

New Ingush President Shows Signs that he'll Take a Different Approach

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Prague Watchdog on November 19 published a piece that warmly praised Ingushetia's new president, General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, who replaced the wildly unpopular Murat Zyazikov (North Caucasus Weekly, October 31). The website called Yevkurov "an idealist in general's stripes."

"From the very first moment of his appointment, General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov has behaved like a man sent to the front line with a special mission," the piece stated. "He cancelled the inauguration ceremony and the celebrations that are normally held when a new Ingush president takes office. On his first day he visited the central mosque to take part in the evening prayers. His predecessors have also made such visits from time to time, but only as guests of honor. Yevkurov plans to rely primarily on the people, rather than on the siloviki and the bureaucrats. He let this be understood when, on returning from prayers, he requested support from the elders of the Ingush teips."

The website noted that Yevkurov also met with representatives of the opposition, including relatives of the slain independent website founder Magomed Yevloev, to whom he expressed his condolences. Prague Watchdog reported that Yevkurov sent a commission headed by opposition leader Magomed Khazbiev to the pretrial detention center in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, in order to ascertain the conditions in which young men from Ingushetia were being held there and to provide them with legal assistance. He also promised to establish a commission to investigate disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions, the website reported. In return, according to Prague Watchdog, the opposition said Yevkurov would be given a "trust credit," at least for the first hundred days of his presidency.

In addition, Prague Watchdog reported that Yevkurov has risked a confrontation with still powerful members of the republic's previous administrations, such as former republican government chairman Ibragim Malsagov, who, back during Ruslan Aushev's presidency, closed off a railway tunnel near his home and made the street a pedestrian walkway. That state of affairs continued until Yevkurov's accession as president: the new president has ordered the street to be unblocked. Yevkurov has also ordered that land which was unlawfully seized by officials be returned to the state and promised to appoint a "normal minister of education" who will end the bribes that parents have to pay for their children's education.

Yevkurov has also indicated that, in contrast to Murat Zyazikov, he will not take a strictly militarized approach to fighting Ingushetia's Islamist insurgency, saying that the republic's rebel groups will "automatically disappear" if such things as "50-50 cash kickbacks"—that is, rampant official corruption—are eradicated.

He has also brought back personnel from the comparatively popular administration of Ruslan Aushev. Kavkazky Uzel on November 14 quoted Magomed-Sali Aushev, a former deputy chairman of Ingushetia's government and a former member of the republic's Parliament, as saying that Ingushetia's new prime minister, Rashid Gaisanov, and the head of the republican presidential administration, Ibragim Tochiev, were both "directly connected" to Ruslan Aushev and were members of Aushev's team when he was Ingushetia's president.

Yet despite signs that President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov wants to make positive changes, Ingushetia still faces great challenges. As Prague Watchdog wrote regarding the current situation in the republic, "attacks and killings continue, as if no change of government had taken place."

Unidentified gunmen in Ingushetia attacked the house of the Malgobek district police chief, Ruslan Archakov, in the village of Achaluki on November 19. The opposition Ingushetia.org website reported that the attackers fired assault rifles and grenade launchers at the house and that the shooting lasted five to eight minutes. No one was hurt in the incident and police who arrived at the scene failed to detain the attackers—who, according to Itar-Tass, had fled in three cars. Ingushetia.org reported that young people had been "brutally tortured" in the Malgobek district internal affairs department several days earlier.

The Regnum news agency reported on November 18 that a member of the patrol and sentry service of the Nazran city police department, Amir Gazikov, was shot and wounded by an unidentified attacker on November 18. Also on November 18, a house belonging to Yakub Yandiev, a bailiff in Kantyshevo, a village in Ingushetia's Nazran district, was fired on by unknown attackers. Interfax reported that no one was hurt in that attack.

A military convoy came under fire in the village of Troitskaya in Ingushetia's Sunzha district on the evening of November 17. Itar-Tass reported that unidentified gunmen fired on the convoy, which consisted of a Ural truck and two armored personnel carriers, using automatic weapons and an RPG-26 grenade launcher. None of the servicemen traveling in the convoy were hurt in the attack, but a local resident who was riding his car at the time of the attack, identified as Islam Yevloev, and another passerby, identified as Magomed Tochiev, were wounded.

Also on November 17, gunmen shot a municipal official in Ingushetia's main city, Nazran, the republic's Interior Ministry reported. According to the Associated Press, Magomed Barakhoev, the head of one of Nazran's districts, died in the hospital

of injuries from the attack, which also injured his wife.

On November 15, a gunman fatally shot a policeman at a checkpoint on the Rostov-Baku highway near the village of Yandare. RIA Novosti quoted Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for the Investigative Committee, as saying that after police stopped and inspected a car, "shots were fired from the vehicle as it departed, and police officers returned fire." He said that one policeman died at the scene and the person in the car was wounded and taken to a hospital.

On November 14, a monument in Nazran's Barsukinsky municipal district to Idris Zyazikov, who was a Communist Party chief in Ingushetia during the 1920s, was seriously damaged in a bomb blast, Itar-Tass reported. According to the news agency, the monument, which is situated at school No. 6 on Zyazikov Street, was unveiled three years ago. Idris Zyazikov is related to the former Ingush president, Murat Zyazikov.

Also on November 14, an explosion took place in a home belonging to Ingushetia's acting vice premier, Bashir Aushev. A source in the republican Interior Ministry told Kommersant it was uncertain whether someone fired a grenade launcher at the house or whether an explosive device detonated there. The house has not been occupied for some time and thus no one was hurt in the blast.

Meanwhile, on November 17 a court in Nazran declared that the August 31 arrest of Magomed Yevloev, founder of the independent Ingushetiya.ru website (which is now located at Ingushetia.org) was illegal. Yevloev was shot to death while in police custody that same day. Police claim the shooting was accidental, but Ingushetia.org, members of Yevloev's family and opposition leaders in the republic have accused the republic's former president, Murat Zyazikov, and other top officials, including Ingush Interior Minister Musa Medov, of being behind the shooting.

The court's ruling was hailed by the press freedom watchdog group Reporters Without Borders. "This is a first step towards recognizing the political nature of the behavior of the Ingush security forces in this case," the group said in a statement. "We hope that a thorough and impartial investigation will soon be carried out into the exact circumstances of Yevloev's death."

Islamic Militants Ratchet Up Attacks in Dagestan

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Dagestan has seen an uptick in violence between security forces and suspected Islamic militants during the past week. A police officer was killed in the village of Leninkent near the capital Makhachkala on November 19. Interfax quoted an unnamed spokesperson for Dagestan's Interior Ministry as saying that the dead body of Police Major Shamkhal Abdulmutalov was found on the outskirts of Leninkent that morning and that Abdulmutalov had apparently been killed on his way to work. Agence France-Presse quoted a local police officer as saying that 13 shell casings were found near Abdulmutalov's body with two bullet holes.

Itar-Tass reported on November 18 that an explosive device had detonated on a roadside in Makhachkala's Kirovsky district that morning as a VAZ-2110 car was passing by. A regional police source told the news agency that "two men with injuries were brought to the hospital" after the incident. Itar-Tass reported that, according to preliminary information, the two wounded men were employees of Dagestan's Spiritual Board of Muslims and that it was possible that criminals had planned to assassinate one of them. Interfax identified the two victims as Sultan Sultanmagomedov, an anchor of a Muslim TV show and an advisor to the mufti of the Dagestani Spiritual Board of Muslims, and Gazimagomed Kurazkhmaev, his driver and bodyguard.

Kavkazky Uzel reported on November 18 that both men had multiple shrapnel wounds but that their lives were not in danger. The website noted that Sutanmagmedov, who it identified as the deputy mufti of Dagestan's Spiritual Board of Muslims, was known in the republic as "one of the most irreconcilable opponents of religious radicalism, known in the republic as Wahhabism."

Dagestan's armed Islamic insurgency, the Sharia Jamaat, has denounced and threatened members of the republic's Spiritual Board of Muslims (Chechnya Weekly, January 26, 2006; April 19, 2007).

Federal Security Service (FSB) commandos killed four militants during a special operation in Makhachkala on November 17, Itar-Tass reported. The militants were holed up in an apartment on the second floor of a five-story building in the Dagestani capital and, according to Interior Ministry official Shamil Guseinov, a gun battle broke out after they refused to surrender.

The Moscow Times reported on November 19 that among the four Islamist militants killed in Makhachkala, was a suspect twice cleared by juries on charges of organizing the 1999 apartment bombing that killed 58 people. According to the English-language newspaper, the suspect, 46-year-old Magomed Salikhov, was accused of organizing a bombing in the Dagestani town of Buinaksk in September 1999, the first in a series of apartment building bombings that hit Russian cities that month, killing more than 300 people and leading the Kremlin to start the second war in Chechnya. Although Salikhov himself was twice cleared by jurors, his associates were tried by a judge and sentenced to terms upward to life in prison.

Interfax quoted a spokesman for the local branch of the FSB as saying that the four men had been linked to dozens of killings of local law enforcement officials and moderate Muslim clergymen, as well as local television journalist Telman Alishaev earlier this year (North Caucasus Weekly, September 5).

On November 14, unidentified people fired at a traffic police detail in Dagestan's Karabudakhkentsky region, killing one policeman, Itar-Tass reported. A source in the press service of Dagestan's Interior Ministry told the news agency that police officers came to a filling station and asked the driver of an unlicensed VAZ-2110 car to show documents. "A man with a submachine-gun got out of the car and shot one of the policemen point-blank, after which he and his accomplice escaped from the scene of the incident," the source said.

Kadyrov Leads a Special Operation

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Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov personally organized and led a special operation aimed at members of “illegal armed formations” in Chechnya’s Kurchaloi and Nozhai-Yurt districts on November 14-15, Interfax reported, citing the Chechen presidential press service. The chief of that service, Lemma Gudaev, was quoted as saying that the operation lasted all night but that no signs for rebel forces were found— something which Kadyrov considered a “good sign.”

“Kadyrov emphasized that not a single trace of the bandit formations was discovered here, and that speaks to the fact that there are practically none remaining in the republic,” Gudaev said. “Yes, there are small groups that do not represent a serious threat to society; nonetheless, it is necessary to conduct a tough fight against them, to oppose their unlawful actions and uncoordinated raids on representatives of the law-enforcement bodies. One of the reasons nothing of them has been found thus far is their very small number, but I am sure that sooner or later they will answer to the law.”

Gudaev also quoted Kadyrov as saying that members of “illegal armed formations” have been giving up the fight lately —something which, he said, shows that rebel leaders have started to lose the trust of their forces, who see the mood of the Chechen people as, according to Kadyrov, simply wanting to “live peacefully and to create.” Kadyrov said that thanks to “large-scale explanatory work” carried out by the republic’s religious authorities and local administrative bodies, ten rebels recently put down their weapons and returned to peaceful life.

Meanwhile, Interfax reported on November 18 that a militant was killed and another injured in a shootout with federal forces near the village of Goichu in Chechnya’s Urus-Martan district. The battle broke out after the federal troops spotted a group of about ten militants just south of Goichu.

A policeman was injured in a grenade blast as police officers and Interior Ministry troops were conducting a search operation on November 17, Itar-Tass reported. The news service did not specify exactly where the incident took place.

Kavkazky Uzel reported that a member of the Chechen police force’s patrol and sentry service No. 1, Isa Dukuev, received serious shrapnel wounds while taking part in a security operation in Chechnya’s Vedeni district on November 16. That same day, the Regnum news agency quoted a Chechen Interior Ministry source as saying that a rebel had been detained in Chechnya’s Shatoi district and that a resident of the village of Goity in Chechnya’s Urus-Martan district had been detained for providing the rebels with supplies and informing them of the whereabouts of federal troops and police. Regnum also quoted a federal Interior Ministry source as saying that on November 17 a militant who had fought in the late Shamil Basaev’s Chechen rebel group back in 1996 was arrested in Grozny’s Oktyabrsky district.

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Dagestani Jamaat Expands Operations into Azerbaijan

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By: Mairbek Vatchagaev

Everything started last August 17 with the explosion at the Abu Bekir mosque in Baku. This mosque is considered a meeting place for those who adhere to the Salafi ideology. A grenade was thrown into the mosque during the evening prayer, killing two people and wounding several more. (<http://www.day.az/news/society/132051.html>) The authorities attributed this attack to internal score-settling among the Salafists, arrested about 18 people suspected of organizing the attack, and decided to close the mosque (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, September 2). It should be noted that the mosque was initially closed temporarily due to the investigation into the blast, but the authorities decided not to reopen it.

It is not quite clear why the Salafists themselves are accused of an attack which reflects negatively on their reputation. However, the explosion has given the authorities in Azerbaijan a pretext to close a mosque which, unlike Azerbaijan's Muslim Spiritual Directorate, was not subservient to the state (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, August 18). In a state where a particularly shaped beard is sufficient enough for the police to harass an individual, it is difficult to speak of the Salafis having a mass following (www.day.az/news/society/129564.html).

Starting in late August, information trickling in from the northern part of Azerbaijan, an area bordering Russia, suggested that something unusual was taking place. It subsequently became clear that measures were being taken against jamaat members, who are known in Azerbaijan as "forest brothers." An operation to neutralize the former leader of the Dagestani Jamaat Emir Abdul-Mejid (aka Ilgar Malachiev) was carried out on August 29, while other similar measures carried out by the Azerbaijani authorities aimed at eliminating Malachiev's group were unsuccessful (Interfax, August 29). In an operation lasting several days Azerbaijan's military and special services tried to disarm a group of militants who had entered Azerbaijan from Dagestan. At issue here is the Lezgin ethnic minority, which after the breakup of the Soviet Union found itself divided by the Samur River between Russia and Azerbaijan. The Lezgins are the second largest ethnic group in Azerbaijan (according to various sources, they number about 250,000) (<http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2004/0183/analit05.php>). At the same time, according to the Russian Federation's 2002 census, 411,000 Lezgins reside in Dagestan (<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=17>).

According to information provided to the police by suspects detained during several operations aimed at disarming militant groups, on July 19th Emir Abdul-Mejid illegally crossed the border between Russia and Azerbaijan and visited Baku and Sumgait. It is likely that in the course of this trip, Abdul-Mejid attempted to form a Sumgait jamaat, which was to operate in coordination with other jamaats under the unified command of Dokku Umarov, leader of the North Caucasus Emirate. This development would mark the first time since the death of Shamil Basaev in July 2006 that an attempt has been made to form a new jamaat outside the boundaries of the North Caucasus region, thereby entangling the integral component of the Transcaucasus region—Azerbaijan.

According to the Azerbaijani authorities, the militants intend to establish not just one jamaat—in Sumgait—but to create the entire network of jamaats across Azerbaijan with particular focus on the regions bordering Dagestan. In this Lezgin-populated area of Azerbaijan jamaat members may inadvertently benefit from Baku's negative policy towards the Lezgin ethnic minority—or, to be more precise, from the Azerbaijani authorities' attempts to ignore the very fact of existence of this problem (<http://05.moy.su/news/2006-11-24-10>). It should be noted that Emir Abdul-Mejid himself hails from the Lezgin-populated area of Azerbaijan and has many influential connections there (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1228630.html).

All of the actions taken with regard to Emir Abdul-Mejid, including the operation to assassinate him and capture his group, tacitly confirmed that the jamaat's zone of militant activity had expanded to that part of the Lezgin-populated territory that is under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. The very fact that Emir Abdul-Mejid traveled to Sumgait, a large industrial city in Azerbaijan located close to Baku, testifies to the possibility that the non-Lezgin population of Azerbaijan may be involved in the resistance movement as well. In other words, the jamaat's territorial expansion was followed by ethnic expansion through the involvement of ethnic Azeris. At the same time, the fact that there is a relatively sizeable Lezgin Diaspora in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, should not be ignored either. It is conceivable that Emir Abdul-Mejid counted on Baku's Lezgin Diaspora, because it is still premature to talk about an Azeri segment in the resistance movement's overall structure.

It is still not quite clear how much Emir Abdul-Mejid was able to accomplish before he was killed on September 8 (RIA Novosti, September 9). Right after his death, the jamaat withstood another devastating strike when about 10 of its members were killed while illegally crossing the border from Azerbaijan to Dagestan (www.ng.ru/cis/2008-09-23/6_azerbaidzhan.html). The coordinated action taken by Russian and Azerbaijani Special Forces indicates that this operation was planned well in advance and not spontaneous.

A week after the assassination of Emir Abdul-Mejid, a news report appeared about another special operation against the members of the "forest brothers" in the northern regions of Azerbaijan (APA News Agency, September 19).

On October 2, the Azerbaijani authorities announced they had arrested 25 members of the "forest brothers" group, which possibly implied that they were jamaat members (<http://www.day.az/news/society/132051.html>).

On November 10, Azeri news media reported that the Azerbaijani authorities were conducting special operations against

jamaat members in the Lezgin-populated northern part of the country (<http://yerkramas.org/news/2008-11-10-1805>).

This means the Azerbaijani authorities failed to deprive the jamaat members of their sanctuary in the northern part of the republic in August and September. It can be surmised from this that there is a well-formed and deeply rooted jamaat in that part of the country that continues to function even after the death of its leader Emir Abdul-Mejid. The absence of news reports about actions carried out by the jamaat of Lezgins of Azerbaijan on the website controlled by prominent North Caucasian Salafist ideologue and political figure Movladi Udugov, who also happens to be responsible for informational support of the Caucasus Emirate, is possibly related to the fact that full-fledged contacts between the aforementioned jamaat and the structures of the Emirate have not yet been established. In other words, after organizing this entity in that area of Caucasus, Emir Abdul-Mejid simply did not have time to connect it with his contacts abroad and within the Caucasian Emirate.

The network of jamaats operating in the Caucasus has grown and now incorporates cells from Sochi in the northwest to Baku in the southeast. However, it is important to emphasize that this growth does not imply an overall radicalization of the region or that there will be any such development in the foreseeable future. The portion of the region's population who are ready to carry out armed resistance is below one tenth of one percent. However, this tiny minority is far more active in its expression of dissent than the passive majority is in its expression of support for the Russian or the Azeri regime. Their main achievement is that they have a shared ideology (Salafism), a shared objective (assuming power in the region), and the means of achieving it through armed struggle and attrition warfare that will eventually force the Russian army out of the region.

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Russia Admits Rebel Fighter Activity in Chechnya

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By: Mairbek Vatchagaev

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

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

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

The losses among rebel fighters continue to be an important indicator for propaganda purposes, yet after nine years of war neither Russian nor Chechen officials could explain how exactly they arrive at these casualty numbers. For instance, according to the official Grozny government reports, "this year, police investigations and special operations led to the killing of 23 rebels, including 2 commanders, arrest of 144 members of illegal armed groups, and surrender to the police of 25 former rebel fighters", that is, a total of 192. The Russian military cites another set of numbers—according to them, 32 rebel fighters have been killed and none were arrested or surrendered (www.rosbalt.ru/2008/05/20/485458). If these reports are true, it is puzzling why Ramzan Kadyrov claimed in his statement on January 30th, 2008, that "the war may already be described in the past tense" (news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid_7218000/7218692).

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

Young Chechen men who keep leaving for the mountains to join the rebel forces are a constant thorn in the government's side. For example, according to the villagers of the town of Vedeni (www.vedeni.net/forum), five young men, including one high school and four college students, have left to join the rebels during the month of May alone. To contain this trend and keep it from spreading, the Grozny government is putting pressure on friends and family members of the young men who have left to join the rebels. Frequent interrogations of parents and family members by the assorted government agencies (including FSB, Ministry of Interior, Yug Special Forces unit and other pro-Moscow government groups) force people to yield to the government's demands. For instance, the evening news of the local TV channel "Grozny" on May 22nd, 2008, featured footage of a group of mothers who were placed in front of the cameras and forced to appeal to their children to return home or be cursed for the rest of their lives. It was a miserable sight to see—people couldn't help but understand that what pushes children to leave home are the actions of the government, not the blessings of their parents. The families can't stop them from leaving and the use of their parents as a pressure tool causes nothing but public resentment against the government.

The second development worth noting is the government's admission of public support for the rebel fighters. As noted by the commander of the United group of armed forces in the North Caucasus Nikolai Sivak, "the local populace either supports the bandit groups or stays neutral, but does nothing to resist them and does not give them up to the federal forces" (BBC radio on May 20th, 2008, bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid_7410000). This secret is well-known yet neither Russia nor Chechnya prefers to bring it up. In a place where unemployment is sky-high (according to the official reports, 76.9 percent of the able-bodied population or half a million people are unemployed, www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1215658.html) and where the law is used primarily for putting pressure on the public instead of protecting it from the government, it is easy to find thousands of people who not only support the resistance movement, but are ready to become its active members. Without this support or, at a minimum, widespread public sympathy, the rebel fighters would be nothing but kamikadzes ready to perish at any moment. It is the public support that allows the rebels to not only survive, but reform through structural and qualitative changes in their ranks.

An independent expert of Kavkaz Uzel Grigori Shvedov confirms that rebel fighters in Chechnya usually do not terrorize the public. According to Shvedov, the acts of violence targeting civilians are usually staged by someone other than the rebels, and this is an important consideration that the Chechens seem to have included into their tactical arsenal. Assassination of rank-and-file policemen is always condemned by the public because many of them have joined the force as the only available way to earn a living. It should not be forgotten that the educational establishment that would have given many a chance to learn marketable skills has been missing from Chechnya for the last 18 years. Today, the only opportunities available in Chechnya are either in the construction business or in the police; none are available for others. Akhmed Zakayev tried to take advantage of the situation when he shocked all Chechens by admitting the achievements of Ramzan Kadyrov's rule and suggesting that the rebels should revise their stance toward the Chechen policemen (<http://chechenpress.org/events/2008/05/20/1f.shtml>). The rebel leader Dokka Umarov didn't stay quiet either—he continues to argue for the recently announced Caucasus Emirate by making frequent references to his predecessors Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev and Shamil Basayev. According to Umarov the only reason that Sadullayev and Basayev did not announce the Emirate earlier was because they didn't have enough time. Umarov claims that the rebel forces today are capable of mounting strikes across the entire Emirate territory (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5991894707404590867&hl=fr>).

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

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