

### Attacks Reported in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria

Unidentified gunmen fired on a car in which soldiers were traveling in the village of Verkhnie Achaluki in Ingushetia's Malgobeksky district on May 29, killing two servicemen on the spot and wounding two others. One of the wounded servicemen later died in the hospital, bringing the total number of servicemen killed in the attack to three. The press service of the Investigative Committee for Ingushetia told Interfax that the servicemen were traveling through Ingushetia on the way to their base in Mozdok, North Ossetia, at the time of the attack. Russian Interior Ministry troops were involved in a shootout with militants in Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district on May 24. A local police source told RIA Novosti that no troops were injured in the clash and that there was no information about fatalities among the "illegal armed group" members involved in the clash. "Troops clashed with a group of nine gunmen, about one kilometer from the town of Gandalbos, and then about three kilometers from the town another clash occurred with another group of militants numbering about 30," the source told the news agency. The source said that the militants were fired on with artillery as they retreated. A spokesman for the Ingush Interior Ministry said that the ministry had no information confirming that those armed encounters had taken place. The same spokesman said, however, that two Interior Ministry troops were wounded on May 23 when an unidentified explosive device went off in the Sunzhensky district. "They were both hospitalized and the doctors say their lives are not in danger," the spokesman said.



RIA Novosti reported on May 23 that a group of unidentified assailants opened fire on a border guard garrison in downtown Nazran, Ingushetia's largest city. "The attack [involving automatic weapons and grenade launchers] occurred at 3:00 a.m. Moscow time [23:00 GMT]," an Ingush law-enforcement source told the news agency. "No casualties have been reported." According to RIA Novosti, a spokesman for the regional Federal Security Service (FSB) directorate later confirmed the attack, saying there were no casualties among the garrison personnel. In an item on the same incident, Itar-Tass reported that the attackers fired with small arms and grenade launchers and that three or four grenades were fired at the building, causing a fire that was extinguished by border guards. The building sustained minor damage but nobody was injured in the attack, Itar-Tass reported.

In Dagestan, a senior police officer was killed on May 25. RIA Novosti, citing a police source, reported that Colonel Akhmedudin Absaludinov, deputy head of the investigation and search division of the republican Interior Ministry's department for combating economic crimes, was shot dead in the center of Makhachkala by an unidentified gunman. The news agency reported that Absaludinov's murder was connected to his professional activities, noting that, according to the Dagestani prosecutor's office, he had led the fight against corruption in the republic for a long time.

An explosive device planted under a car belonging to a top official from Dagestan's Finance Ministry went off early on May 26 in Makhachkala, the republic's capital. According to a police source, the explosion seriously damaged the car, but no one was injured in the attack.

On May 24, a member of the anti-organized crime directorate (UBOP) of Kabardino-Balkaria's Interior Ministry was shot to death by two unidentified gunmen. Kavkazky Uzel reported on May 25 that the murder occurred when the attackers, driving in a VAZ-2110 car without license plates, fired automatic weapons at a Mazda belonging to the UBOP officer, Azamat Nagoev, at a car wash located at the entrance to the village of Dugulubgei, killing Nagoev and a guard at the car wash, Boris Balkizov. On May 19, unidentified attackers threw an explosive device into the courtyard of a home in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria's capital. The ensuing blast left a 32-year-old man, who was not named but identified as a former UBOP employee with shrapnel wounds in the back, arm, leg and torso, as well as facial burns. On May 3, unknown attackers hurled a grenade and fired automatic weapons at a security guard patrol in Nalchik, wounding two security guards.

In Chechnya, a "gang leader" wanted for involvement in a number of serious crimes, including the bombing attack in Grozny's Staropromyslovsky district on May 4 that killed five police officers (Chechnya Weekly, May 8), killed himself on May 24 by detonating a grenade in order to avoid being captured, Itar-Tass reported. Chechen Interior Minister Ruslan Alkhanov said that Abu Isupkhadzhev, whom he identified as the so-called emir of the Grozny district village of Pervomaiskaya, was spotted in the village of Valerik in the Achkhoy-Martan district. "During his detention, he offered

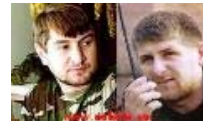
armed resistance and then blew himself up with a grenade," Alkhanov said. Isupkhadzhiev was a native of the Grozny district village of Pobedinskoye, Itar-Tass reported. According to RIA Novosti, he had been a member of the "Central Front" of separatist fighters led by Rustam Basaev, who was killed in August 2007.

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### Another Confrontation Between Yamadaev's and Kadyrov's Forces Reported

A violent confrontation between members of the Vostok battalion, which operates under the federal Defense Ministry's Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), and Chechen law-enforcement personnel reportedly took place on May 26. Kavkazky Uzel quoted an unnamed Chechen Interior Ministry officer who described what happened. "On the evening on May 26 on the Gudermes-Shuani highway, members of the PPC (patrol-sentry service) of the republican MVD who were carrying out operational-search activities set up a mobile guard-post. Carrying out orders from the leadership of the republic's MVD, the policemen stopped and checked the weight of the motor transport passing along the road. Around eight o'clock in the evening, they stopped a column of three Urals trucks accompanied by two passenger cars—a Zhiguli and a Niva—for examination. In response to the demand to present documents, one of the military men with the rank of captain pulled out a pistol and demanded that they be allowed to pass, stating that they were heading to the Vostok battalion's base. The policemen decided not to get into a conflict with the servicemen and allowed the column to pass."



According to Kavkazky Uzel, however, after the column arrived at the Vostok base, a group of Vostok servicemen returned from the base to the guard-post and demanded that the guard-post be removed, which led to a fight in which two of the Chechen policemen, an officer and a sergeant, were injured and subsequently hospitalized. "In order to intimidate the policemen, the servicemen also opened fire under their feet and shot up a car [belonging to] members of the DPS [road patrol service], and then left for their base," the Chechen Interior Ministry officer told Kavkazky Uzel, adding that the incident is now under investigation. "This is hardly the first case of Vostok servicemen coming into conflict with members of the republic's law-enforcement organs," he said.

A confrontation between a group of Vostok servicemen led by Badruddi Yamadaev, younger brother of the battalion's commander, Sulim Yamadaev, and members of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's bodyguard unit that took place on April 14 after the Vostok members refused to yield a road outside Gudermes to Kadyrov's motorcade reportedly resulted in a number of deaths. Following the incident, the Chechen authorities placed Badruddi Yamadaev on the republic's wanted list. Kadyrov subsequently claimed that Sulim Yamadaev had been replaced as the battalion's commander by a person whom Kadyrov did not name. That, however, has not been officially confirmed (Chechnya Weekly, April 17 and 24; May 1, 8, 16 and 22).

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### Zakaev Denies Making Overtures to Kadyrov

The London-based prime minister of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), Akhmed Zakaev, has denied that comments he recently made which were widely interpreted as praise for Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov are part of an attempt to reach an accommodation with the pro-Moscow Chechen leader. Kavkazky Uzel on May 18 quoted Kadyrov as saying in an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that the situation in Chechnya today is cardinaly different from that of 2000-2003, “when the civilian population of Chechnya was subjected to cruel and severe zachistki, torture and violence,” that rebel forces “are not fighting against Ramzan Kadyrov; they are fighting against the occupation forces,” and that while Chechnya is not independent, its “decolonization” is a “fait accompli.” Zakaev was also quoted as saying that rebel forces are freer to carry out attacks on federal forces because police loyal to Kadyrov prevent federal forces from punishing the civilian population for such attacks (Chechnya Weekly, May 22).



Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported on May 23 that Zakaev had made his comments about Kadyrov in an interview with RFE/RL in November 2007 and repeated some of them at a conference in London on May 14 organized by the Royal United Services Institute. Yet according to RFE/RL, Zakaev gave an interview to RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service on May 20 in which he “implicitly” branded Kadyrov a “criminal” for his repeated calls to wipe out the remaining resistance forces and to punish civilians who provide them with material aid. Zakaev also said that the Russian leadership still views Kadyrov as a rebel and “will kill him treacherously at the first opportunity,” RFE/RL reported. According to RFE/RL, Zakaev made a similar prediction at the May 14 conference in London, saying he is convinced “a magnificent funeral” is being prepared for Kadyrov and that Beslan Gantamirov, the former Chechen Deputy Prime Minister and Grozny mayor, is slated to succeed Kadyrov.

Newsru.com, citing Ekho Moskvyy radio, had quoted Zakaev as saying that “we are preparing several serious documents aimed at averting clashes between the Chechen partisans and the Chechen police” (Chechnya Weekly, May 22). Yet RFE/RL quoted Zakaev in his May 20 interview as categorically denying speculation that some kind of draft written agreement exists between him and the pro-Moscow Chechen leadership. RFE/RL also quoted him as denying that the recent visit to Grozny by renowned surgeon Khassan Baiev was undertaken at his behest. RFE/RL also reported that Zakaev, asked whether he would under any circumstances seek an accommodation with the pro-Moscow Chechen leadership, dismissed as impermissible “any betrayal of the path we have followed over the past 10-15 years,” adding that for him to return to Chechnya tomorrow would constitute such a betrayal. Zakaev added, however, that he sees it as his duty to seek any possible political settlement of the Chechen conflict, and that the government and parliament in exile are working to that end.

Zakaev's denials notwithstanding, some observers regard Zakaev's perceived positive “signals” to Kadyrov as significant. Sergei Markedonov, head of the Inter-Ethnic Relations Department at the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, said in a piece posted by the Politcom.ru website on May 26 that with the virtual elimination of internal opposition in Chechnya, a process of “ethno-national consolidation around the figure of Ramzan Kadyrov” has begun.

“The Kadyrov phenomenon is becoming a subject of serious study within the Ichkerian ‘abroad’—that is, among representatives of the separatist movement who were involved in armed opposition to the Russian state in 1994-1996 and in 1999-2001,” Markedonov wrote. “Thus the London ‘dweller’ [Zakaev] under certain conditions is prepared to recognize the legitimacy of the new political order in the republic. For him, Kadyrov is a politician protecting the Chechen ethno-national cause. In his time, Ramzan Kadyrov, criticizing the member of the team of President Alu Alkhanov, German Vok, repeatedly pointed to the fact that his first and last names had been changed, emphasizing that this is not ‘in the Chechen manner’. Thus, loyalty to ethnos means much more for both Kadyrov and Zakaev than any other loyalty. And this unites them.” Markedonov added that Kadyrov and Zakaev may also “come together in an aversion to radical Islam.”

Markedonov wrote that while none of this means that the Kadyrov regime is prepared to accept overtures from Zakaev and his allies, and that the latter are unlikely to return to Chechnya anytime soon, signals of this kind will appear from time to time because part of the separatist political elite living abroad sees “potential allies” in “the pro-Russian power and administrative structures of the Chechen Republic.”

Markedonov concluded: “With Russia’s help, the Islamists and simply inconvenient rivals in the struggle for power (Maskhadov, Basaev, Sadulaev) have been crushed and ethno-nationalist and ‘traditional’ trends have been strengthened. With the help of financial infusions from Moscow, the [Chechen] economy has been ‘stabilized’ (especially in comparison to the war periods), and the social sector has been repaired (again, compared to the 1990s). Having eliminated any checks and balances to Kadyrov Jr., Moscow itself has placed all power in one pair of hands.”

Meanwhile, Magomed Khanbiev, the former ChRI Defense Minister and general of the ChRI armed forces who is now a deputy in Chechnya’s parliament, called on his former comrades living abroad to return to the republic and disband the rebel armed groups, Kavkazky Uzel reported on May 29. “Our president is a Chechen, the representatives of all branches of power are Chechens, members of the law-enforcement organs are also Chechens,” the website quoted him as saying. “We don’t realize it, but it is possibly today that we have received the very independence that was fought for all those years. And when those who have not yet returned [to Chechnya] understand this, realize that it is the embodiment of their ideals, they will return home and become brothers-in-arms of the president.”

According to Kavkazky Uzel, Khanbiev said that the authorities in Chechnya are ready for negotiations with the remaining rebels. “We must help them in this, since we are responsible for their fate, for the future of their families. You, as people who have influence on these young people, and we, who are ready for any form of negotiations. We want you to return. And I appeal to you yourselves to return and to assist in the return of those who remain on the other side of the barricades. I ask you to really look at what we have today, soberly assess the situation in the republic, with whom and with what you agree or do not agree, and to articulate it. In order to listen to you, we have a president, a parliament, a people.”

Kavkazky Uzel reported that some observers in Chechnya view Khanbiev’s comments as a response to Zakaev. “Zakaev, located in London, recently gave an unambiguous signal of readiness to enter into a dialogue with the functioning authorities in the republic,” the website quoted an anonymous Chechen political analyst as saying. “Of course, the leadership of the republic, through the mouth of the former Defense Minister of Ichkeria, let it be known that is not averse to beginning contacts. Time will tell what will come from this.”

Still, some Chechens said they thought Khanbiev’s comments would have no influence on those currently carrying on the armed struggle against federal forces and the republican authorities. “Khanbiev—who, like Zakaev, hid abroad—never enjoyed particular authority among those who really fought in both the first and second military campaigns in the republic,” a former ChRI parliamentary deputy told the website on condition of anonymity. “Gelaev, Basaev and Maskhadov himself were genuinely significant figures in the resistance. Khanbiev couldn’t be called anything other than an ‘operatic general’, and Zakaev is an artist who has no notion of military affairs. I don’t think that those who are today subordinated to Dokka Umarov and are in the mountains will rush in multitudes to surrender following Khanbiev’s appeal. In their circles, he is seen as nothing but a traitor who didn’t have enough courage to die for his ideals.”

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### New Presidential Envoy Visits Chechnya

Vladimir Ustinov, the new presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, arrived May 28 in Chechnya on an official visit, Kavkazky Uzel reported. According to the press service of the Chechen president and government, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accompanied Ustinov to the Kadyrovs' native village, Tsentoroi, where they visited the grave of Kadyrov's father, Akhmad Kadyrov, who was Chechnya's president from October 2003 until he was assassinated in May 2004. Ustinov was scheduled to visit schools, hospitals and objects under construction.



Interfax quoted Ustinov as telling a group of generals with whom he met in Tsentoroi that representatives of the security forces and law-enforcement agencies who are deployed in Chechnya should work closely with the republic's religious authorities. "I believe that you in your work need to receive the blessings of the mufti of Chechnya, representatives of Orthodox Christians, to cooperate closely and consult with them," he said. "In that case the people will support you even more and your work will be more successful. The country's leadership is devoting special attention to that approach toward work. I believe that the military and law-enforcement organs will only gain if they are in constant communication with the clergy." According to Interfax, one of Chechnya's best known and respected religious figures, Khozhakhmed Kadyrov, expressed hope that Ustinov in his new post "will give aid and assistance to the republic's rebirth and give the region the attention it needs."

Meanwhile, a group of relatives of people who have been abducted held a demonstration in Grozny on May 29 near the building that houses the offices of Chechnya's human rights ombudsman. According to Kavkazky Uzel, ten women and a man held up signs with photographs of their missing young family members, with one of the demonstrators holding up a sign reading: "Return our sons!"

"The authorized representative of the [Russian] president in the Southern Federal District, Vladimir Ustinov, is currently in the republic on a visit," one of the demonstrators told Kavkazky Uzel. "I would like him to know that there is such a serious problem in our republic as disappeared and kidnapped citizens, so that not only the local authorities, but also the federal authorities will start to work actively in this direction and finally tell us what happened to our children. Where are they? Who abducted them, and why? Where are they now? If they are no longer alive, then let them at least say where their graves are located or give us their remains for burial according to our customs."

According to Kavkazky Uzel, following his arrival in Chechnya on May 28, Ustinov promised to do everything possible to determine the fate of those who disappeared in Chechnya during the military campaigns in the republic. "Missing people, if they are alive, need to be searched for," the website quoted Ustinov as saying. "I assure you that we will do everything possible to help citizens in searching for their missing relatives." During his tenure as Russia's Prosecutor General, Ustinov urged a policy of detaining family members of terrorists involved in hostage taking (Chechnya Weekly, May 16).

Meanwhile, Amnesty International made specific mention of the North Caucasus and Chechnya in a special memo on human rights in Russia sent to President Dmitry Medvedev and timed to coincide with the human rights group's annual global report. The Associated Press reported on May 28 that the memo stated that abuses continue to plague Chechnya and surrounding regions in the North Caucasus, where police and government forces have allegedly tortured and abducted civilians. "Confessions' extracted under torture from those alleged to be members of armed groups have been used as evidence in trials in the North Caucasus which fail to meet international standards of fairness resulting in long-term imprisonment," the memo stated.

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### Briefs

#### Kadyrov Named to State Council's Presidium

President Dmitry Medvedev has named Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov a member of the presidium of the State Council, the presidential advisory body created by Vladimir Putin in 2000, Kavkazky Uzel reported on May 28. According to the Russian president's press service, the other members of the new State Council presidium are Tula Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Dudka, Kamchatka Krai Governor Aleksei Kuzmitsky, Vologda Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Pozgalev, Novosibirsk Oblast Governor Viktor Tolokonsky, Perm Krai Governor Oleg Chirkunov and Tyumen Oblast Governor Vladimir Yakushev.

#### Chechen Officials Again Denounce Sivak's Comments

Chechen officials have continued to denounce the interview that the commander of the Combined Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, Major General Nikolai Sivak, gave to the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda, (Chechnya Weekly, May 22). Sivak stated in the interview that Chechnya's rebels are getting support from the local population. "To accuse the local population of supporting the militants, when thousands of law-enforcement agency employees, members of the administration, religious figures and ordinary citizens of the republic have become their [the rebels'] victims, is blasphemous!" Kommersant on May 24 quoted Chechnya's human rights ombudsman, Nurdi Nukazhiev, as saying. Nukhazhiev compared Sivak's comments to "the far-fetched accusations against the Chechens made by the Stalin-Beria regime on the eve of the deportation in 1944." While Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov has not commented on Sivak's remarks, the head of the information-analytical directorate of the Chechen presidential administration, Lemy Gudaeva, accused the Russian military of deliberately heating up the situation. "They need to justify their presence here, to get [promotions] and awards, and so statements about swarms of militants, about their support from the population, are appearing," Kommersant quoted Gudaeva as saying. Nukhazhiev called on the prosecutor of the Combined Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, Maksim Toporikov, to investigate Sivak's comments, but, according to Nukhazhiev, Toporikov refused, saying there were insufficient grounds to do so. Nukhazhiev told Kommersant he will appeal to the Prosecutor General's Office.

#### Ingush Opposition Website Suspended

Moscow's Kuntsevsky district court on May 26 suspended Ingushetiya.ru, the opposition website in Ingushetia owned by Magomed Yevloev, while prosecutors investigate accusations by the republic's authorities that it disseminates extremist material. According to Reuters, the court said in a statement that it had "upheld a motion by the Republic of Ingushetia ... to order Magomed Yevloev to close his Internet activities." Yevloev's lawyer, Kaloi Akhilgov, told Reuters the accusations against the website, which is highly critical of Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, were political. "The website shows Ingushetia as it really is and they don't like it," Akhilgov said. "We are going to challenge this court order." Reuters quoted Akhilgov as saying that Ingushetiya.ru is hosted in the United States, meaning that the court has to order all Internet providers in Russia to switch off the website, which, he said, will be a logistical challenge by the June 5 deadline. Reporters Without Borders issued a statement on May 27 deploring what it called the "dangerous" hounding of independent media outlets in Ingushetia. The press freedom watchdog group noted that the 19th issue of the independent paper Doch was banned from newsstands and at the airport in the Ingushetian capital, Magas, two days earlier because it contained an interview with former Ingushetian President Ruslav Aushev. "Despite the ban, Doch was distributed in Ingushetia and other places," Reporters Without Borders stated. "But such censorship is pointless and also dangerous for freedom of expression in a region which is already very isolated."

#### Chechen Government Youth Website Hacked

Computer hackers infiltrated the Chechen government's youth website on May 23 and posted messages insulting the Russian government, RIA Novosti reported. The news agency quoted a spokesman for the republic's youth affairs committee as saying that the hackers, who apparently gained access to the site's server from Germany, posted photos of the slain Chechen rebel field commanders Khattab and Shamil Basaev and that the attack was aimed "at discrediting the republic's government and the youth policy it is carrying out." RIA Novosti reported that the hackers were believed to be from Moscow and that the website was offline while computer technicians repaired the damage.

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### Russia Admits Rebel Fighter Activity in Chechnya

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Faced with recurring reports of assaults and assassinations in Grozny and the rest of Chechnya, Russian government officials are being forced to admit that rebel fighter operations have become a reality. As always, the leadership of Russia's Interior Ministry and Defense Ministry attempts to explain this by pointing fingers at funding received from overseas sources and generated, among other things, by the kidnapping business, although the officials conveniently fail to mention that no high-profile kidnappings have been reported for quite some time.



It is also unclear exactly how these funds are remitted to Chechnya, because in contrast with 2002–2003, when rebel fighters were active in the Pankissi Gorge (the ravine straddling the Georgia-Chechnya border in the mountainous part of the Major Caucasus ridge that is populated mostly by ethnic Chechens), no illegal border crossings have been attempted during the last few years.

According to Deputy Russian Interior Minister Arkady Yedelev, all rebel fighter activity boils down to a small group of no more than twenty foreign mercenaries working to draw young people into anti-Russian operations ([www.regnum.ru/news/fd-south/chechnya/1001679.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/fd-south/chechnya/1001679.html)), although Yedelev did admit that the situation in the North Caucasus in general may be described as stable with some tension. He also noted that rebel fighters are making special efforts to destabilize Karachaevo-Cherkessia, thus proving the importance of this region for their purposes, and said this was the reason for the recent dispatch of troops to the area.

The losses among rebel fighters continue to be an important indicator for propaganda purposes, yet after nine years of war neither Russian nor Chechen officials can explain exactly how they arrive at these casualty numbers. For instance, according to official Grozny government reports, “this year, police investigations and special operations led to the killing of 23 rebels, including two commanders, arrest of 144 members of illegal armed groups, and surrender to the police of 25 former rebel fighters,” which is a total of 192. The Russian military cites another set of numbers—according to them, 32 rebel fighters have been killed and none was arrested or surrendered. If these reports are true, it is puzzling why Ramzan Kadyrov claimed in his statement on January 30 that “the war may already be described in the past tense.”

It is equally mystifying how these ostensibly defeated rebel fighters could manage to mount a number of high-profile attacks against government facilities in the villages of Alkhazurovo (village administration building), Bamut (administration building burned down), Roshni-Chu (shootout with an intelligence gathering group), Dai (Interior Ministry department/police building), Shali (military commander's office shot up), Grozny (a military column bombed) and other units of the pro-Moscow government ([www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1214147.html](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1214147.html)). This list does not include dozens of minor isolated explosions and assaults against the police forces across the republic. Even those who would have preferred to keep information of this sort under wraps for fear of damaging the image of Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of Chechnya's pro-Moscow government, could not keep quiet about these developments. If rebel fighters are capable of mounting so many attacks across the entire republic after almost two hundred of them were supposedly eliminated, then their true numbers could only be guessed, and that does not even include areas outside of Chechnya.

Young Chechen men who keep leaving for the mountains to join the rebel forces are a constant thorn in the government's side. For example, according to the villagers of the town of Vedeno, five young men, including one high school and four college students, left to join the rebels during the month of May alone ([www.vedeno.net/forum](http://www.vedeno.net/forum)). To contain this trend and keep it from spreading, the Grozny government is putting pressure on friends and family members of the young men who left to join the rebels. Frequent interrogations of parents and family members by assorted government agencies (including the Federal Security Service, Interior Ministry, Yug [South] special forces unit and other pro-Moscow government groups) force people to yield to the government's demands. For instance, the evening news of the local TV channel “Grozny” on May 22 featured footage of a group of mothers who were placed in front of the cameras and forced to appeal to their children to return home or be cursed for the rest of their lives. It

was a miserable sight to see: people understood that children left home to join the rebels because of the actions of the government, not because their parents urged them to do so. The families cannot stop them from leaving and the government's use of their parents as a pressure tool causes nothing but public resentment against the government.

The second development worth noting is the government's admission of public support for the rebel fighters. As noted by the commander of the Combined Group of Forces in the North Caucasus Nikolai Sivak, "the local populace either supports the bandit groups or stays neutral, does nothing to resist them and does not give them up to the federal forces" (BBC radio, May 20; Chechnya Weekly, May 22). This fact is well-known yet neither Russia nor Chechnya likes to bring it up. In a place where unemployment is sky-high—according to the official reports, 76.9 percent of the able-bodied population or half a million people are unemployed (<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1215658.html>)—and where the law is used primarily for putting pressure on the public instead of protecting it from the government, it is easy to find thousands of people who not only support the resistance movement, but are ready to become its active members. Without this support—or, at a minimum, widespread public sympathy—the rebel fighters would be nothing but kamikazes ready to perish at any moment. It is the support of the population that allows the rebels to not only survive for years, but implement structural and qualitative changes in their ranks as well.

Grigory Shvedov of the Kavkazky Uzel website confirmed that rebel fighters in Chechnya usually do not terrorize the public. According to Shvedov, acts of violence targeting civilians are usually staged by elements other than the rebels, and this is an important consideration that the Chechen rebels seem to have included in their tactical arsenal. The assassination of rank-and-file policemen is always condemned by the public because many of them have joined the force as the only available way to earn a living. It should not be forgotten that the educational system, which would have given many people a chance to learn marketable skills, has been missing in Chechnya for the last 18 years. Today the only opportunities available in Chechnya are in the construction business or the police. Akhmed Zakaev, prime minister in the government of the exiled separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), tried to take advantage of the situation when he shocked all Chechens by admitting the achievements of Ramzan Kadyrov's rule and suggesting that the rebels should revise their stance toward the Chechen policemen (<http://chechenpress.org/events/2008/05/20/1f.shtml>). The rebel leader Dokka Umarov has not stayed quiet either: he continues to argue the cause of his recently announced Caucasus Emirate on video by making frequent references to his predecessors Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev and Shamil Basaev, who, according to Umarov, did not announce the Emirate earlier only because they did not have enough time. Umarov also claimed that the rebel forces today are capable of mounting strikes across the entire territory of the Emirate (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5991894707404590867&hl=fr>).

Regardless, the massive stream of news reports from all the parties involved in the conflict make it clear that the Chechen rebel forces are ramping up their activities and this is certain to affect the entire North Caucasus resistance movement and the political environment of the region in general.

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