

Attacks Continue in Ingushetia

A car belonging to an official believed to be a relative of Musa Medov, Ingushetia's Interior Minister, was blown up in Nazran on October 8. The opposition Ingushetia.org website reported that a powerful explosion took place 100 meters from the Interior Ministry building in Nazran while Itar-Tass quoted a source as saying that the explosion was an attempt on the life of Daud Medov, the deputy head of the Interior Ministry's vehicle maintenance department. According to Newsru.com, the blast was caused by an explosive device that was attached to the undercarriage of Medov's Lada Priora car and that the bomb went off when the car was parked outside his home and as Medov had left his home and gone outside. Neither Medov nor anyone else was hurt in the blast, but the car was burned out.



Ingushetia.org confirmed that the destroyed car belonged to Ingush Interior Minister Musa Medov's nephew, noting that Medov himself was recently the target of a failed attack by a suicide bomber (North Caucasus Weekly, October 3). As Newsru.com noted, Musa Medov is among those blamed by Ingushetia's opposition for the August 31 killing of opposition website founder Magomed Yevloev and that Yevloev's relatives declared a blood feud against those they accuse of murdering him, including Medov and Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov.

On October 6, unidentified attackers fired on a Mercedes that was being driven in Nazran by Anzor Zyazikov, a legal advisor at an antenna production facility. Zyazikov was not hurt but a passenger riding with him—identified as Magomed Albakov—was killed. Interfax quoted a source in the press service of the Investigative Committee for Ingushetia as saying the attackers fired on the Mercedes from a silver VAZ-2114 car. Russian news sources pointed to the fact that the apparent target of the attack has the same last name as Ingushetia's president, but there was no indication that they are relatives. Another attack took place on October 6 when, according to Ingushetia.org, a car being driven by Akhmed Kotiev, deputy chairman of the Ingush public movement "People's Assembly of Ingushetia" came under fire. Ingushetia.org quoted Kotiev as saying that two attackers fired on his car from a VAZ-2017 automobile. No one was hurt in the incident.

Itar-Tass reported on October 5 that an explosive device went off near the prosecutor's office in Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district. The explosive device was placed beneath a Ford Escort car belonging to a prosecutor's office security guard that was parked near the building. No one was hurt in the blast. RIA Novosti reported on October 5 that a police officer was killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on a police patrol vehicle in Ingushetia. The news agency did not indicate exactly where the incident took place, but reported that police were searching for a Lada car used by the assailants.

Itar-Tass reported on October 4 that an explosion took place in the city of Malgobek near the building of the district office of the Federal Security Service (FSB) department for Ingushetia. The news agency, citing republican police, said an explosive device had been planted under a car parked near the building. No one was hurt in the explosion and the building was slightly damaged (see Mairbek Vatchagaev's article below).

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Ingush Interior Minister's Bodyguard Reportedly Charged in Yevloev Killing

RIA Novosti on October 8 quoted Musa Pliev, a lawyer for the family of slain Ingush opposition website founder Magomed Yevloev as saying that the Prosecutor General's Office of Ingushetia had charged Ibragim Yevloev, the head of security for Ingush Interior Minister Musa Medov, with manslaughter in connection with Magomed Yevloev's death. Interfax on October 8 quoted another lawyer for the relatives of Magomed Yevloev, Kaloi Akhilgov, as saying that Ibragim Yevloev had been charged under Article 109 of Russia's Criminal Code: "inflicting death by negligence."



Magomed Yevloev, who founded the Ingushetiya.ru website, died August 31 from a gunshot wound sustained while in police custody (North Caucasus Weekly, September 5). Following Yevloev's death, the website's address was changed to Ingushtia.org.

On October 6, the main directorate of the Investigative Committee for the Southern Federal District announced it had completed its investigation into Yevloev's death and concluded that he was killed by an accidental shot from a pistol belonging to one of the policeman who had detained him. Newsru.com noted on October 8 that the name of the policeman who "accidentally" shot Yevloev has not been made public out of fear that he will be the target of a revenge attack, although the policeman in question would appear to be Ibragim Yevloev, the head of security for Ingush Interior Minister Musa Medov.

The Associated Press (AP) on October 8 quoted Pliev as predicting in an interview with Ekho Moskvyy radio that that the bodyguard to Ingushetia's Interior Minister charged with Magomed Yevloev's death would get a suspended sentence. In his interview with the radio station, Pliev did not name the guard, AP reported. Newsru.com on October 8 quoted Kaloi Akhilgov, the other family lawyer, as saying that investigators had failed to question two people who were in the police car with Magomed Yevloev at the time of his death. He also said that Yevloev's wife had not been interviewed by investigators.

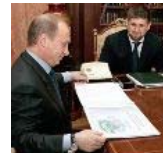
Newsru.com on October 8 quoted Pliev as reiterating the claim of Magomed Yevloev's relatives and associates that he was killed deliberately by police while in custody. He also said that investigators had carried out their investigation into the shooting in a manner designed to hide the identity of those who ordered Yevloev's killing. At the same time, Pliev said he did not plan to challenge the results of the probe and the upcoming trial because, in his view, the court will render the verdict ordered by the Ingush authorities. Instead, Pliev said an appeal will be filed with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The Ingush opposition, meanwhile, plans to hold protests over what they see as a biased investigation into Yevloev's death.

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Kadyrov Renames Grozny Street in Putin's Honor

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov signed a decree on October 5 changing the name of Victory Avenue (Prospekt Pobeda) in the Chechen capital Grozny to V.V. Putin Avenue (Prospekt imeni V.V. Putina). Interfax quoted Grozny's mayor, Muslim Khuchiev, as saying of the move: "In this way his [Putin's] outstanding service in the fight against terrorism [and] the restoration of the Chechen Republic's economy and the social sphere is commemorated."



Newsru.com noted that October 5, the day the decree was signed, was also Kadyrov's 32nd birthday, Grozny City Day and the start of festivities marking the 420th anniversary of the establishment of "good-neighborly" relations between Russia and Chechnya. Tens of thousands of inhabitants of Grozny and other parts of Chechnya gathered on the capital's Akhmat Kadyrov Square, from which Putin Avenue runs, for the ceremony marking the renaming of the avenue. Kadyrov and Vladimir Ustinov, presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, were among those who participated in the ceremony, during which several thousand students lined both sides of Putin Avenue.

"As a Chechen, as a Muslim, I state that I am ready, if necessary, to die for Vladimir Putin," Kadyrov told the crowd. "Thanks to this person we have arrived at a time in which peace and tranquility reigns in Chechnya." He added that "terrorists from 60 countries came to Chechnya not to make it a sovereign nation, but ... to turn it into a springboard for bringing down Russia. They failed to do this thanks to the decisiveness and the will of Putin, thanks to the fact that he had trust in Akhmat Kadyrov, and Akhmat Kadyrov also had the trust of the Chechen people."

Ustinov, for his part, gave high marks for the situation in Chechnya, which he described as "stable."

Meanwhile, Kommersant reported on October 6 that the Kremlin viewed Kadyrov's initiative to rename Victory Avenue after Vladimir Putin "reservedly." According to the newspaper, Kremlin sources made it clear that while Putin cannot prevent a street being named after him, he does not welcome such a step. Moskovsky Komsomolets noted on October 6 that even back during the Soviet period it was forbidden to name streets after living figures and that most of Russia's regions have passed laws on renaming streets that retain this prohibition. In addition, some regions have laws stating that streets can be renamed after people only ten years after they have died. Indeed, Moscow's law was recently changed so that Big Communist Street could be renamed Solzhenitsyn Street.

"In general, of course, in Russia it is not acceptable to name any objects after incumbent politicians," Newsru.com on October 6 quoted Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, as saying. "But such decisions are taken by the authorities of a region and are not subject to agreement from the center, so that this was only Ramzan Kadyrov's decision. Vladimir Putin has expressed his opinion on this subject more than once. He would prefer it if there were not such initiatives. But he also cannot forbid them."

Meanwhile, Aleksandr Belov, leader of the far-right Movement Against Illegal Immigration, called Kadyrov's decision to rename a Grozny street after Vladimir Putin "inadequate" and a "mockery" not only of Putin, but of Russia's head of state, President Dmitry Medvedev. "This renaming of a street has made Medvedev a laughingstock in the entire world," Belov said. "Ramzan Kadyrov showed himself to be a real Chechen by naming Grozny's central street after Putin. However the mentality of the East, unfortunately, remains in the Middle Ages, inasmuch as there always the desire there to bow down before the more powerful [and] show that they are loved and honored. But for some reason this idea smells of insincerity ... It is clear that Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] is a deserving person and did a lot for the Chechen people. So there is a reason to thank Putin, but this method of showing gratitude is outdated. Although maybe there, in Chechnya, such an initiative is seen as normal."

However, Kavkazky Uzel quoted ordinary Chechens as saying they were shocked by the initiative. "I don't understand: how can the avenue be named in the memory of this person?" the website quoted a 60-year-old resident of Chechnya, Salakh Saidulaev, as saying. "He, just like Boris Yeltsin, was and will forever remain in the memory of our people as the main culprit in the tragedy of Chechens at the end of the last and the start of this century. It was precisely Putin, first in his capacity as chairman of the government and then as president of Russia, who gave the orders to bomb and shell our cities and villages. The victims of the rocket fire on Grozny and on the refugee columns in October 1999 are on his conscience. He, as commander-in-chief, is responsible for everything that the Budanovs and Shamanovs and others did here. I consider this decision as a disgrace."

Salikhat, a 48-year-old Grozny resident, told Kavkazky Uzel: "Ramzan once again has demonstrated what he thinks of the opinion of the people and the tragedy that Chechens have lived through for the past 15 years through the fault of the Kremlin. First he named a street in honor of the Pskov paratroopers, then he immortalized the name of General [Gennady] Troshev here and now he has decided to elevate Putin. Of course, Putin may be an idol and God to Ramzan Kadyrov and his family, since it is precisely thanks to him that they have become who they are today." Salikhat said that she regards Putin as the culprit in the deaths of many peaceful inhabitants of Chechnya and added that she has become disillusioned with Kadyrov because of this decision.

Abu, a 20-year-old Grozny resident, told Kavkazky Uzel: "I cannot imagine, for example, the government in Kosovo naming a street in honor of the former president of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic or, let's say, an avenue in Tskhinvali being named after Mikheil Saakashvili. I pity Ramzan. He probably himself does not realize that he is undermining his authority and honor among the population with his ill-conceived actions." Abu also said that Putin is responsible for the deaths of Chechen civilians.

Isa, a Grozny resident and student at a local college, said of Kadyrov's decision: "In my view, it is ordinary toadying and yet another attempt to show loyalty to the Kremlin. On television all yesterday evening they showed a portrait of Putin with an inscription written below—'national hero of the country'. What kind of post is that? Who gave it to Putin? Ramzan? Of course, to hear and see all of this is funny and bitter at the same time. What is all this leading to?"

An activist with a local human rights group told Kavkazky Uzel. "Tens and hundreds of thousands of people in Chechnya were killed, kidnapped, disappeared without a trace or crippled. Who is responsible for that? Of course, Yeltsin and Putin. The former has already, happily for him, died, but there is the chance—at least I very much hope so—that Putin will answer for these evil deeds. To name an avenue in his honor, in my view, means to approve and support the policy he followed of 'pacification' of Chechnya using rocket fire, aerial bombardment, artillery attacks and

'large-scale' and 'targeted' zachistki [security sweeps]. This means to forgive him for the blood of thousands and thousands of innocent women and children. Kadyrov has yet again showed, above all, his deep dependence on Putin ... Personally, this aroused only contempt in me."

Adam, a history teacher in a Grozny school, told Kavkazky Uzel: "How can you do such things without asking for the opinion of the people? I know that if the situation here were just a bit different, people would be demonstrating in the streets of Grozny, demanding that he reverse this decision. But everyone fully understands that they weren't given the chance to express their opinion, because everything here is suppressed. Therefore everyone is silent. But that's only for now. I don't think that there will be a Putin Avenue, Troshev Street or Pskov Paratroopers Street in Grozny forever." Adam added that he thought that in the near future these names would no longer be around.

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Chechen Officials Punish Relatives of Rebels

Kavkazky Uzel reported on October 8 that inhabitants of the mountainous Vedeno district in southern Chechnya had announced a boycott of the families of members of "illegal armed formations." The website reported, however, that while the local authorities claimed the boycott was initiated by the local inhabitants themselves at a meeting, many Vedeno district residents they did not know when or where such a meeting took place.

According to the website, the boycott means that families whose children are in the ranks of the rebels will no longer receive assistance from their fellow villagers. Among other things, they will not be permitted to participate in village gatherings and meetings or to receive meat from community ritual sacrifices or help from fellow villagers in carrying out agricultural work.

"It is not my idea or demand; it is the demand of the public of the Vedeno district," said Vedeno district head Shamil Magomaev. "I only voiced the decision of the district gathering of citizens. As the participants in the gathering at which these issues were discussed said, the relatives of members of illegal armed formations will incur public censure. In their opinion, considering the mentality of the Chechens, this will become an effective measure in counteracting the ideology of terrorism."

According to Kavkazky Uzel, many Vedeno district residents knew nothing about the meeting at which the decision to boycott the families of rebel fighters putatively took place. "I didn't know that we had a district gathering at which a decision was taken not to give aid to families of militants," said district resident Alkhazur Bisultanov. "I, of course, do not approve of the fact that young people are going into the woods [to join the rebels], but to punish their parents for the actions of foolish children is also, in my opinion, not completely correct. ... Jobs need to be created; as many children as possible must be sent off to study, including outside the republic, so that they can see normal life, so that they have some sort of future prospects. But pressure on relatives is not a method."

Still, inhabitants of the town of Vedeno were quoted as saying that on October 6 there was a meeting between local residents and officials of the district administration military commandant's office, during which the issue of young people going off to join the rebels was discussed. At that meeting, Shamil Magomaev called on the parents of young people who have joined the rebels to convince their children to return home and to stop the outflow of youth to the rebels.

According to Kavkazky Uzel, local authorities in Chechnya are increasingly using the concept of "collective responsibility" to try to stem the flow of youth into the rebels' ranks. Indeed, New York Times correspondent C.J. Chivers wrote in an article published on September 29 that in "a campaign to punish families with sons suspected of supporting the insurgency, at least a dozen homes have been set ablaze since midsummer." Chivers cited the case of a Shali resident, Valentina Basargina, whose home was burned out by raiders in camouflage, one of whom told her "in thickly accented Russian" just before torching the house: "This is for the one who is gone." Chivers noted that Basargina's nephew had recently disappeared and that police had said he joined the insurgency. A spokesman for Kadyrov told the New York Times that the Chechen government knew nothing about the burnings.

Citing residents and a local human rights organization, Chivers reported that the burnings have been accompanied by a program, "embraced" Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, "that has forced visibly frightened parents of insurgents to appear on television and beg their sons to return home." According to Chivers, in a series of state-run news programs in the republic this summer, senior Chechen government officials spoke about the collective responsibility of people whose relatives have joined the insurgency and of "collective punishment." On one such broadcast, Kadyrov himself reportedly said: "The families whose relatives are in the forests, they are accomplices in the crime." Chivers also reported that Grozny Mayor Muslim Khuchiev, a confidant of Kadyrov, stated on one such broadcast: "We are not now holding dialogue with you on the basis of the laws of this state. We will act according to Chechen traditions." Khuchiev added: "The evil which is done by your relatives in the forest will return to you and your homes. Each of you soon will feel it on your skin."

Newsru.com on October 8 reported that local authorities in Gudermes and Argun had several weeks earlier demanded that the relatives of militants leave their homes and move out of the cities. The website also reported that law-enforcement officers in the Shatoi district had burned the home of a young man who had recently gone into the mountains to join the rebels. A Shatoi district police official was quoted as saying that the home of the family of a militant had been burned by police as revenge for the burning of the home of one of their colleagues by rebels.

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Ingushetia on the Brink of War

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Since the start of October, there have been a record number of attacks against the government in Ingushetia. The situation raises the questions of what is really happening in this small North Caucasus republic that became known to the world as a home to Chechen refugees and why the federal government has failed to establish even a semblance of order in this small enclave of just over four thousand square kilometers.

The events of the last eight months include 114 acts of terror (an average of three to four per week) and a casualty count of 28 killed and 84 wounded policemen as well as 10 killed and 35 wounded servicemen (Komsomolskaya Pravda, September 17). According to the opposition website Ingushetia.org, the first three days of October also saw attacks on personnel of Ingushetia's Interior Ministry. According to Ingushetia's former president, Ruslan Aushev, the power agencies have unleashed a kind of civil war against the Ingush people.

The truth is that Ingushetia has multiple problems whose boundaries are often blurred and are interrelated. Failure to take these linkages into account produces only an incomplete picture of the situation and very uncertain results.

The Refugee Issue

Ingushetia has a high concentration of refugees—numbering in the tens of thousands—who fled not only from Chechnya (this group consists of ethnic Ingush who were forced to leave Chechnya and sought to resettle in Ingushetia permanently) but also from North Ossetia (following clashes in October-November 1992 the Ossetian government implemented de facto ethnic cleansing in the Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz and its suburbs by expelling ethnic Ingush residents who had lived in these areas for several centuries). These two refugee groups remain a source of trouble for the Ingush government, and while the refugees from Chechnya have more or less resettled in Ingushetia within their assigned areas, those who fled Ossetia have no desire to stay in Ingushetia permanently and demand that the government repatriate them to their native lands that by now have been occupied by Ossetian refugees from South Ossetia [1]. Neither Murat Zyazikov nor Ruslan Aushev were able to alleviate the problem since a final decision can be made only by the federal government, which has no intention to settle these territorial disputes to the detriment of Ossetians.

The Land Issue

Ingushetia may well be the only republic in Russia without the fixed borders of an administrative subject of the Russian Federation. Apart from the politically charged issue of Ossetia's Prigorodny district, there is also a very real problem involving Chechnya. The borders between Chechnya and Ingushetia have not been clearly delineated since 1991. Djohar Dudaev then believed that the Ingush might want to re-unite with the Chechens and that the process of separating the two republics, which were joined in the Chechen-Ingush autonomous republic, should not be hurried. As a result, the decision to establish formal boundaries between the two republics was made only recently [2]. In the meantime, the parties have abstained from making any loud statements, although each has tried to carve out a piece of land along the border at the expense of its erstwhile "brotherly" group.

Civil Opposition

A non-government movement called "The People's Assembly of Ingushetia" is currently active in the republic. Some of the best-known civil opposition leaders include Bamatgirey Mankiev and the head of the steering committee of the national protest meeting Magomed Khazbiev, a close associate of the late Magomed Yevloev, the owner of the opposition Ingushetiya.ru website who was murdered on August 30, 2008. Along with the new owner of the opposition website (it has reappeared as Ingushetia.org), Magomed Aushev, Khazbiev organized the collection of signatures petitioning President Dmitry Medvedev to recall the current president of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov, and replace him with the first Ingush president, Ruslan Aushev (www.novayagazeta.ru/news/301032.html).

The Ingush opposition's problem is that it overestimates its real capabilities. It is not that popular with the Ingush public and its leaders have failed to earn public respect and appear less than professional. For instance, after collecting tens of thousands of signatures calling for the return of Ruslan Aushev, they were ready to brand him an enemy of the Ingush people simply because he did not attend Magomed Yevloev's funeral (Ingushetiya.ru, September 2). Currently, the opposition is obsessed with a single idea, and that is to force Murat Zyazikov out of power.

Armed Opposition

Jamaat units reporting to the common leader Magas (aka Akhmad Yevloev) are actively operating in Ingushetia. The multi-branch structure of the jamaat gives its units the benefit of being able to stage multiple strikes across Ingushetia simultaneously and—just as importantly—in broad daylight. The jamaat leader Magas has also replaced Shamil Basaev as the military amir of the Caucasus Front, and is one of the formidable figures in the leadership hierarchy of the North Caucasus armed resistance movement. It comes as no surprise that the Magas-led Jamaat has grown into one of the most capable units of the North Caucasus resistance movement. Daily attacks on government forces and reinforcements drafted from the local youth indicate that counter-insurgency operations conducted by the Federal Security Service (FSB) are only local in nature and have no strategic effect on the jamaat's effectiveness (interview with Ruslan Aushev, BBC Radio, October 1).

The Religious Factor

The religious factor is driven by the influence of the Salafi movement and the activities of the vird (religious brotherhood) of Batal-Hajji Belkharoyev. While the Salafists may succeed in drawing some young people into their fold, Batal-Hajji's group is a well-established entity that operates as a vird closed to all outsiders with its own treasury, a unified chain of command and exceedingly severe discipline. Ruled solely by the principle of mutual help, the brotherhood puts its members above country, family or anything else. When it comes to the brotherhood's activities, the government is forced to look the other way and pretend that nothing is happening. The brotherhood may kill, insult or confiscate anyone's business without exception, using any means possible.

The Separatist Problem

This issue forms the critical difference between Chechnya and Ingushetia. While Chechnya has a well-established base of those committed to the separatist ideas that formed over the last twenty years, Ingush society has no equivalent to this group except those who took arms to join the opposition. Magomed Khazbiev's casually-made comment that Ingushetia may solve its problems by seceding from Russia came as a shock (www.nr2.ru/incidents/193825.html). No one expected even a hint of a separatist sentiment or statements from Ingushetia's opposition. The Caucasus Times website wasted no time in suggesting that the murder of Magomed Yevloyev, the former owner of Ingushetia.org, was related to the website's efforts to collect signatures calling for Ingushetia's secession from Russia (Caucasus Times, September 1). It is a bit odd that no one brought that up while the owner of the oppositionist web site was still alive.

The Federal Policy Factor

As long as the federal government in Moscow accepts the claims Ingushetia's president, Murat Zyazikov, that there is peace and order in the republic, it has to try to suppress the public opinion by mounting secret operations against those suspected of sympathies toward the separatists. Most often, these operations target young people who disappear without a trace, and the public blames the federal powers (Ingushetia.org, October 3). During her visit to the republic in September 2008 Ludmila Alekseyeva had to admit that Ingushetia's situation today is reminiscent of the Stalin-era terror of 1937 (Kavkaz-uzel.ru, September 23; North Caucasus Weekly, September 26). By continuing to back Murat Zyazikov, Moscow tries to avoid admitting problems in Ingushetia, yet it is not likely to ignore the growing trend of attacks against its power agencies for much longer. Nor is the federal center likely to call on Ruslan Aushev. The government is simply at a loss as to what to do in the region, and this is precisely the reason that the attacks on the government are growing to alarming levels.

Notes

1. A. Zverev, Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus. Part 1, 1996, in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Bruno Coppieters (ed.)
2. The draft law on local self-government in Chechnya and Ingushetia was adopted by the State Duma of the Russian Federation—see *Kommersant*, September 1

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