

### Opposition Website: Ingush Rebels Seize Villages

Ingushetia.ru reported on October 16 that rebel fighters had seized two villages in the republic. According to the opposition website, the militants had blocked the entrances to the villages of Muzhichi and Yandare from the Rostov-Baku federal highway and had set up their own checkpoints. Yet sources in Ingushetia's Interior Ministry called the report "disinformation," while the republic's prosecutor, Yury Turygin, told Interfax that neither he nor the Interior Ministry nor any other republican law-enforcement bodies had received any information about "bandits" having seized villages.



At the same time, Ingushetia's Interior Ministry confirmed on October 16 that rebel gunmen had wounded a resident of Muzhichi when they opened fire on his car after he refused to heed their demands to stop. Newsru.com also reported that a man was kidnapped in Yandare on October 15. The website quoted Ingush Interior Ministry sources as saying that eight to ten people wearing masks and camouflage uniforms had tried to stop cars on the outskirts of Muzhichi but that police and Internal Troops who later arrived at the scene found no one there. Ingushetia.org reported that rebels manning makeshift checkpoints had been stopping cars to check documents as part of a search for law-enforcement personnel.

Meanwhile, unidentified assailants fired on Ingush Interior Ministry special forces in the city of Nazran on October 16, wounding one of them, Newsru.com reported. Also on October 16, a bomb blew up a car belonging to a police inspector in Nazran. No one was hurt in the blast.

On October 15, the deputy head of the Sunzha district administration, Khadzhibikar Dhankhotov, was shot to death by unidentified gunmen who escaped in a car, Interfax reported. On October 11, two Interior Ministry servicemen were wounded in an explosion that took place near a water tower in the village of Yuzhnyi in Ingushetia's Malgobek district. On October 10, two Interior Ministry troops were injured when a roadside bomb went off near an Ural truck carrying them in the city of Malgobek. According to Interfax, the two servicemen were hospitalized but not critically injured.

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## Is the Kremlin Behind Calls for Merging Ingushetia and Chechnya?

Ingushetia.org reported on October 12 that demonstrators gathered on the administrative border between Ingushetia and Chechnya to call for a unification of the two republics. According to the opposition website, the demonstration was organized by the Ingush leadership, which arranged for demonstrators to be bussed to the site of the rally, which was held near a school in the Chechen village of Sernovodsk. Ingushetia.ru reported that among those who addressed the rally was Duvakha Abdurakhmanov, speaker of the Chechen Republic's parliament, the People's Assembly, who promised to convey Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's opinion on the issue. Yet the press service of Chechnya's People's Assembly told Ekho Moskv Radio that while Abdurakhmanov had been in Sernovodsk that day to visit polling stations (local elections took place on October 12 in various Russian regions, including Chechnya), no demonstration had taken place there and the Chechen parliamentary speaker merely spoke with voters. The Ingush authorities did not comment on the reported demonstration.



On October 13, Ingushetia.org reported that a second demonstration in favor of merging Ingushetia and Chechnya had taken place that day in the Chechen capital of Grozny. The website reported that both local inhabitants and residents of Ingushetia who had been bussed in took part in the rally, and that some of the demonstrators carried signs and placards calling for a merger of the two republics. Newsru.com reported on October 13 that the Grozny rally was coordinated between the Ingush and Chechen governments.

Nezavisimaya Gazeta on October 15 quoted the head of the Chechen president's information-analytical directorate, Lema Gudaev, as saying that there had been no pro-unification demonstration in Grozny and that the demonstration held in Sernovodsk on October 12 took place "spontaneously," without official sanction. He also called reports that the authorities of both republics had approved the demonstrations "disinformation" spread by Ingushetia.org. According to Nezavisimaya Gazeta, the office of the presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District categorically refused to comment on the situation.

Yet Nezavisimaya Gazeta quoted Chechen parliamentary speaker Duvakha Abdurakhmanov as saying that a large group of residents in Ingushetia had held a demonstration in Ingushetia's Sunzha district demanding that they be allowed to vote in the election for Chechnya's parliament. As the newspaper pointed out, both Chechnya and Ingushetia regard the Sunzha district as their own, given that the administrative border between the two republics was not carefully demarcated back in 1992. "They are puzzled as to why what is in fact a single small nation was divided when not only people, but also large states are seeking paths to convergence," Nezavisimaya Gazeta quoted Abdurakhmanov as saying. The newspaper noted that Abdurakhmanov added the caveat that there is no need to "hasten developments." As Nezavisimaya Gazeta noted, Abdurakhmanov is considered a close associate of Ramzan Kadyrov.

On October 13, deputies in Ingushetia's People's Assembly disseminated a statement expressing their indignation and categorical disagreement with the idea of re-creating Checheno-Ingushetia. "We, the deputies of the People's Assembly of Ingushetia, express our indignation and categorical disagreement with the absurd idea of recreating a new Checheno-Ingushetia," Interfax quoted the statement as saying. "We are stating once again that the experiment to create a new Checheno-Ingush people, like the Bolshevik slogan about creating ... the 'Soviet person' ... collapsed ignominiously a long time ago."

According to Newsru.com, the Ingush deputies said reviving Checheno-Ingushetia would lead to nothing good. "Sober-minded and sane people should not step on the same rake twice," the statement said. "Simply raising the issue of unifying Ingushetia and Chechnya for discussion has aroused an extremely negative reaction in Ingush society ... Such a merger is unwise and not in the interests of the two peoples at the current historical stage of development, both from the economic and the political point of view. The Ingush people once and for all made their historic choice, although that choice was made not at the most problem-free historical period in Russia's development. In the referendum of November 1991, 97.5 percent of the voters-inhabitants of Ingushetia expressed their desire to be part of the Russian Federation ... and this is a historical fait accompli that will not be overturned as long as the Russian Federation exists."

Newsru.com on October 13 quoted the speaker of Ingushetia's parliament, Makhmud Sakalov, as saying the demonstration calling for the merger of Ingushetia and Chechnya that had reportedly taken place in the Chechen village of Sernovodsk the previous day was a hastily convened gathering of several dozen people who "regard themselves as mouthpieces of 'the people's will' of both the Ingush and Chechen people." He added: "We want to say right away that we together with the fraternal Chechen people already went through this, and the previous unification brought nothing good either to the Chechens or to us. Today both Ingushetia and Chechnya are developing rapidly; dwellings, objects of sotskultbyt [Soviet term referring, among other things, to schools and entertainment and cultural infrastructure-NCW] and enterprises are being built. There are neither territorial nor political nor economic quarrels among our peoples."

For the first time in a long time, leaders of Ingushetia's opposition were in agreement with the republic's parliamentarians. "We fully understand who did this—on the orders of [Ingush President Murat] Zyazikov, all his comrades, both the government [ministers] and the chairman of the government," opposition leader Magomed Khazbiev told Nezavisimaya Gazeta. "Of course, they might now be saying [that they didn't]. But the authorities gathered up people, paid old people a thousand rubles a piece and sent busloads of them to the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia. Where did these people get their placards [with] slogans? All of this was prepared. Even back three or four years ago there was talk that Zyazikov wanted to tack Ingushetia onto Chechnya, that all of this was planned in the Kremlin, that they wanted to join the Ingush with the Chechens. Zyazikov at that time went on television and said that any such annexation was out of the question, that these were just rumors, but of course he will do anything that those on top tell him to do."

Opposition lawyer Kaloi Akhilgov told Nezavisimaya Gazeta that the demonstrations were organized in order to gauge public opinion on the issue of merging the two republics. "We already went through a merger of Chechnya and Ingushetia and it brought nothing good—to the Ingush, at any rate," Akhilgov told the newspaper. "If attempts at such an amalgamation are made, I think the ranks of the people who are in the woods [the rebels-NCW] will swell." Akhilgov said that while reports about the demonstrations in favor of merging the two republics appeared on the opposition Ingushetia.org website, the opposition had nothing to do with the demonstrations. "I am sure all of this is coming from Moscow, because such an idea has been nurtured for a long time—since the time that the situation in Chechnya was more or less settled—but the last two to three years in Ingushetia have been stormy," he said. "Moscow needs to have a quiet region in the form of a Checheno-Ingushetia headed by the strong leader

Ramzan Kadyrov. Today, everyone is saying that Murat Zyazikov is not handling the situation.”

Nezavisimaya Gazeta quoted Zyazikov's spokesman, Bers Yevloev, as saying about the possibility of a merger of Ingushetia and Chechnya: “Murat Magomedovich [Zyazikov] has repeatedly expressed his opinion on this issue and will not be commenting on it yet again, particularly now. His position is as follows: Checheno-Ingushetia is in the past and there will be no return to it.” Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported that it asked former Ingush President Ruslan Aushev what he thought about the reported pro-unification demonstrations but that he refused to comment.

Aleksei Malashenko of the Carnegie Moscow Center told Nezavisimaya Gazeta: “The situation is completely incomprehensible. It does not look like the president of Chechnya initiated this process ... What is going on is definitely harmful to Moscow. Such an idea, of course, is hovering around in certain circles—unifying Ingushetia and Chechnya and thereby getting rid of Murat Zyazikov. But the fact is that the Ingush themselves do not want this; they are afraid of being under Ramzan— knowing, let's say, his methods of rule. On the other hand, Kadyrov, as is known, permits himself certain things at times, something on the lines of a little blackmail of the Kremlin for his own purposes.”

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### Yamadaev Murder Suspects Detained

Two suspects in the murder of Ruslan Yamadaev, the former State Duma Deputy representing Chechnya and brother of former Vostok battalion commander Sulim Yamadaev, were detained in Moscow on October 16 (North Caucasus Weekly, September 26). Newsru.com, citing the TV-Tsentr television channel, reported that a black Mercedes with tinted windshields was stopped by traffic police officers in the northwestern part of the capital and found to have fake government license plates. A search of the vehicle and those inside turned up a Makarov pistol with a silencer and two loaded magazines. Investigators said that the car was the one from which Yamadaev was shot on September 24.



According to police, three people were in the car at the time it was stopped—the driver, who is a native of Dagestan and on whose body the pistol was found, and two passengers, one of whom managed to escape. Still, Moscow officials said it was premature to connect those suspects to Yamadaev's murder. A Moscow police department spokesman, Vladimir Korobkov, told Ekho Moskvy Radio that several people had been detained but that it was "still too early" to talk about their involvement in the Yamadaev killing.

The people detained on October 16 were not the first suspects in Ruslan Yamadaev's murder. At the beginning of October, the newspaper Tvoi Den reported that a 53-year-old man with a previous criminal record who resembled the police's composite sketch of Yamadaev's suspected murderer had been detained in Moscow. That suspect was reportedly found with a Kedr machine-pistol and a silencer that was thought to have been used to kill Yamadaev. Yet the Investigative Committee under the Prosecutor General's Office subsequently refused to confirm that a suspect in Yamadaev's murder had been detained. At the same time, an official involved in investigating Yamadaev's murder told Interfax that a man with a Kedr machine-pistol and a silencer had been arrested but that it was premature to say whether he was involved in the murder.

Meanwhile, Life.ru reported that according to investigators, a 53-year-old native of Moldova identified simply as "Aleksandr Ch.", who was detained at the beginning of October with a Kedr machine-pistol, may have had a direct role in Yamadaev's murder and resembled the description of the killer given by eyewitnesses. The website quoted investigators as saying that while the serial number on the pistol's barrel remained intact, the weapon had not been on any list of lost or stolen weapons. "From this one can conclude that it [the pistol] made its way to the capital from Chechnya or another hot spot," a source told the website. Life.ru noted that the Kedr machine-pistol is among the weapons used by Russia's special services. At the same time, the website noted that both Ruslan and Sulim Yamadaev had been involved in fighting Chechnya's rebels and that investigators were trying to link that fact to Ruslan Yamadaev's murder. Still, Life.ru reported that the suspect's apartment and dacha in Russian capital had not yet even been searched.

According to Life.ru, "Aleksandr Ch." was jailed for rape back in 1973 and is a member of the Solntsevo organized crime group.

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### Putin Travels to Chechnya to Inspect Post-Quake Rebuilding Efforts

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin traveled to Chechnya on October 16 to inspect reconstruction work following an earthquake that struck the republic on October 11. Putin and Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu were met at the airport by Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, who then accompanied the visitors to the town of Gudermes.



Earlier, during a meeting with Kadyrov and Shoigu on October 14, Putin promised to render all of the financial aid needed to repair what had been damaged during the quake. Shoigu said that 700 specialists were in the republic to help restore the supply of water, natural gas and electricity, adding that more specialists would be sent to the republic. Shoigu estimated that the repair work would take two weeks and noted that three district hospitals were damaged in the quake.

Kadyrov, for his part, reported on October 14 that 4,120 apartment buildings had been damaged by the quake, 1,400 of which could not be rebuilt. He also said that three hospitals and various education and cultural facilities would also have to be rebuilt completely. Putin noted that the quake had left 20,000 people homeless and praised the role Kadyrov had already played in rebuilding Grozny.

Two tremors hit Chechnya in quick succession on October 11, the first with a magnitude of 5.6 and the second at 4.8, the Moscow Times reported on October 13, citing the Emergency Situations Ministry. Thirteen people were killed and 100 injured, and an Emergency Situations Ministry spokeswoman in Moscow told the Moscow Times that three children were among those killed by the quake and that of the 27 people hospitalized, 12 were in serious condition. A state of emergency was declared in the region.

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### Pro-Moscow Authorities Terrorize Families of Chechen Militants

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

The authorities in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, are trying hard to present a rosy picture of the situation on the ground. The many public holidays are interspersed with reports about the opening ceremonies at this or that facility in the city or the republic.

Against this background of a “permanent” holiday, there are frequent reports on local television about the attempts by the authorities to prevent youths from leaving for the mountains to join the militants to fight against those who speak on behalf of the people. Alarming signals about the exodus of the youth to the mountains can be found in brief news reports from around the Chechen Republic, as well as in the angry denials made by Ramzan Kadyrov in front of the television cameras.

A recent public address by the mayor of the city of Argun included threats to evict the families of militants and the parents of young men who had joined the rebels in mountains and failed to convince their sons to return to their families (<http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2008/08/m144307.htm>). The eviction threats entail not only evictions from current places of residence but also expulsions from the city entirely. In an evening news broadcast on Chechen television several days later, the Argun mayor did not disavow such radical measures and cited the opinion of city residents, thereby avoiding responsibility for the statement he had already made publicly.

Similar threats were heard from Grozny Mayor Muslim Khuchiev, the chief financial officer of Kadyrov's projects, which are funded through the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation. The New York Times published an article on this subject in late August 2008. The article contained a quote by the Chechen capital's mayor, who stated: “At present we will not carry out a dialogue with you based on the laws of this state. We shall act in accordance with the Chechen traditions.”

According to the Memorial human rights group, several houses were burned down in the Itum-Kalin District as a warning to those whose children left for the mountains. Following the same scheme, a number of houses were destroyed in Shatoi and Shali districts of the Chechen Republic.

The Prefect of the Vedeno District of Chechnya, Shamil Magomaev also decided to please the authorities and declared that all families of those whose children joined the militants would be deprived of all social benefits (Severny Kavkaz, October 7). His statement, however, was retracted by the evening because it was clearly illegal. Another interpretation was offered instead—that what was meant was the deprivation of “social assistance” in accordance with traditional Chechen customs. This actually sounded even more nonsensical than the initial iteration (Regnum, October 7). What was most interesting about Magomaev's TV performance was that he admitted that “the authorities cannot fight with militants as long as their ranks are swelled by more and more youth” ([skavkaz.rfn.ru/news.html?id=153449&cid=](http://skavkaz.rfn.ru/news.html?id=153449&cid=)). That is, even though the authorities are trying hard to conceal the true state of affairs, it can still be ascertained from the conversations between the authority figures and the population. According to official figures provided by the law-enforcement authorities, in the first six months of 2008 more than fifty people joined the militants (Regnum, October 7). And these are official estimates, while in practice the number of those who have joined militants is significantly larger. For instance, the head of the “Demos” center, Tatyana Lokshina, is convinced that hundreds of young men joined the militants in 2007 alone ([www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1193008.html](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1193008.html)).

The main reason that local authority figures make such radical statements is because they are trying to present themselves in a good light to Ramzan Kadyrov, who is not happy about those who are departing for the mountains. The heads of local bodies of executive power simply do not know how to draw a line between their loyalty to Kadyrov and the violations of Russian laws. It is quite likely that the Prosecutor General's Office sends out urgent signals about the inadmissibility of adopting such decisions in order to forestall the wholesale substitution of the legal framework of Russian Federation with gangster-style settling of scores.

The principle of accountability of all relatives for one family member has become an everyday norm in Chechen society under the reign of Ramzan Kadyrov. Collective accountability must, in the view of the authorities, yield a positive result in the end. Yet people see how the authorities humiliate the relatives and family members of those who have joined the militants in mountains and many are puzzled by the actions of the authorities. It only adds more negativity to the overall popular attitude against Chechnya's pro-Moscow leadership.

Particularly popular among the youth are the video recordings, which are distributed by cell phones, in which the actions of militants are assessed positively. Patriotic songs from the time of independent Ichkeria, symbols of that era and historiographies of various rebel field commanders are becoming increasingly popular among college-age Chechen youth.

There is nothing new in the tactic chosen by the authorities, because various forms of pressure on the families of militants have been adopted and implemented from the very beginning of combat activities in Chechnya. The Russian special services first tried such measures on certain personalities—including, for example, Magomed Khanbiev ([Lavkaz.memo.ru](http://Lavkaz.memo.ru), March 10, 2004). Almost two dozen of his close relatives were arrested in order to lure him out of the mountains and force him to surrender to the authorities. Those arrested included his brother, sisters, brother-in-laws and others. Some efforts were also made to influence Aslan Maskhadov when authorities arrested his older sister, who is 70, and his two brothers, as well as five other family members ([Newsru.com](http://Newsru.com), January 13, 2005). Several months after Aslan Maskhadov was assassinated they were released from custody. (The president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Aslan Maskhadov was killed on March 8, 2005.)

Slightly later, following the now-familiar scheme, the pro-Moscow Chechen authorities abducted the older brother and aging father of Dokka Umarov, the leader of the Chechen resistance movement. It should be noted that Dokka Umarov's father died while in custody (Prague watchdog, August 22, 2006).

Those who filed cases with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (France) against the crimes committed by the Russian troops in Chechnya were also subjected to persecution. Several of them were killed by unidentified gunmen ([Newsru.com](http://Newsru.com), June 21, 2007), while others were coerced to retract the statements that they already made ([Kommersant-Vlast](http://Kommersant-Vlast), April 17, 2006). There have also been cases in which jurists and lawyers who helped Chechens filed their cases to the court were actively persecuted ([Gazeta.ru](http://Gazeta.ru), July 16).

In their attempts to demonstrate loyalty and devotion to Ramzan Kadyrov, the local pro-Moscow authority figures inadvertently incur the ire of the people and this has a positive impact on the militants, who quickly find supporters in the disenfranchised portion of the population as a way to sustain their struggle against the pro-Moscow Chechen government.

Thus far nothing presages a major change in the situation in Chechnya against the background of the policy Ramzan Kadyrov is implementing on behalf of his Moscow paymasters. The Kremlin strategists clearly prefer a putatively "subdued" Chechnya under Kadyrov to a law-based one in which elements of separatism would still be strongly manifested in society. And that is why the Russian government will continue to close its eyes to the peculiarities of the Chechen authorities.

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