

## North Caucasus Weekly

Volume 9, Issue 35 (September 19, 2008)

### Ten Militants Killed in Southern Dagestan

The Dagestani branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB) reported on September 17 that it had killed ten militants in an operation that day. According to the Moscow Times, the Dagestani FSB said in a statement that a Gazel minivan that was carrying the insurgents, along with arms and explosives, was ambushed on a road near Russia's border with Azerbaijan. The FSB commandos reportedly fired several rocket-propelled grenades into the minibus and sprayed the rebels with automatic gunfire. According to the FSB statement, two of its officers were wounded in the fighting, one of whom died later in a hospital.



Kommersant reported on September 18 that the group of militants killed in the operation consisted of field commander Zakir Novruzov and nine of his fighters. The newspaper reported that, according to the FSB, the group had been planning to seize a middle school in the Suleiman Stalsky district of Dagestan. Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported on September 18 that a large quantity of ammunition, seven automatic rifles, explosive devices, a large quantity of food supplies and religious literature were found in the militants' minivan.

Newsru.com reported on September 18 quoting the FSB as saying that five of the dead militants were active members of rebel groups who were on the federal wanted list, while the other five were rebel "accomplices." As the Moscow Times noted on September 18, the FSB operation on September 17 followed two recent crackdowns by security services on the same Islamist rebel network, which is active in southern Dagestan. Three policemen and five militants, including Ilgar Malachiev, whom the Chechen rebel leadership had appointed last fall as commander of Dagestan's insurgents, were killed in a clash on September 7. The following day, three policemen were killed in a shootout with members of Malachiev's group whom law enforcers attempted to encircle near the village of Sirtych (North Caucasus Weekly, September 11).

Nezavisimaya Gazeta on September 18 quoted a Dagestani FSB source as saying: "In general, one can state that the activities of the bandit groups in southern Dagestan have been neutralized." However, the newspaper interpreted the FSB operations in southern Dagestan as evidence that violence is on the rise in southern Dagestan, which was the republic's most peaceful area before the start of this year. Nezavisimaya Gazeta added that experts predict southern Dagestan could become a new "hotbed" in coming months.

Meanwhile, RIA Novosti reported on September 18 that five police officers were injured in Dagestan after gunmen opened fire on their police post overnight.

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### Servicemen, Militants and a Senior FSB Officer Die in Ingushetia Violence

The Investigative Committee under the Prosecutor General's Office for Ingushetia confirmed on September 17 that four servicemen were killed that day in an attack on Interior Ministry troops in Ingushetia. Itar-Tass reported that the four servicemen were traveling in a Ural truck on the Galashki-Datykh highway when it came under fire and that they "died on the spot." Interfax quoted Vasily Panchenkov, an aide to the commander of the federal Interior Ministry's Internal Troops, as saying that the bodies of four Interior Ministry servicemen were found with gunshot wounds by an armed patrol near the village of Galashki. According to Reuters, a source in the investigative department of the Ingush Prosecutor's Office told Interfax later that the soldiers had probably been shot from a nearby forest.



Kavkazky Uzel reported on September 15 that the first deputy head of the Ingush branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), Aleksandr Nagovitsyn, was killed during a special operation in the village of Verkhnie Achaluki in Ingushetia's Malgobek district. According to the website, a total of four law-enforcement officers were killed and eight wounded during the special operation in Verkhnie Achaluki. According to various reports, two or three militants were also killed in the operation. Kavkazky Uzel quoted an Ingush Interior Ministry source as saying: "The operation to neutralize the NVF [illegal armed formation] participants who hid in private home [number] 49 on Zarechnaya Street began on Sunday [September 14] and was completed late in the evening today [September 15]. The underground gang members were offered the chance to put down their weapons, but they put up armed resistance."

Newsru.com on September 15 quoted Ingushetia's chief prosecutor, Yury Turygin, as saying that three militants were killed and a large quantity of weapons and ammunitions were seized during the security operation in Verkhnie Achaluki. According to Ingushetia's Interior Ministry, security forces used large-caliber machineguns and grenade launchers in the operation, which lasted more than ten hours.

On September 12, someone shot at a car being driven by Musa Kodzoev, head of the criminal investigation department of the city Karabulak. No one was hurt in the incident. Also on September 12, Timur Khutiev, a former employee of a private security firm in Nazran, was shot to death at the entrance of his apartment building. That same day, gunmen fired on a police post in Ingushetia's Malgobek district manned by Interior Ministry personnel from Khabarovsk Krai who are currently stationed in the republic. No one was hurt in that incident. Late in the evening of September 11, gunmen attacked a home in Nazran belonging to Daud Atigov, brother of Khasan Atigov, head of the "Daimohk" Ingush national movement. Kavkazky Uzel reported that the attackers fired automatic weapons and grenade launchers at the home, which caught fire. According to the website, members of Daud Atigov's family were injured and hospitalized, but he himself was not hurt.

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### Leading Rights Activist Meets with Zyazikov

The head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Lyudmila Alekseyeva, met with Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, and other republic officials in Magas, Ingushetia's capital, Newsru.com reported on September 16. Immediately after the meeting, Interfax quoted Alekseyeva as saying: "The meeting with Murat Zyazikov lasted more than two hours. He was very courteous. The conversation was very emotional. It was mainly the president of the republic who spoke during the meeting, and I listened. That's what I came for—to listen."



Lyudmila  
Alekseyeva

Alekseyeva said on September 16 that she had not yet drawn any conclusions based on her conversations with officials in Ingushetia, but confirmed that besides meeting with Zyazikov, she also met with the republic's premier, parliamentary speaker, Interior Minister and chief prosecutor. She said that among the topics of discussion was the death of Magomed Yevloev, owner of the opposition Ingushetiya.ru, died on August 31 from a gunshot wound he sustained while in police custody. Ingush officials say Yevloev was shot accidentally when he tried to grab a gun from a police officer, but Yevloev's relatives and associates insist that he was assassinated (North Caucasus Weekly, September 5). "The prosecutor of Ingushetia said that a criminal case has been launched and that an investigation is continuing," Alekseyeva said in reference to Yevloev's death. "I asked what explains a strange thing—that attacks in Ingushetia are targeted mainly at policemen and officials. They answered that a terrorist underground apparently exists. The leadership of Ingushetia talked about the socio-economic development of the republic and expressed pain and alarm about the situation of Ingush refugees who cannot return to North Ossetia's Prigorodny district. The prosecutor of the republic [of Ingushetia] said people are living in difficult conditions and that this, in his view, is one of the factors that is causing tension." (As Kavkazky Uzel reported on September 17, Zyazikov has denied press reports that tension is growing in Ingushetia.)

Alekseyeva also met with one of the leaders of Ingushetia's opposition, Maksharip Aushev, as well as with representatives of human rights groups and other public organizations in the republic. "People complained about the violation of their rights by members of the power structures," she said. "There were complaints about the detention and kidnapping of people in Ingushetia. It's mainly young people who are disappearing, and this is very troubling." Alekseyeva said she planned to have more meetings with opposition members, human rights activists and to meet with relatives of Magmoed Yevloev and well as ordinary citizens. Alekseyeva said that she would make public her conclusions drawn from her trip to Ingushetia by the end of September.

Kavkazky Uzel noted on September 17 that human rights activists in Ingushetia are concerned about the murder of Magomed Yevloev, the recent murder of Murat Zyazikov's cousin (North Caucasus Weekly, September 11), and the "constant armed attacks" on members of the republic's law-enforcement bodies and government officials. Gzt.ru noted on September 17 that while a delegation of members of Russia's Public Chamber headed by Aleksandr Brod, director of the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, recently visited Ingushetia and concluded that there is not, in Brod's words, a "protest mood" in the republic, Lyudmila Alekseyeva said she was traveling to Ingushetia on what she called a "peacemaking mission."

Meanwhile, police in Ingushetia carried out searches of the offices and homes of two Ingush opposition leaders, Maksharip Aushev and Magomed Khazbiev, on September 15. Aushev and Khazbiev, both of whom were close associates of Magomed Yevloev, are being investigated for allegedly using force against law-enforcement personnel in an attempt to seize their service revolvers. Kavkazky Uzel quoted Khazbiev as saying that the police officers who conducted the searches were probably looking for weapons and that during the search of his home, the area where he lives was completely blocked off by security personnel, some of whom arrived in armored personnel carriers and among whom were K-9 units. Aushev said that the security personnel who searched his home included K-9 units and men with metal detectors, and that his office in Nazran was also searched.

Khazbiev said that the case against him and Yevloev is fabricated. "In its accusations that we took away weapons, the [Ingush] ministry of internal affairs cited what I supposedly said in an interview with the newspaper Kommersant: that I and Maksharip Aushev really did take weapons off of two Ingush MVD employees—Albogachiev and Ozdoev," Khazbiev told Kavkazky Uzel. "Yes, I gave an interview to the newspaper, but I did not say anything about taking away weapons ... And I found out about the criminal case from news reports."

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### Ingush Reportedly Abducted in Moscow

Izbrannoe.ru reported on September 18 that Ingush living outside the republic are also feeling threatened. According to the website, ten natives of Ingushetia living in Moscow have disappeared with out a trace since the beginning of September. Interfax reported on September 17 that a police patrol in Serebryany Bor, a dacha area in northwest Moscow, had discovered Magomed Khamkhoev, a 35-year-old ethnic Ingush resident of the Russian capital, in handcuffs and wearing only underwear and a T-shirt.

Kommersant on September 18 quoted Khamkhoev as saying that he had been abducted by unknown persons and held in the basement of a cottage in Serebryany Bor, where he was beaten and tortured. He said that his captors made no demands of him, but spoke Ossetian to one another and, as he understood it, had some sort of links with the Russian special services. Khamkhoev said that during his incarceration, his captors showed him the body of an unidentified dead man that bore signs of torture and told him: "You will be same. That's what you get for Beslan."

Ethnic Ingush were involved in the September 2004 taking of hostages at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia. More than 330 of the hostages—more than half of them children—died after Russian commandos stormed the school building.

On September 17, while his captors were out of the house, Khamkhoev managed to break a window and escape. After police found Khamkhoev, they raided the cottage and searched the premises. Kommersant reported on September 18 that police found a cell for holding hostages and electro-shock devices to use for torture. The newspaper also reported that after Khamkhoev's escape, Ingush opposition leader Magomed Khazbiev and the relatives of other Ingush who have disappeared in Moscow this month went to the site of the alleged secret prison. According to Kommersant, Bilan Khamchiev, a State Duma deputy from Ingushetia, has taken control of the investigation into Magomed Khamkhoev's abduction and is connecting it to the disappearance of ten Ingush in the Russian capital since the start of September.

On September 19, Kommersant provided additional details about the search of the cottage. According to the newspaper, investigators found stripped electric cables which, the newspaper noted, could be used for torture, as well as a metal "cage." According to relatives of Khamkhoev, who were allowed to observe the search of the cottage, the investigators inquired with the security detail for the dacha area to find out who owned the cottage, soon after which someone arrived at the scene identifying himself as Lieutenant Colonel Mikhail Nikolaevich Ananov, who described the cottage as a "special facility" belonging to a military unit but did not say what it was used for. He did claim that the metal cage found inside was used for keeping dogs. The investigators, however, found no evidence that dogs had been kept there. According to Kommersant, the press services of the Moscow Military District and the Defense Ministry were unable to answer whether Lieutenant Colonel Ananov is indeed an active duty military officer or provide any information about the "special installation" in Serebryany Bor where Magomed Khamkhoev - and possibly other abductees - was held.

Ingushetiya.ru, meanwhile, reported on September 18 that the abduction of Ingush in Moscow is connected to the Ossetian-Ingush conflict over the Prigorodny district in North Ossetia, from which Ingush were expelled en masse in the early 1990s. According to the opposition website, all ten of the young Ingush who were kidnapped in Moscow this month were acquainted with Alikhan Kalimatov, a Federal Security Service (FSB) lieutenant colonel who had investigated the kidnappings and murders of Ingush in the Prigorodny district and was himself murdered a year ago. Kalimatov had reportedly collected evidence showing that the kidnappings and murders in the Prigorodny district were sanctioned by top North Ossetian officials and that the kidnapers of the Ingush in Moscow may have been trying to extract information about Kalimatov's findings.

According to Kommersant, Kalimatov and his team found that 21 people—19 Ingush and two Chechens—were kidnapped in the Prigorodny district between the summer of 2005 and July 2007. The newspaper reported that Kalimatov said revenge for Beslan could have been the motive for the kidnappings but that his investigation had yielded no "concrete results." Kalimatov was shot to death in Ingushetia in September 2007 (Chechnya Weekly, September 20, 2007). His death was blamed on militants, Kommersant reported.

Meanwhile, Ella Kesaeva, leader of the Voice of Beslan group, told Ekho Moskv radio that the abduction and incarceration of Ingush in Moscow in revenge for the Beslan tragedy was a “provocation by the special services” aimed at “setting two peoples against one another.”

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### Briefs

#### Militants Kill Police in Karachaevo-Cherkessia

The Associated Press reported on September 14 that one police officer was shot to death and two wounded in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. The news agency quoted the republic's Interior Ministry as saying that two unidentified militants gunned down a police colonel in front of his house and also riddled a traffic police car with bullets, wounding two officers inside.

#### Attacks Wound Zapad Battalion Commander, Kill Chechen Prosecutor's Bodyguards

On September 17, unidentified gunmen fired on a vehicle carrying four members of the Defense Ministry's Chechen-manned Zapad (West) battalion, including its commander, Beslan Edilkhanov. Utror.ru reported on September 18 that one serviceman, a 25-year-old private, was killed in the attack, while Edilkhanov was seriously wounded. A third serviceman was also wounded in the attack. Two policemen were shot to death by an unidentified gunman in Grozny's Zavodsky district on September 12. A Southern Federal District law-enforcement source told Interfax that the slain policemen were members of Chechen chief prosecutor Valery Kuznetsov's security detail.

#### Former Commander of Russian Forces in Chechnya Dies in Plane Crash

General Gennady Troshev, the former commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, was among the 88 people killed on September 14 when a Boeing-737-500 passenger jet operated by Aeroflot subsidiary Aeroflot Nord and flying from Moscow crashed on the outskirts of the Ural Mountains city of Perm. Russian accident investigators ruled out terrorism as the cause for the crash and were focusing on the possibilities of pilot error or engine failure. Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov announced on September 14 that a street in the Chechen capital Grozny would be named after Troshev. Back in 2001, Troshev, who received a Hero of Russia award for his service, called for the public hanging of Chechen rebel fighters.

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### Russian Media Fails to Conceal New Upsurge in Militant Activity

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Recent developments in the North Caucasus covered in the mass media focused primarily on Dagestan and Ingushetia. The first news item, concerning the assassination of the Dagestan Jamaat (Dagestan section of the Caucasus Emirate) commander Abdul-Majjid, aka Ilgar Malachiev (Gazeta.ru, September 7), may potentially trigger substantial changes within the resistance movement's structure. The fact is that the replacement of any prominent jamaat leader at the republican level invariably leads to other adjustments within the movement in general. These changes cannot fail to affect the rank-and-file rebel soldiers as the whole network of linkages connected to a given jamaat leader begins to unravel.

It comes as no surprise that any newly-appointed leader tends to focus on his own region. That was certainly the case during Abdul-Majjid's appointment in September 2007 after his predecessor Amir Rappani Khalilov was killed during a special operation carried out by the Russian forces in Kizilyurt on September 17, 2007 (Lenta.ru, September 18, 2007). At the time, the appointment of Khalilov's replacement set off a number of unwelcome developments in Dagestan. It was Amir Abdul-Majjid's efforts that led to the expansion of the resistance movement's operations into the southernmost parts of Dagestan, such as the city of Derbent and the areas adjacent to the border with Azerbaijan. A native of Zakaty (Azerbaijan), Abdul-Majjid did not set up a jamaat cell in southern Dagestan, but in all likelihood has managed to establish one across the border in Azerbaijan. The significance of the latter was that for the first time, the North Caucasus resistance movement has crossed regional boundaries and extended its efforts into the South Caucasus. It is still difficult to say whether the cell in the South Caucasus was a well-established jamaat unit, a novice group still in the planning stages in its new location or a handful of fighters who traveled to the South Caucasus for a quick break, which is just as plausible.

In any event, the areas adjacent to the Russo-Azerbaijani border are home to the Lezgin and Tabasaran ethnic communities who continue to maintain close contacts, often bypassing the boundaries that separate them. The area was also the location of the jamaat unit targeted by Azeri forces during a special operation of August 29-30 (Kavkaz.tv, September 2) in which government troops suffered some losses while the rebels managed to break the siege and escape unharmed. Presumably, the jamaat fighters, while on the run from the Azeri troops, crossed the Russian border into Dagestan, where they ran into the waiting trap of Russian special operations forces who had much better luck than their Azeri colleagues. The government reports of the Dagestan Jamaat commander's death were confirmed several days later—possibly an indication of coordination challenges within the Sharia Jamaat after the loss of its commander ([www.jamaatshariat.com](http://www.jamaatshariat.com), September 11), or of short-term communications breakdown before the appointment of Abdul-Majjid's replacement, who would have to reclaim and take charge of all late commander's connections. In a statement confirming Abdul-Majjid's death, the Sharia Jamaat also claimed responsibility for the slaying of Dagestani reporter Telman Alishaev (<http://media.rin.ru>, September 3; North Caucasus Weekly, September 5) reportedly killed for leaving Islam (<http://www.jamaatshariat.com/content/view/869/41>).

In the meantime, Ingush President Murat Zyazikov made another stab at making one and all believe that Ingushetia is faring better than any other place. Oddly enough, Zyazikov blamed all Ingushetia's problems on the United States. Zyazikov declared during a September 8 press conference with Itar-Tass that "for some reason, Comrade Bush has developed affection for faraway Ingushetia." With enough daily incidents to make prioritizing them a challenge, if Ingushetia really is the most peaceful part of Russia, then the state of affairs in the less peaceful areas can be only imagined.

For example, the following seven incidents took place in Ingushetia on September 11 alone:

- gunfire targeting the residence of President Murat Zyazikov in the village of Barsuki;
- an explosion at a gas station in the city of Nazran;
- a bombing targeting Malgobek imam Hussein Shadiev (his leg was amputated as a result of the explosion);
- an evening shootout in Nazran;
- another evening shootout at the Ekazhevo post;
- an assassination attempt against Ibrahim Khalukhaev, son of the dean of the Institute for Economics and Law Sulambek Khalukhaev; an attempt was made on his father's life the previous day;



- shots fired at the house of Daud Atigov, the brother of the chairman of Daymohk (Motherland) Ingush International Union.

This list includes only the incidents that were made public through the efforts of the opposition web site [www.ingushetiya.ru](http://www.ingushetiya.ru). To make it clear that September 11 was not an exception to the rule, one can point out that the previous day, September 10, Murat Zyazikov's cousin was assassinated, which in and of itself is less important than the fact that the victim was also the brother of the Chief of President's personal security detail, meaning that the murder was clearly directed personally against President Zyazikov ([www.newsru.com](http://www.newsru.com), September 10). There were other such incidents on September 10, including a shooting that wounded the dean of the Institute for Economics and Law Sulambek Khalukhaev and the killing of a fortune teller in the village of Troitskaya.

Ingushetiya.ru also reported a rather odd bit of news—that 44 employees of Ingushetia's Interior Ministry had resigned on September 1, with another 27 members of the police force resigning on September 9. These reports stand in glaring contradiction to statements made by President Zyazikov.

In an unexpected turn of events, Ramzan Kadyrov made a surprise statement in support of the president of his neighboring republic, offering his reassurances that in the next few months, law and order will be restored in Ingushetia and “the wave of chaos” will subside. In effect, the Chechen leader, in an effort to give a boost to his neighbor, simply confirmed that a “wave of chaos” is indeed crashing over Ingushetia. Naturally, Kadyrov neglected to comment on the bombing of the Russian military base in the town of Vedenov on September 3 that left one serviceman dead and 11 wounded. He was also silent about the suicide bombing the same day at the base of the Yug Special Battalion, which killed one battalion member and wounded several others. Kavkaz-Center ([www.kavkazcenter.com](http://www.kavkazcenter.com)), the official mouthpiece of the radical wing of the North Caucasus resistance movement, releases daily reports of losses allegedly suffered by the Russian side. However, since most of these reports are difficult to corroborate, they can be considered but not relied on.

While the events of the past week were neither new nor sensational, the rebel fighters' activities along the Dagestan-Kabardino-Balkaria perimeter suggest yet again that their operations, far from being isolated incidents, are far better organized than the Russian mass media would care to admit, and therefore the Russian army's presence in the region is a strategically motivated decision.

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