he, as an officer, is transferred to a new place of service, then they will certainly take Sulim's services and military experience into account and appoint him to a higher position."

Kommersant noted that despite their problems with Kadyrov, both Sulim and Ruslan Yamadaev attended Dmitry Medvedev's inauguration as Russian president in Moscow on May 7 (see Andrei Smirnov's article in this issue).

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Briefs

No Let Up in Violence in Dagestan

Two police officers were killed in central Dagestan on May 15, Reuters reported. Interfax quoted Dagestan's Interior Ministry as saying that saying a vehicle with three officers was shot at during a routine patrol of the village of Gubden. Two were killed and one was wounded. As Reuters noted, last October attackers burned down the house of Gubden's police chief about 10 days after unknown gunmen opened fire on Russian riot police in the village, wounding two. In September 2007, the kadi [Islamic judge] of a mosque in Gubden was killed when unidentified gunmen fired on him with assault rifles as he was going to the mosque for morning prayers. The Sharia Jamaat claimed responsibility for that assassination (Chechnya Weekly, October 4, 2007). On May 11, a police officer was shot dead and another injured in a drive-by shooting at a police post near the village of Dzhemikent in Dagestan's Derbentsky district, Kavkazky Uzel reported. Also on May 11, police in Dagestan discovered and defused two bombs, RIA Novosti reported. One was discovered near the village of Shamkhal-Termen in Dagestan's Kizilyurt district while the second was found in Makhachkala, the capital.

Former Chechen Presidential Candidate Abducted

Nikolai Paizulaev, a Chechen poet and former republican presidential candidate, was kidnapped in Grozny on May 14. Kavkazky Uzel reported on May 15 that Paizulaev received a telephone call on May 14 from someone who said they had information about the whereabouts of his 7-year-old daughter, who was abducted last month.

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Is Aushev Planning a Political Comeback?

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

When the Ingush public found themselves at a crossroads in 1991 after their Chechen neighbors announced secession from Russia, they decided that following the Chechen example may lead to the irreversible loss of lands in the environs of the Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz that were originally annexed during the deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples in 1944. The Ingush opted for a different path and announced the re-establishment of the Republic of Ingushetia (initially formed in 1918 and merged with Chechnya in 1934.) By transferring ancestral Ingush lands to North Ossetia-Alania and resettling the Ingush alongside the traditionally pro-Moscow Ossetians, the Russian government thought its security at the main Trans-Caucasus artery would be guaranteed. Essentially, the Ingush were moved further away from a strategically important road because of their closeness to the Chechens, that is, Russia attempted to protect itself from potential excesses from their side.



The issue became particularly pressing after the Abkhazia war of 1992, when all the roads to the Transcaucasus, save the Voenno-Gruzinskaya Highway (the most important transportation link between the Russian-dominated Caucasus and Trans-Caucasian countries since the late eighteenth century), were blocked. The route across Dagestan and Azerbaijan is also an option, however, it is a less commercially attractive alternative compared to what is already available to Russia today. It therefore comes as no surprise that during his visit to the new military base in the mountains of Dagestan (Botlikh), Vladimir Putin brought up the matter of a new road to Georgia (Newsru.com, February 4, 2008) to bypass the Voenno-Gruzinskaya Highway, which remains blocked to this day due to the still-unresolved status of South Ossetia within Georgia. The Dagestani route (Avaro-Kakhetinskaya Highway) is therefore of strategic importance for Russia today, although Putin's proposal caused no great enthusiasm in Georgia (K. Liklikadze in the Tbilisi weekly Rezonansi, February 11, 2008).

Ingushetia's position in the region is a special one; despite its obvious closeness to the Chechens it managed not to become embroiled in the Abkhazia conflict of 1992. It also maintained its distance from the Caucasus Confederation and avoided declaring its sovereign status like other republic members of the Russian Federation. It is perhaps Ingushetia's excessively pro-Russian stance that allows Moscow to ignore the problems of the republic because it realizes that they are tied to the return of the annexed lands near Vladikavkaz.

In the context of Ingushetia's politics, the return of the lands seized during the deportation will always remain a litmus test of the patriotism and maturity of its politicians. It therefore comes as no surprise that when Ruslan Aushev was approached to lead the blank slate of a republic with no distinct boundaries and no administration, the Ingush people assumed that someone with Aushev's reputation would be able to secure the return of the disputed lands. Ruslan Aushev stepped down before the end of his term after it became clear that he had failed to win the trust of President Putin (Echo.msk.ru, April 8, 2008). Despite colossal improvements in Ingushetia, the people were still not satisfied with Aushev's rule because the core issue of the Prigorodny district remained outstanding with no future prospects of resolution. The public became accustomed to Aushev during the decade of his presidency; the search for his replacement was already underway and Aushev's decision to step down early was met with understanding and gratitude. Aushev was also blamed for his close relationships with prominent ethnic Ingush businessmen (Mikhail Gutseriev, Mussa Keligov, etc.) and the dominance of the Aushev clan.

In contrast with Ruslan Aushev, who was already a national hero before he was elected, Murat Zyazikov was a virtual unknown before his rise to the presidency. Zyazikov's term as president will be remembered by the Ingush people as a time of unrestrained crime, contempt for any government action, terror against its own people, dozens of people gone missing and hundreds arrested and killed by security forces and belatedly blamed for their alleged ties to terror. The previously unseen scale of attacks against law enforcement personnel mounted by the Ingush Sharia Jamaat under the longstanding leadership of the Ingush armed resistance commander Magas (A. Yevloev) should also be added to the mix. Even the ever-diplomatic European Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg could not avoid saying that the real hotspots of North Caucasus today are Ingushetia and Dagestan (Deutsche Welle radio

station, May 1, 2008), and it is difficult to disagree.

For example, during just the first few days of May, Ingushetia saw a spree of shootings of policemen across the republic, attacks on a military convoy and a policeman's residence, the killing of Kantyshevo village native Issa Arsaev during a police- and FSB-led operation and multiple gunfights after dark in locations guarded by the army, the police and the FSB branch in Ingushetia (Ingushetiya.ru, May 1-9, 2008).

The events in Ingushetia are unfolding as if following a preplanned script (quite possibly by someone in the Kremlin, although Putin is unlikely to give up his appointee Zyazikov without a fight.) First, after maintaining a low profile for many years, Ruslan Aushev made a very public appearance on a talk show focused on issues facing Ingushetia hosted by the Moscow State University (Gazeta #69, April 16, 2008). He next made a surprise visit to Ingushetia to take part in a soccer game of the local league, and several competitions bearing his name took place in Nazran (Ingushetiya.ru, May 9, 2008). It seems as if the conditions for the return of the previously disfavored Ingush leader are ripening. Finally, the popular Ingushetiya.ru website recently sponsored a petition drive asking visitors to sign and send to the government a request for Aushev's return as president of Ingushetia.

Some in Ingushetia are awaiting the return of Ruslan Aushev with open joy; he personifies a time when things like "mop-up" operations, "anti-terror" zones stretching over two to three blocks and kidnappings perpetrated by the law enforcement agencies of the neighboring republics were virtually unknown in Ingushetia and seemed impossible.

However, Ingushetia has changed and so have the Ingush people; they have learned to live outside the rule of law maintained so painstakingly during Aushev's term. They have also learned to look at their leaders with a more critical eye and create mechanisms to put pressure on the government. An example of the latter can be seen in the mass meetings of the Ingush teips (clans) across the republic to elect representatives for the popular public assembly to operate independently and in parallel to the People's Assembly of Ingushetia. The elections to the latter were ignored by this small but very temperamental North Caucasus republic.

Ruslan Aushev is also not the same man he used to be during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. Aushev stepped down when he failed to convince then-President Putin that the policy of terror directed against the entire civilian populace will bring no results. Therefore, the rule of Ruslan Aushev under the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will be constrained by limitations that did not exist when Aushev was first elected president during the term of Boris Yeltsin. Consequently, Ruslan Aushev will not be as effective as his supporters expect him to be today. Aushev represents Ingushetia's past; the present calls for a new leader capable of uniting the people in the face of the current threat that the crisis in Ingushetia may worsen.

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Kadyrov Presses his Campaign against the Yamadaevs

By Andrei Smirnov

Following the inauguration of the newly elected Russian president Dmitry Medvedev on May 7, the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov initiated another public campaign against his political rivals, the Yamadaev brothers, and the Vostok battalion that is headed by one of the brothers, Sulim Yamadaev. In early May, Kadyrov started to prepare public opinion for another statement criticizing the Yamadaev clan and the activity of Vostok battalion in general. On May 5, several policemen loyal to Kadyrov found the remains of seven people near the Chechen city of Gudermes. On May 7, an anonymous source in the Chechen police told the media that those unidentified people could have been victims of extra-judicial executions carried out by Vostok members. The next day, May 8, the Chechen police declared that investigators were looking into the battalion's possible involvement in the murder of the Arsamakov brothers (see Chechnya Weekly, April 17 and 24, May 1 and 8).



On May 12, Ramzan Kadyrov held a meeting with the heads of the regional law-enforcement bodies. At the conference, a representative of the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor's Office in Chechnya said that the committee had proceeded on the criminal case of Arsamakov brothers' disappearance (the brothers are relatives of a Moscow banker of the Chechen origin Abubakar Arsamakov, who had had conflicts with the Yamadaevs, and were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen early last year). "There are witnesses that give testimony on this case and the main suspect is Badrudi Yamadaev (one of the Yamadaev brothers-AS)," an official from the Investigative Committee told Ramzan Kadyrov.

The meeting Chechen president's meeting with the local security officials was broadcast by Chechen TV and looked like a political show that had been prepared in advance. When the Investigative Committee representative linked in his speech the Arsamakov case with that of the Yamadaev brothers, Kadyrov made a statement that sounded like a punch-line. The Chechen president announced that Vostok battalion commander Sulim Yamadaev had been suspended from the command of the battalion for the period of the investigation. "An investigation of Vostok activity would shed some light on many murders and kidnappings in Chechnya," he added (Regnum, May 13).

It was very important for Kadyrov to demonstrate a quick and clear victory in his standoff with the Yamadaev brothers. Nevertheless, the Chechen leader said that Sulim had been suspended, but did not say who had replaced him as Vostok commander. In fact, the acting commander of the battalion now is Jambulat Nutaev, Sulim Yamadaev's deputy and the unit's chief of staff, thus a person absolutely loyal to Sulim. Moreover, an official in the Russian Defense Ministry refused to comment on Kadyrov's statement and one of them said curtly in an interview to the RB website that "to dismiss a Vostok commander is the prerogative of the Ministry of Defense and Kadyrov's declaration is just his private business" (RB.ru, May 13).

Nevertheless, the military had to agree that all members of Vostok should go through a merit rating procedure and that the number of the unit fighters could be significantly reduced (Kommersant, April 14). In an interview with the newspaper Kommersant, Ruslan Yamadaev, the older brother of Sulim, denied the fact that Sulim had been dismissed, but hinted that Sulim could take another, much higher position in the Russian military hierarchy. In another interview, with the Life.ru website, Ruslan Yamadaev said: "Sulim is in the hospital now and has no information about his resignation. His first deputy is the acting commander of the battalion now and Vostok is functioning like it functioned before I am sure that Sulim will have a brilliant career and he deserves a higher position." (Life.ru, April 13).

The Russian military command will most likely make changes in Vostok and move Sulim Yamadaev from Gudermes to Khankala, the main military base of the Russian army in Chechnya. In late April, a source in the Defense Ministry told Nezavisimaya Gazeta that the ministry considered a plan to transform the Vostok battalion into a special brigade to be stationed in Khankala and that Sulim might head it (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, April 21). Such a step could help calm Kadyrov down while at the same time preserving Vostok as a military force that the Russian military command in Chechnya needs in order to conduct special operations in the region. However, if this is the case, Ramzan Kadyrov will not have achieved his main goal - the destruction of the Yamadaev clan. The brothers will still have capabilities to

influence political life in Chechnya and, what is more important, the Kremlin's policy towards the republic.

Russian political and military leaders are not so stupid as not to have learned lessons from the Kadyrov-Yamadaev war that occurred in Gudermes last month (see Chechnya Weekly, April 17). After a time we will see great changes in Chechnya, and not only in Vostok, but in all pro-Russian Chechen units. "The conflict between bodyguards of the Chechen president and fighters of the Vostok battalion comes from the absence of a unified body that should coordinate movements of all units in Chechnya," said General Anatoly Kulikov, a veteran of the Chechen war and head of the unofficial but very influential organization called the Club of Russian Military Leaders, told the Russian media (Yuga.ru, April 16).

"I believe that the Russian Defense Ministry made a mistake forming mono ethnic units in Chechnya," General Yuri Netkachev, a former commander of the 58th army in the North Caucasus, told Nezavisimaya Gazeta. "The mistake should be corrected. It is the Military Manual that should rule in the army, not ethno-cultural values or kinship ties" (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, April 21).

Some say that the generals are talking about reforming only of the Vostok battalion, but in fact they mean the units subordinate to Ramzan Kadyrov as well. Most likely, Russia's generals will soon suggest mixing all pro-Russian Chechen units with Russian officers and putting all Chechen squads under the strict control of the Regional Operational Staff for Conducting the Anti-Terrorist Operation in the North Caucasus. That is the main conclusion that the Kremlin might draw from the gun battle between Yamadaevsty and Kadyrovsty in Gudermes.

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