

Kadyrov Wants Russian Military to Vacate Land and Installations in Chechnya

Speaking during a government meeting in Grozny on July 19, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov demanded that the heads of power and law-enforcement organs strictly follow the law in using land and installations in Chechnya. "The Chechen Republic is a full-fledged subject of the Russian Federation; the constitution and other laws of Russia and the Chechen Republic function here," Newsru.com quoted him as saying. "And I am firmly convinced that not only the civilian authorities, but also the military command of units and sub-units deployed in the republic are also strictly obligated to observe them."



Kadyrov expressed unhappiness over the fact that representatives of the military command deployed in Chechnya who were invited to attend the meeting did not show up. "Units and sub-units of power structures and law-enforcement organs occupy huge territory and installations," he said. "A majority of these are in their possession without the corresponding legal registration. When I ... demand that all of this be brought into line, they write reports that Ramzan Kadyrov is against the federal center. ... It is necessary to close this question once and for all. If we demand that ordinary citizens obey laws, then first and foremost all officials, including military ones, are obligated to obey them."

Kadyrov called on the heads of all ministries, agencies and local administrations "to take all necessary measures through judicial organs, prosecutor's offices and other instances so that large land territories and installations ... occupied by the military without permission are vacated and transferred according to their intended use." He added: "We are acting in the role of supplicants; we are asking the military every day to vacate schools and hospitals at a time when there are not enough of these establishments in the republic. ... We must obey the law, whether we are civilians or in uniform."

According to Newsru.com, participants in the Chechen government meeting cited numerous cases involving violations of laws governing land use and damage resulting from the unlawful use of land by the military, with the damage to agricultural land alone estimated at around eight billion rubles (more than \$340 million). Kommersant on July 21 quoted Chechnya's minister for property relations and land use, Supyan Lechkhadzhiev, as saying: "Damages to the republic amount to more than fifteen million rubles [more than \$638,000] monthly, because a majority of the land is not used as intended." According to a report submitted to the meeting, the Russian military currently occupies fifteen times more territory in Chechnya than it was renting during the final years of the Soviet Union. In 1992, the military units of the federal Defense Ministry and other structures were occupying 3,754 hectares of land (14.5 square miles) in Chechnya while today the land officially occupied by the military in the republic comes to 31,000 hectares (120 square miles), not including land that is being used by the military without the local authorities' permission.

Kommersant reported that Chechnya's deputy chief prosecutor, Nikolai Kalugin, had urged the federal Main Military Prosecutor's Office to audit the use of funds allocated to military units deployed in Chechnya for renting land and for compensating the republic for damages to land occupied by the military. Still, Kadyrov ordered his officials not to wait for the results of such an audit and to ensure that agricultural and other civilian land illegally occupied by the military is returned as soon as possible, given that some of the installations that his administration plans to reconstruct are currently occupied by the military and other "power structures." Kadyrov said that if the military refused to vacate such installations, then it will become necessary "to force them to do it through the courts."

The head of the press service of the Temporary Operational Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, Nikolai Varavin, conceded in an interview with Kommersant that the problems discussed by Kadyrov and other Chechen officials during the meeting in Grozny on July 19 do exist, but said they should not create a conflict between the military and Chechen authorities. "I cannot speak for the Defense Ministry structures, but the heads of the [federal] police units are in constant contact with representatives of the local administrations; we are discussing with them and resolving issues of returning civilian establishments." An unnamed representative of the Unified Group of Forces in the North Caucasus said, however, that the Chechen authorities' accusations concerning the military's use of land in the republic were far-fetched. "What's the point of such accusations?" the official said. "We are not refusing to pay rent for the

land, if the law requires it.” The official added he could not comment on the fact that senior military officials had failed to attend “Mr. Kadyrov’s meeting.”

Meanwhile, around 20 mothers of young men who were abducted in Chechnya held a demonstration in Grozny on July 18 calling for the return of their children, Gazeta reported on July 20. The demonstration was organized by the non-governmental organization Materinskaya Trevoga (Mother’s Alarm) and several officials from the office of Chechnya’s human rights ombudsman were on hand to show their support. According to the newspaper, one demonstrator, Mata Suleimanova, held a sign directed at Chechnya’s president that read, “Ramzan, Help Us Return Our Children.” She told Gazeta that in 2002, three of her sons had been taken by unidentified persons in masks who, she said, judging by their accents, were Russians.

As Gazeta, protests were recently held outside the base of the Russian Defense Ministry’s Vostok battalion in the town of Gudermes by demonstrators who accused the battalion and its leaders—including its commander, Sulim Yamadaev, and his brothers—of murders and abductions (North Caucasus Weekly, June 12). The Vostok battalion and the Yamadaev brothers have been locked in a conflict with Kadyrov and his supporters since a violent confrontation between the two sides in April. According to Gazeta, the organizers of the July 18 demonstration in Grozny said that before the conflict between Kadyrov and the Vostok battalion erupted, they had not been granted permission to hold demonstrations protesting the kidnappings.

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Policemen Murdered in Chechnya and Karachaevo-Cherkessia

Three policemen were killed in Chechnya on July 20. The Associated Press on July 21 quoted an anonymous Chechen Interior Ministry official as saying that the bullet-riddled bodies of three officers who had been guarding an Interior Ministry trailer were found on a collective farm. The official said the assailants made off with the officers' guns. Kavkazky Uzel reported that the incident took place on the outskirts of the village of Naursk.



Kommersant on July 22 identified the three slain policemen as Khizir Musaliev, Avsad Aitamirov and Salavdi Bachaev. The newspaper reported that Chechen Interior Minister Ruslan Alkhanov had visited the scene of the crime on July 21 and ordered local officials to find the murderers of the policemen "in the shortest possible time." Alkhanov warned that "those heads of police departments who do not take all necessary measures to suppress such sallies, ensure the required level of law and order [and] prevent infringements on the lives of civilians and members of the law-enforcement organs will be punished right up to dismissal from their posts." Alkhanov added that each police chief must control the "operational situation" in their area, "answers for everything happening on his territory and bears personal responsibility for each person, whether he is an ordinary resident or a member of the police."

Kavkazky Uzel reported on July 22 that Alkhanov had promised a reward for information about the killers of the three policemen. As the website noted, the number of attacks on policemen in Chechnya has increased lately, with two or three such attacks happening per week.

On July 23, unknown attackers fired on two vehicles carrying members of an OMON special police unit from Zabaikalsky Krai in Siberia who are stationed in Chechnya, Kavkazky Uzel reported. No one was hurt in the incident. On July 22, a serviceman from a federal Defense Ministry unit was severely wounded in a bomb explosion that took place in a wooded area on the outskirts of the village of Bamut.

Meanwhile, three traffic police officers were shot to death in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, the Associated Press reported on July 18. According to the republic's Interior Ministry, gunmen entered a restaurant where the officers were eating after work and opened fire. A bystander was also injured in the shooting and the attackers escaped with two of the officers' handguns.

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Police and Officials Targeted in Ingushetia

There were also numerous attacks on police and other officials in Ingushetia over the past week. The republic's deputy mufti, Kombulat Zyazikov, was shot and wounded by unknown attackers on July 24. Itar-Tass reported that Zyazikov was traveling in an automobile on the Nazran-Karabulak highway when the attack took place. The Associated Press (AP), however, reported that Zyazikov was shot near his home in Nazran and quoted police as saying he was in the hospital in stable condition. According to AP, Zyazikov was shot in the knee and shoulder. Interfax reported that Kombulat Zyazikov is a close relative of Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov.



Kavkazky Uzel reported on July 24 that seven people were injured when a bomb went off outside a house belonging to Isa Korigov, head of criminal investigation department of the town of Malgobek. The website quoted law-enforcement sources in Ingushetia as saying that someone had fired a grenade launcher at Korigov's home in Malgobek and that the bombing took place after police who had been summoned following the grenade attack arrived at the home. Korigov was among the seven people injured in the blast. RIA Novosti quoted local residents who live near Korigov's house as saying they heard automatic weapons fire followed by several large explosions.

Also on July 24, unidentified gunmen opened fire on the home of the chairman of Ingushetia's government, Kharun Dzeitov, in Nazran's elite Tsentri-Kamaz district. No one was hurt in the attack. At around the same time, unidentified gunmen fired on a car in which a couple and their young children were traveling in Nazran's Altievsky municipal district. No one was hurt in that incident. That same day, unknown attackers fired on a car being driven by Magomet Bogatyrev, a government specialist in geological surveying and natural resources from Rostov-on-Don. The incident took place not far from a police checkpoint near the settlement of Barsuki. Neither Bogatyrev nor the members of his family with whom he was traveling were hurt. Bogatyrev, who had driven to Ingushetia to attend a funeral, told police that the gunmen who fired at his car had been standing in the road next to two automobiles and that several of them were wearing camouflage uniforms.

On July 18, unidentified gunmen fired on a column of vehicles carrying members of the 126th regiment of the Interior Ministry's Internal Troops as it was traveling on the highway connecting the villages of Barsuki and Gazi-Yurt in Ingushetia. Six servicemen were wounded in the attack, Kavkazky Uzel reported. On July 17, an OMON police commando was wounded in an armed attack that took place near an OMON base in the city of Karabulak.

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Briefs

Presidential Envoy Visits North Ossetia and Ingushetia

Vladimir Ustinov, the new presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District who visited Chechnya in May, made another trip to the North Caucasus last week, this time visiting North Ossetia and Ingushetia. Kommersant reported on July 19 that Ustinov did not meet with members of the Voice of Beslan or the Mothers of Beslan while in North Ossetia despite the fact that both groups had made repeated requests to meet with Ustinov to discuss the investigation into the September 2004 Beslan school siege. According to the newspaper, while in Ingushetia, Ustinov, accompanied by Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, visited a border guard headquarters in the Dzheirakh gorge near the republic's border with Georgia.

Large Bomb Discovered in Dagestan's Capital

A large bomb was discovered in Makhachkala on July 21 not far from the offices of the Dagestani branch of Russia's Federal Treasury, Kavkazky Uzel reported. The bomb, described as a "powerful homemade explosive device," was detonated in a controlled explosion. According to the website, experts said the bomb could have been planted either by enemies of the head of the Dagestani branch of Russia's Federal Treasury, Saidgusein Magomedov, or by "extremists," given that a police post was located nearby.

Kosovo Flag Reportedly Raised During Soccer Match in Grozny

Gazeta.ru reported on July 20 that Kosovo's national flag was raised in Grozny's Sultan Bilimkhanov Stadium during a championship match between the Terek Grozny and Rubin Kazan soccer teams. According to the website, the flag appeared alongside the flags of the countries that some of the Terek Grozny players come from. Russia does not recognize Kosovo's independence, and Gazeta.ru reported that the Russian Football Union promised to investigate the incident. On July 21, Kavkazky Uzel quoted Chechnya's sports minister, Khaidar Alkhanov, as categorically denying that such an incident had taken place.

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Kremlin Policy in Ingushetia is Paralyzed

By Andrei Smirnov

The Kremlin's strategy toward the North Caucasus is based on the old imperial principle of carrot and stick. The stick is the Russian armed forces, special police units and Federal Security Service (FSB) that conduct bombings of the mountainous areas, mopping-up operations in villages and arrests and manhandles young people in the region. When sheer force does not work and the Kremlin sees that the harassment and anti-guerrilla operations are not weakening the local insurgency, the carrot policy comes into play. This strategy involves an increase in financial support for the Caucasus regions, discussion about how to solve the corruption problem and develop the economy, an imitation of a dialogue with the local public promising to improve the human rights situation, an activation of religious policy, the declaration of an amnesty for the rebels, and so on. A program designed to lure ethnic Russians back to the North Caucasus and financial assistance to the region's professional athletic clubs could be also described as belonging to the carrot part of the Kremlin's Caucasus strategy.

Anything that goes beyond the carrot-and-stick policy is forbidden. Any political reforms, free democratic elections, freedom of conscience, speech or assembly, let alone political dialogue with rebel leaders, are unacceptable. It seems as if nothing can change this stand by the Russian authorities.

This summer the rebels increased their attacks against Russian troops and police forces across the whole North Caucasus, but the most alarming situation is in Ingushetia. On July 18, the press service of the governor of Kurgan Oblast (a region in the Russian Urals) issued a statement announcing that policemen from the oblast who are on a tour of duty in Ingushetia would be sent home three months earlier than planned. According to Tatyana Geiyl, a member of the press service of the Kurgan police, the policemen will be sent back from Ingushetia to Kurgan "for treatment and psychological rehabilitation" (Interfax, July 18).

Late in June and early July, three officers of the Kurgan police team stationed in Ingushetia were killed and eight wounded in rebel attacks. Kurgan Oblast Governor Oleg Bogomolov asked federal Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev to allow the Kurgan policemen to return home—Nurgaliev reluctantly agreed (Ingushetiya.ru, July 18).

The return of the Kurgan policemen from Ingushetia before their end of their tours of duty looks like an escape from the battlefield. It is a bad sign, given that policemen from other Russian regions now serving in Ingushetia could follow the example of their Kurgan colleges and also demand a retreat when several officers of their squads are killed or wounded. In the long run, the federal Interior Ministry may face a mass refusal of Russian policemen to serve in Ingushetia. If that happens, Ingushetia will become like Iraq's Anbar province, where rebels were able to move openly and even held parades in 2005-2006, ignoring the American troops located in the area. Even now there are indications that this could be the case in Ingushetia in the near future. On July 9, a group of rebels entered the mountain village of Muzhichi and killed three local residents linked to the security services. This was reported by all the Russian news agencies but what the official sources in Russia did not say was that rebels were seen not only in Muzhichi that night, but also in the villages of Ordzhonikidzevskaya and Surkhakhi, in the city of Nazran, and on the Kavkaz highway, where the militants set up checkpoints to look for policemen (Ingushetiya.ru, July 9).

Ingushetia is very close to a state of affairs in which rebel posts are seen more frequently than those of the police or the Russian army. Does the Kremlin understand this? Probably so, but it still believes that the problem can be solved using a carrot-and-stick strategy.

On July 18, Vladimir Ustinov, the Russian president's envoy to the Southern Federal District, visited Ingushetia. His visit to the republic has demonstrated that the Kremlin seeking to avoid changing anything in its policy toward the region, even if this policy is completely ineffective.

Accompanied by Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, Ustinov first of all visited Dzheirakh, a mountain district of the republic. During his trip to Dzheirakh, Ustinov spouted all the standard phrases about there being positive tendencies in the economic development of Ingushetia and about how he expected greater results in the future (RIA Novosti, July 19). Ustinov then visited some facilities in Nazran and an Orthodox church in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya. Thus

the envoy demonstrated the Russian government's determination to continue to implement the program of encouraging ethnic Russians to return to Ingushetia, despite the fact that many Russian civilians have been killed in the region. After his journey to Ordzhonikidzevskaya, Ustinov went to the Ingush capital Magas, where he met with republican security officials. He called upon them "to improve coordination" between different security agencies (Interfax, July 18). This, in fact, means that the envoy wanted the FSB and police officers from other regions of the country to cooperate closely with the Ingush police. Yet Ustinov did not explain how the Ingush police can be trusted when many of the most active local officers have been killed and others could simply be secret rebel sympathizers.

Ustinov ended his visit to Ingushetia promising offering the obligatory promise to Murat Zazikov to provide more financial support to the republic (Interfax, July 18). He also declared that traditional Islam should be cultivated in the republic and called upon the Ingush youth not to use violent illegal methods of fighting against "social evils that we still have in our world" (Interfax, July 21). The envoy did not explain what methods the Ingush should use, given that everything in Ingushetia is forbidden, including the freedom of assembly.

More money and better coordination between different security agencies: That is what Russian officials have been saying for many years when asked to explain how they are going to solve the Caucasus problem. What else could they say, given that Kremlin's political will to change anything in the Caucasus, and especially in Ingushetia, is paralyzed? Only when the black flag of jihad is openly hoisted in Ingush, Chechen and Dagestan cities, might they make up their minds to start serious political reforms in the North Caucasus. By then, however, it will already be too late.

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Political Chaos Reigns in the North Caucasus

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Despite Russia's failure over the last nine years to put an end to the conflict in the North Caucasus and the continuing political chaos in the region, it is nonetheless attempting to dictate its policies to Georgia. The recent events in the North Caucasus, including simultaneous strikes staged by rebel fighters against the Russian targets, clearly point to an orchestrated surge of the resistance movement, particularly in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia (North Caucasus Weekly, July 17).

Ingushetia, where the government claims life is back to normal—so announced the deputy speaker of Ingushetia's parliament, Tamara Khautieva, during a special press conference in Moscow on July 2 (<http://ingushetiya.ru/news/14694.html>)—hosted yet another visit of the Russian president's envoy to the Southern Federal District, Vladimir Ustinov, who came down to show support for Vladimir Putin's appointee and former Federal Security Service (FSB) colleague, Murat Zyazikov, who is Ingushetia's president (<http://ingushetiya.ru/news/14842.html>). Following the old party apparatchik tradition, Ustinov announced that Ingushetia was indeed doing well—a statement that stands in sharp contrast to the startling number of armed incidents that continue to plague this small southern republic.

As for neighboring Kabardino-Balkaria, despite the frequent yet isolated attacks targeting the police forces, the series of events do not yet point to an emerging pattern of tactical operations by the local Yarmuk Jamaat, commanded by Amir Seifullah (aka Anzor Astemirov, who is chairman of the North Caucasus insurgency's Supreme Shariah Court and a top member of the resistance hierarchy).

In Karachaevo-Cherkessia, the news of the assassination of three policemen (<http://www.caucasustimes.com/article.asp?id=15487>) came as a shock after a long lull without similar reports, which was attributed mainly to the overall weakening of the Karachai Jamaat.

In contrast, rebel activity in Dagestan is forcing the government to conduct continuous anti-terror operations in some villages or areas for months, such as the town of Gimry, where an operation has been going on since last December. Moreover, for the first time in years, reports indicate recent rebel activity in Derbent, the southernmost part of Dagestan, signaling the expansion of the resistance movement across the entire territory of Dagestan, and potentially beyond into adjacent Russian regions and Azerbaijan, whose border towns are populated by the same Dagestani ethnicities (the Lezgin, the Rutul and the Tsakhur).

Reports of rebel operations in Chechnya and Ingushetia have long become a mainstay of the news media, yet both governments are trying their best to maintain the illusion that all is well. The tactic of choice for the governments of Chechnya and Ingushetia is to claim that everything is quiet and that their regions are no different than any other Russian Federation jurisdiction.

As feeble they may be, the attempts by the federal authorities and those in the North Caucasus to play down losses have yielded some results. Russian broadcast media outlets do not report on current events in the region, preferring instead to focus on positive trends to the exclusion of everything else. Information is being suppressed and foreign journalists have been banned from working in the region, except for those who subscribe to Russia's theory of a stable peace in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

In the meantime, Chechnya's executive branch decided to dissolve the parliament elected only two-and-a-half years ago (on November 27, 2005). The move was not triggered by parliamentary opposition to the republic's regime, as might have been the first guess under most circumstances, and as some analysts tried to argue (http://expert.ru/printissues/expert/2008/26/news_apogei_predannosti/). It would have been hard to think of a more cooperative group of lawmakers, and the parliament's chairman, Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov, has never missed an opportunity to declare his wholehearted personal devotion to Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, whether the circumstances warranted it or not.

Instead, the sole reason for Chechnya's upcoming parliamentary elections is to get rid of the bicameral form of

parliament that in the future will serve as an additional layer of Ramzan Kadyrov's bureaucracy regardless of the exact headcount and lineup of its members. It is easy to predict that the voter turnout in these so-called elections—in a place where most people never vote—will be 100 percent, as is customary in Chechnya. Although this time, it is likely that very few people will dare ignore the trip to the voting booth and thereby demonstrate their oppositionist mindset, which is why the fall elections will probably attract the highest voter turnout since the beginning of the war. The explanation has nothing to do with the public's civic awareness or high regard for Ramzan Kadyrov's policies. Instead, people will be driven to vote by fear of being reported to the authorities and accused of ignoring the elections organized for the personal benefit of Ramzan Kadyrov as well as sympathizing with the rebels—a charge that may not be entirely untrue.

Meanwhile, Russia is moving along with a massive military exercise that is being conducted in the North Caucasus in the immediate proximity of the Georgian border. This multi-phase exercise in the North Caucasus Military District, called "Caucasus 2008" involves the units of the district troops, the Novorossiysk Maritime Base, the Caspian Fleet, the Interior Ministry Internal Troops of the North Caucasus district, the regional coast guard department of the FSB and airborne troops, including the Pskov Division. A total of 8,000 servicemen are reportedly participating (<http://regnum.ru/news/1027980.html>; North Caucasus Weekly, July 17). The drill will cover Krasnodar and Stavropol krais, the Astrakhan, Volgograd and Rostov oblasts, the republics of North Ossetia/Alania, Ingushetia and Dagestan, as well as the republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and the Chechen Republic, and will be led by Colonel General Sergei Makarov. The reported number of participating troops and the area covered by the drill seem suspiciously very low. Clearly, the timing of the drill "just happened" to coincide with unrest in Georgia: what other explanation could there be for stationing airborne troops in the Roki Pass in North Ossetia near the Russian-Georgian border? Moscow's goal is to put psychological pressure on Tbilisi, as well as use the opportunity to practice, and perhaps use force against the region's rebel forces.

Overall, one is tempted to agree with Grigory Shvedov, editor-in-chief of Kavkazsky Uzel website, which monitors developments in the North Caucasus, who believes that it would not be unwarranted to say today that Russia has lost control over the situation in the region (<http://voanews.com/russian/2008-07-14-voa10.cfm>). Today the North Caucasus lives by its own laws and customs, which are different from the rest of Russia. In an attempt to balance the situation, Moscow turned the region over to the local elites, hoping that they will be able to take control, but what the Kremlin got in exchange was a region ruled by chaos and dozens of conflicts that give the government no chance to appeal to the facts. This is why we can look forward to a long stretch of propaganda claiming that the troubled North Caucasus region is in fact one of the most peaceful regions in Russia.

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