SPECIAL REPORT

Jihadist and Islamist Trends in Eurasia in 2011
Part I

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PLUS: First Suicide Bombing of 2012 in Russia Occurs in Dagestan

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TRENDS IN ISLAMISM AND JIHADISM IN RUSSIA AND EURASIA DURING 2011 IN REVIEW

By Gordon M. Hahn

Introduction

Islamist and jihadist trends in Russia and Eurasia during 2011 showed points of continuity and change. Russia remains the center of gravity for jihadi activity in Eurasia, with the North Caucasus functioning as the global jihadi revolutionary alliance’s bridgehead into Russia. In particular, Russia’s North Caucasus saw the Caucasus Emirate mujahedin suffer a very slight decline in operational capacity, but a more pronounced decline in the capacity of its suicide bombing and special operations unit, the Riyadus Salikhiin Martyrs’ Brigade (RSMB) was registered. The CE mujahedin continued and in some ways strengthened its ties to the global jihadi revolutionary movement and maintain a level of jihadi violence on a par with the high mark it achieved in 2010. In Russia’s Volga and Urals, both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan continued to experience very low levels of jihadi activity with little or no organizational connection to the CE’s activity. Outside of Russia, the North Caucasus’s neighboring Azerbaijan saw increased political dissension connected with issues related to the rights of Muslims and one alleged international plot. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan emerged for the first time as a locus of significant jihadi activity, including suicide bombings and other a few other jihadi attacks. Also for the first time, Kyrgyzstan witnessed as much or more jihadi activity than Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In short, Kazakhstan’s and Kyrgyzstan’s increased jihadi activity compensated for a decline in jihadi activity across the rest of the region as compared with 2010. I review these trends in more detail below.

RUSSIA

Jihadi Terrorism in Russia in 2011 in Figures

IIPER’s data for 2011 shows a 6.3 percent decline in the number of insurgent and terrorist attacks and related violent incidents in Russia – 546 – as compared with 583 in 2010. All or almost all of these attacks were carried out by the Caucasus mujahedin network of insurgent and terrorist jamaats (see Table 1).

Table 1. Estimated Number of Jihadi Terrorist Incidents and Casualties in Russia during 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Attacks/ Violent Incidents</th>
<th>State Agents Killed</th>
<th>State Agents Wounded</th>
<th>Civilians Killed</th>
<th>Civilians Wounded</th>
<th>Jihadists Killed</th>
<th>Jihadists Wounded</th>
<th>Jihadists Captured/Surrendered</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingushetia</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagestan</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>97</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabardino-Balkaria</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachaevo-Cherkessia</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adygeya</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>
**Methodology:** The data in this table are estimates. The estimates represent where possible the average of the minimum jihadi-reported figures and of the average of the minimum and maximum figures from non-jihadi sources. The logic behind this methodology is based on the tendency of Russian and local government and non-jihadi Russian and local media (often tied to or dependent on government reporting) to underreport the number of terrorist incidents and their resulting casualties as well as the tendency of jihadist sources to exaggerate the jihadists’ capacity by sometimes claiming responsibility for attacks carried out by others for criminal, ethnic, or clan purposes and exaggerating the numbers of casualties caused by their own attacks. Data for mujahedin killed comes from averaging figures reported by the CE-affiliated IslamUmma website and the human rights organization Memorial’s website Kavkaz-uzel.ru. Data for mujahedin wounded, captured and surrendered typically come from non-jihadi sources. Incidents include not only attacks carried out, but also counter-terrorist operations and successful and attempted arrests. They do not include prevented attacks (deactivated bombs, etc.). The estimated number of CE attacks and jihadi-related violent incidents was derived from an average between the number of attacks/incidents as reported individually on CE websites and on non-jihadi sources. An average between this number from jihadi sources and the number of attacks as reported in non-jihadi sources was used to derive our estimated number of CE attacks and jihadi-related violent incidents. Where possible a similar methodology is used to derive the figure for the number of mujahedin killed, wounded, and captured.

**Sources:** The jihadi sources’ data for attacks in the North Caucasus comes from monthly figures reported by the CE-affiliated website ummaNews.com as well as reports and claims of responsibility for individual attacks appearing on the CE websites Kavkaz tsentr (www.kavkazcenter.com), Hunafa.com (http://hunafa.com), VDagestan.info (http://VDagestan.info), and Guraba.info (http://guraba.info), and Islamdin.com (www.islamdin.com). Non-jihadi sources include official statements and independent reporting, especially that of the oppositional Russian human rights organization ‘Memorial’ and its website Kavkaz-uzel. Other non-jihadi sources used include: www.regnum.ru, kommersant.ru, www.rian.ru, and www.gazeta.ru. For the Moscow Domodedovo Airport attack see “V osushchestvlenii terakta v aeroportu

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<th>0</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>Stavropol, Krasnodar, and Rostov</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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**North Caucasus Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>541</th>
<th>237</th>
<th>288</th>
<th>121</th>
<th>117</th>
<th>319</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>263</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tatarstan</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bashkiriya**</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrakhan**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Russia***</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

|                | 546 | 237 | 288 | 159 | 297 | 322 | 20 | 289 |

*The data that forms the base for this table’s figures were researched by Gordon M. Hahn as well as Seth Gray, Leonid Naboishchikov, Anna Nevo, and Daniel Painter.

**A theoretical connection between these incidents and the CE is likely but operational ties remain unclear. The data come from non-jihadi sources only.

***We have included the assassination of Col. Yuri Budanov but retain reservations about CE amir Dokku Umarov’s claim of responsibility. The mujahed killed in Moscow was the January 24th Moscow Domodedovo Airport suicide bomber. We removed the would-be suicide bomber who died on New Year’s Eve when she was preparing her suicide vest for the failed plot targeting Moscow’s holiday celebrations because her death occurred before midnight. Also included is an explosion in Volgograd carried out by Chechen and ethnic Russian jihadis tied to the Astrakhan Jamaat. See Vladislav Mal’tsev, “Vtoroi front terroristicheskoi voiny,” Nezavisimaya gazeta – Religiya, 6 July 2011, http://religion.ng.ru/problems/2011-07-06/5_terror.html.
Approximately 10 percent were initiated by security, military or police agencies in the form of special counter-terrorist operations. The 2011 decline occurred in the second half of the year. As of July 1st the CE was on a pace to exceed its 2010 record of 583 attacks/violent incidents in a single year, having participated in 342 operations from January through June 2011; this half-year total nearly equaled IIPER’s estimate of 373 such violent CE-related incidents for the entire year of 2008. For further comparison, during the first six months of 2010 and 2009, IIPER estimated there were approximately 213 and 236 attacks/incidents, respectively. Notwithstanding the slight dip in CE operational activity in the second half of 2011 and for the year overall, 2011 was the CE’s second most capacious year, exceeding the 2008’s 373 total number of attacks/incidents and 2009’s 511.

The CE’s 546 attacks/incidents last year killed some 237 state agents (civilian officials and military, police and intelligence personnel) and wounded 288, for a total of 525 casualties among state agents across Russia in 2011. This represents a sharp decline in the efficiency of CE’s insurgent/terrorist attacks. For comparison, 2010’s 583 attacks/incidents killed approximately 288 state agents and wounded 533, for a total of 821 casualties among state agents. Thus, whereas the number of attacks/incidents fell by 6 percent, the number of casualties inflicted among state agents by the CE mujahedin fell by 36 percent. Civilian casualties in 2011 also declined by 8.6 percent from 2010. Last year’s 546 attacks produced 456 casualties (159 killed and 297 wounded) as compared to 2010’s 608 civilian casualties (112 killed and 496 wounded) in 583 attacks. This had much to do with the decline in the number of successful suicide bombings discussed below. In sum, 2011’s 546 CE attacks inflicted 981 casualties (396 killed and 585 wounded) as compared with 1,184 casualties (400 killed and 784 wounded) in 2010. This marks a decline of some 17.1 percent in the total number of casualties annually from 2010 to 2011.

Looking at the individual regions, the CE’s Dagestan network of mujahedin, the Dagestan Vilaiyat (DV), continued to be the jihad’s center of gravity throughout 2011 as it has been since April 2010 (See Graph 1). The DV’s 315 attacks/incidents marked a 18 percent increase over its 2010 total on the background of an overall decline of 6 percent in the number of attacks/incidents for the CE as a whole. Thus, the DV’s position as the CE’s vanguard vilaiyat/network was strengthened in 2011. Whereas the DV’s number of attacks comprised 45.8 percent of the CE’s total in 2010, the DV’s 315 attacks comprised some 57.7 percent of the CE attacks in 2011.

As has been true since mid-2010, the United Vilaiyat of Kabaradiya, Balkariya and Karachai (OVKBK), the CE’s network responsible for Russia’s republics of Kabardino-Balkaria (KBR) and Karachaevsk-Khzeriskiya (KChR), stands as the second most powerful of the CE’s vilaiyats. As in 2010, the KBR is still seeing the second highest level of jihadi violence after Dagestan among Russia’s 83 regions, with some 87 attacks/incidents in 2011. There were 6 additional OVKBK attacks in the KChR, giving the OVKBK a total of some 93 attacks/incidents in which its mujahedin were involved in 2011. This represents, however, a decline of 20.5 percent as compared to 2010, when the OVKBK had some 117 attacks/incidents (113 in the KBR and 4 in the KChR) to its log. The CE’s networks in Ingushetiya and Chechnya continued to be the laggards in terms of operational capacity in 2011. The CE’s Galgaiche Vilaiyat (GV) network, which covers the republics of Ingushetiya and North Ossetia, retained its third place position among the CE’s four active vilaiyats, responsible for some 70 attacks/incidents (69 in Ingushetiya and 1 in North Ossetiya). This represents a decline of 68.6 percent from the GV’s estimated total of 102 attacks.
(99 in Ingushetia and 3 in North Ossetia) in 2010. After moving ahead of the GV mujahedin as of the half-year mark for the first time in many months, Chechnya’s jihadi network, the Nokchicho Vilaiyat (NV), slipped back and again brings up the rear among the four CE vilaiyats in 2011 as it did in 2010, despite having patched up its break from CE amir Dokku ‘Abu Usman’ Umarov and returned to the CE fold in late July. Moreover, the CE’s Chechen NV experienced a second consecutive year of operational decline, being involved in a mere 59 attacks/incidents in 2011 as opposed to 80 in 2010 and 159 in 2009.

Graph 1

In terms of casualties inflicted, Dagestan remains the most dangerous and deadly North Caucasus republic for state agents and civilians alike by far (see Graph 2 below). Only Moscow, with the high casualty rate from the January Moscow Domodedovo Airport suicide bombing, approaches Dagestan in terms of jihadi-inflicted casualties. Approximately 131 state agents were killed and 126 were wounded in Dagestan last year, for a total of 257 state agent casualties and equaling 49 percent of the number of state agent casualties inflicted by the CE as a whole. This also marks a sharp decline of more than one-third (33.6 percent) in the number of casualties inflicted among state agents in Dagestan by the DV from the 387 state agent casualties in Dagestan during 2010. Thus, the OVKBK, Chechen NV, and Ingush GV inflicted 20.4 percent

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1 On the NV Chechens’ return to the CE, ss IIPER, No. 44.
(107 – 96 in the KBR and 11 in the KChR), 19.6 percent (103), and 9.7 percent (51) of the state agent casualties, respectively.

**Graph 2**

**Civilian casualties were highest in Dagestan as well** (except for Moscow as a result of January’s Moscow Domodedovo Airport suicide bombing), with approximately 174 (77 killed, 97 wounded), followed in descending order by 34 civilian casualties in the KBR (23 killed, 11 wounded), 16 in Ingushetia (11 killed and 5 wounded), and 13 in Chechnya (9 killed, 4 wounded). In addition to the 34 civilian casualties inflicted by the OVKBK in the KBR, the 11 civilian casualties (5 killed, 6 wounded) inflicted in the KChR are also likely the product of its mujahedin, giving the OVKB a total of 45 civilian casualties inflicted. Similarly, in addition to the 16 civilian casualties inflicted by the Ingush GV mujahedin in Ingushetia, 1 civilian was killed in a jihadi-related attack in North Ossetiya, which is part of the GV’s territory of operations, bringing the GV’s total number of civilian casualties to 17. In sum, the **DV’s Dagestani mujahedin inflicted 73.1 percent of the civilian casualties in the North Caucasus and 38.2 percent across the country by the CE.**

Regarding overall casualties, the DV leads by having inflicted approximately 431 (208 killed and 223 wounded) in Dagestan last year. This makes up 56.5 percent of the 763 casualties inflicted by the CE in the North Caucasus and 43.9 percent of the 981 casualties inflicted nationwide in 2011. The DV was followed by the OVKBK’s total of 130 casualties inflicted (68 killed and 62 wounded) in the KBR and KChR, 116 by Chechnya’s NV (42 killed, 74 wounded), and 67 in the Ingushetia (30 killed, 37 wounded). Dagestan is now
experiencing 57.9 percent (431 out of 744) of the overall number of casualties in the four main Muslim republics (Dagestan, Chechnya, the KBR, and Ingushetiya) where almost all jihadi activity occurs (see Graph 3).

**Graph 3**

![Graph showing total casualties](image)

In terms of efficiency, the DV mujahedin’s attacks saw a sharp decline in efficiency in terms of number of casualties per attack in 2011, falling behind the Chechnya-based NV. In 2011, DV attacks inflicted approximately 1.4 casualties per attack on average. In 2010, the DV’s attacks caused 2.3 casualties per attack. In both 2010 and 2011, the Chechen NV produced approximately 2.0 casualties per attack, the OVKBK - 1.4, and 1.0 in Ingushetiya.

Despite the difficulty in garnering an accurate count of mujahedin killed, wounded and captured, it is clear that losses among the mujahedin remain high. Almost all losses are the result of death or capture, as the Table above shows. Primarily using the reports of *Kavkaz uzel*, a North Caucasus-focused website project of the Russian human rights organization ‘Memorial’ (see Table 1), there were 611 mujahedin neutralized – 322 mujahedin killed and 289 captured – in 2011. Dagestan’s DV mujahedin suffered the most losses - 262

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2 Russia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and (perhaps using adjusted figures) Kavkaz uzel reported a summary total of “more than 300 mujahedin” and 351 killed in the first 11 months of 2011, respectively, and there were few mujahedin killed in December. “Glavkom vnutrennykh voisk MVD: s nachala goda na Severnom Kavkaze unity bolee 300 boevikov,” Kavkaz uzel, 2 December 2011, 14:45, www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/196869/.
(145 killed and 117 captured). The OVKBK lost the second largest number of mujahedin – 144 (63 killed and 65 wounded in the KBR and 11 killed and 5 wounded in the KChR). Chechnya lost 107 mujahedin – 51 killed and 56 captured. The GV lost 63, with 44 killed and 14 captured in Ingushetiya and, assuming their loyalty to the CE and GV, 1 killed and 4 captured in North Ossetiya.

Despite CE amir Dokku ‘Abu Usman’ Umarov’s threats earlier this year to raise hundreds of suicide bombers and some recent Russian media reports regarding a supposed cadre of some 50 or 60 suicide bombers trained and ready to be deployed, the record of the CE’s suicide and special operations unit, the Riyaudus Salikhiin Martyrs’ Brigade (RSMB), was far from impressive in 2011 compared to recent years. Its six successful suicide bombings fell short of the 14 suicide bombings of 2009 and the 16 of 2010.

Moreover, there was not a single successful istishkhad (martyrdom) operation during the last four months of the year. There were four successful suicide bombings in the first quarter of 2011: the January 24th suicide attack carried out by the 20-year old ethnic Ingush Magomed Yevloev at Moscow’s Domodedovo Airport which killed 37 and wounded 180 and the two February 14th suicide bombings by the ethnic Russian couple and mujahedin Vitalii Razdobudko and Maria Khorosheva in Gubden, Dagestan hours apart. The former killed 1 and wounded 22; the latter killed 1 MVD police and wounded 5 MVD police. The fourth suicide attack of 2011 occurred on March 4th when 30-year old Khamzat Korigov exploded a bomb when police tried to check his documents. The explosion only wounded one officer. These 4 successful attacks left 3 suicide bombers dead and killed 39 (2 state agents and 37 civilians) and wounded 207, at least 6 of which were state agents. Thus, after the four suicide attacks carried out by CE-tied jihadists during the first quarter of this year compared to just one in the same period in 2010, it seemed that Umarov might approach realizing his threats.

The fifth successful suicide attack of this year occurred on May 10th when 32-year old Abakar Aitperov detonated a bomb as he apparently tried to enter a military hospital in Dagestan’s capitol Makhachkala. Russia’s MVD chief Ruslan Nurgaliev was there at the time visiting with police and soldiers wounded in a recent battle with mujahedin in Kizlyar, Dagestan. The attack killed the policeman who stopped Aitperov to check his papers as he tried to enter the hospital and wounded another and several a passers-by.

The sixth and last successful suicide attack of 2011 occurred almost four full months later on August 30th, when three suicide bombers detonated bombs in the Lenin district of downtown Grozny, the capitol of the Republic of Chechnya, killing 9 and wounding 22. According to police, the first explosion occurred when police attempted to detain a suspicious man. Two more suicide bombers then detonated their bombs when police rushed to the scene of the first detonation. Among the 9 killed were 7 police, 1 Emergency Ministry worker, and 1 civilian. Both police personnel and civilians were among the 22 wounded. This was the third time in Grozny this year that mujahedin detonated grenades, IEDs, or suicide belts when police or security forces attempted to apprehend mujahedin. There have been two such cases this year in Ingushetiya as well: one successful as mentioned above and one unsuccessful, producing no casualties other than that of the bomber himself. In Grozny, on February 15th two mujahedin detonated bombs when security forces attempted to apprehend them in one of the mujahedin’s homes. On April 25th, two fighters did the same when they reportedly ran out of ammunition in a firefight with security forces during a special counter-terrorist operation.

against them. No one was injured in either of these cases. Another mujahed blew himself up to avoid capture when he was interdicted in Galashki, Ingushetiya on July 12 and Chechnya on August 24th. The mujahed tried to plant a bomb, was stopped by police, and detonated a grenade killing himself.

This year’s six successful and several interdicted suicide bombing attacks have expended the lives of 12 suicide bombers: 11 men and one woman.

Excluding the 22 wounded in the recent Grozny attack, for which we have no breakdown between state agents and civilians, the six successful attacks in 2011 killed 11 and wounded at least 28 state agents and killed 38 and wounded at least 184 civilians. Counting the 22 wounded in the recent Grozny attack, there were 283 casualties – 49 killed and 234 wounded, as a result of the CE’s six successful suicide attacks.

The CE’s Geographical Expanse

At the end of 2011 the CE’s geographical reach remained approximately as it had been a year earlier. The center of its jihad remains in Dagestan where, as noted above, 58 percent of the CE’s attacks and related violent incidents occur. The CE has been able to retain its weaker networks in Chechnya, Ingushetiya and Kabardino-Balkariya, with some, perhaps not statistically significant reduced capacity in each. The CE’s OVKBK was able as it was last year to extend a handful of operations into the KChR, but the KBR remains its base of operations. The DV was probably responsible for the handful or so of operations carried out in Stavropol – for example the February 14th twin shicide bombings in Gubden, Dagestan carried out by the ethnic Russian couple of Islamic converts. The CE’s Ingushetiya-based GV had little success in North Ossetiya and, as noted below, less than last year.

Regarding the geography of suicide bombings in 2011, as in 2010, it was the CE’s Dagestan network that led the way in istishkhad operations. But the DV, which reportedly has its own “Riyadus Salikhiin Jamaat,” succeeded far less often in executing such operations just as the rest of the CE did. Dagestan saw just 3 successful attacks in 2011, compared to 6 such bombings and in 2010. Chechnya experienced 1 successful attack last year, compared with 2 in 2010. Ingushetia saw 1 successful attack in 2011, but 2 in 2010. North Ossetiya had no suicide attacks last year, compared to 2 in 2010. The 24 January 2011 Moscow Domodedovo Airport suicide attack was the only CE suicide attack executed outside of the North Caucasus, but it utilized a suicide bomber from Ingushetiya. Last year Moscow was victim to two simultaneous suicide bombings on the Moscow subway carried out by two female suicide bombers who were the wives of two high-ranking DV amirs that killed 38 and wounded 208. There still has never been a suicide bombing in any other of Russia’s regions besides Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetiya, and Moscow city. In short, the CE showed little or no geographical expansion in 2011 as compared with 2010, though both 2010 and 2011 showed expansion over previous years.

Jihadism and Islamism in Russia Beyond the Caucasus

In terms of expanding operations beyond the Caucasus, the single operation in Moscow last year equates with the single operation there in 2010. Astrakhan saw several violent incidents involving alleged jihadists. In Russia’s Volga and Urals, both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan continued to experience very low levels of jihadi activity with little or no organizational connection to the CE’s activity. However, this activity was almost certainly inspired by the CE and its global jihadi takfirist theo-ideology, continuing a trend that emerged in 2010. In the Volga and Urals mega-regions, neither Tatarstan nor Bashkortostan saw violent jihad-related incidents in 2011 unlike in 2010 when there was 1 in the former and there were 4 in the latter (see Graph 4).
However, both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan saw increases in Islamist activity. Islamism serves as a potential stepping stone to joining violent jihadist groups. There is evidence of growing non-violent Islamist activity in Tatarstan, in particular the growth of underground ‘kitchen Islam’ with perhaps as many as twenty mosques and madrassahs unregistered with the official Muslim Spiritual Board of Tatarstan. These independent Islamic communities are often established or infiltrated by Islamists, some from such international organizations like Hizb ut-Tahrir Islami (HTI), the Muslim Brotherhood, and the less political Tabligh Jamaat. In Bashkortostan, the authorities reported the arrest of some 20 members of HTI in 2011 and claimed they were planning terrorist attacks. However, there is no evidence these cells had ties to the CE or the self-declared Idel-Ural Vilaiyat that emerged in winter 2010 appealing to CE amir Umarov to assist them in training and carrying out jihadi attacks in the Volg-Urals area.

Internationally, in April of 2011, as IIPER reported, a Dagestani cell tied to the CE and its DV network was uncovered in the Czech Republic raising funds and recruits for the CE and possibly planning attacks in an unidentified third country. But this does not exceed the presence in Europe in 2010 represented by the CE-tied Chechen-Moroccan cell that was arrested in stings across parts of Europe and was planning attacks on NATO targets in Belgium.

CE Leadership Trends

Despite CE amir Umarov’s July victory in bringing back to the CE the breakaway Chechen amirs, who accounted for the overwhelming majority of the NV’s amirs and broke with him in August 2010, there is still reason to believe that his authority weakened over the course of the year. First, Umarov’s authority was already weakened prior to 2011. His resignation followed by its retraction in early August 2010, which included
references to his declining health, placed Umarov’s continuation in the top leadership position squarely on the agenda. Umarov has been wounded several times, is reportedly a diabetic, and was reportedly poisoned by the secret services in 2009.

Second, Umarov undermined his own credibility by making threats in early 2011 that he was unable to fulfill. In the wake of the successful suicide bombing attack inside Moscow’s Domodedovo Airport in January 2011 that kicked off the year, CE amir threatened in several video statements to deploy sixty or even one hundred suicide bombers through the CE’s RSMB. Certain Russian news reports in June claimed to have a list of 52 suicide bombers deployed for action.\(^8\) Despite this, the CE and its special suicide bombing brigade, the Riyadus Salikhiin Martyrs’ Brigade (RSMB), produced the lowest number of successful attacks since 2008. Compared to 16 successful (producing casualties) suicide attacks in 2009 and 14 in 2010, this year saw only 6 successful suicide bombings. Umarov’s unrealized threats and bluster could tell on his authority within the CE, something he can hardly afford given the history of the August 2010 break with NV. It was precisely because of the NV amirs’ distrust of his leadership skills along with other issues that led to the split.

Third, Umarov’s leadership of the CE is undermined by the continued decline of the Chechen mujahedin relative to the Dagestanis. Indeed, the NV’s continued poor performance has occurred in tandem with the meteoric rise of the Dagestani DV since April 2010. As noted above, the DV’s pre-eminence among the vilayats held and indeed strengthened throughout 2011, consolidating the trend begun in April 2010. As the Dagestan branch of the CE’s network continues to outperform the CE ‘center’, the Chechen NV network, as well as all other CE vilayats operationally and theo-ideologically, the logic of continuing with a Chechen rather than a Dagestani amir is further undermined. Dagestan’s rise once again poses the ancient question of whether a Dagestani or a Chechen should be at the helm of North Caucasians’ efforts to establish an Islamist emirate in the region. In the mid-19th century, there was considerable tension between the Dagestani ethnic Avar imams, like Imam Shamil, and Chechen leaders like Tasho Hajii over who should hold the top leadership position and what strategy should be adopted for the gazavat/jihad.

Fourth, This logic seems even more faulty when one compares the personal qualities of Umarov and the transforming essence of the CE’s jihad. The charisma of the aging Umarov seems to pale on the background of a plethora of energetic young Dagestani amirs. In addition, Umarov possesses little in the way of real Islamist theo-ideological credentials, whereas the Dagestanis display just the opposite – a fervent belief in violent takfirist Islamism, strong knowledge of its tenets, and an ability and energy in promoting those ideas in numerous Internet videos carried on many of the CE’s websites.

Some basic authority already seems to be slipping from Umarov’s hands to the Dagestanis. The Dagestani qadi of the CE, Abu Ali Mukhammad al-Dagistani, maintains virtually a permanent presence of CE websites. His video lectures and question-and-answer sessions are posted on DV websites weekly. The number of videos in which top DV leaders appear in one week often exceeds the number Umarov appeared throughout all of 2011. Although neither Dagistani (so far) nor Umarov possesses the charisma of a Basaev, Buryatskii, Vagabov or Astemirov, it is Dagistani who possesses more. In terms of Weberian charismatic authority, which is of special importance for one who wants to lead a religiously oriented movement, in particular one that relies on extreme tactics such as suicide bombing, Umarov also suffers a deficit by virtue of the extraordinary jihadi performance or ‘miracles’ engineered by the Dagestani mujahedin in contrast to the fading Chechens of the NV. Also in contrast to Umarov, Dagistani and DV qadi and DV Mountain Sector amir Mukhammad Abu Usman al-Gimri speak increasingly with authority and displays strong knowledge of the holy texts and Arabic language, frequently citing from the former from memory, without reference to written text. This is something to which CE amir Umarov could not even aspire.

In short, the CE’s and Umarov’s leadership, while not poor, is hardly optimal. One way or another, this issue is likely to be resolved soon. Given that Dagestani DV is likely to continue leading the CE in terms of operational, theo-ideological and propaganda performance, it seems unlikely that Umarov’s success will be a Chechen. The issue will likely be decided in favor of a Dagestani ethnic Avar – the Avars are the largest ethnic group in Dagestan – or a compromise figure from among, for example, the Kabards of the OVKBK, given the latter’s status as the second most prolific of the CE’s four permanently acting vilaiyats.

THE TRANSCAUCASUS

Azerbaijan

There were few jihadi episodes in the North Caucasus’s neighboring Transcaucasus during 2011. Azerbaijan experienced no homegrown jihadi violence and little Islamist presence in 2011. However, last month’s demonstrations which broke out in northern Azerbaijan not far from the border with Dagestan in response to the Aliev’s regime’s continuing authoritarianism along with th Azerbaijan authorities’ greater restrictions on Islamic female dress, which provoked a series of demonstrations in the first half of last year, could lead to radicalization of the populace and provide a potential opening to the country’s limited jihadist and Islamist elements and even the CE to the north for recruitment. In the past, Azeris have been found fighting along with the CE mujahedin, and on occasion CE, in particular Dagestani mujahedin have crossed over the border south into Azerbaijan. There possibly is an Azerbaijan jihadist jamaat, as evidenced by the websites Milleti Ibragim (www.milleti-ibrahim.com/az/) and Azeri Jihad Media (http://azerijihadmedia.com), and it may be connected to the possible CE operative, former Russian military officer and Islamic covert Richard Kosolapov, whose articles occasionally appear on the noted Milleti Ibragim site.

In January of this year, Azerbaijani security forces uncovered a plot sponsored from abroad by the Iranian state to attack the US and Israeli embassies in Baku and arrested 22 apparently Azerbaijani conspirators, who were trained in Iranian camps, returned to Baku, and began reconnoitring diplomatic missions, Western companies including British Petroleum’s office, public organizations including the Jewish centre Sohnut, a US fast-food restaurant, and other targets. The first two conspirators arrested in January were said to be planning to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in Baku and a local rabbi and to have been assisted by an Iranian citizen tied to Iranian intelligence. More arrests were made in February, though it remains unclear whether with these later arrests the Azeri authorities are tacking on new trumped up conspirators to the original plot in an effort to clean out suspected Islamists. Azerbaijani intelligence announced the uncovering of a similar plot in 2007. News of this new Baku plot came almost simultaneously to a February 13th IED attack on Israeli diplomatic personnel in New Delhi, India and similar, thwarted Iranian plots in Thailand and Azerbaijan’s neighbor of Georgia on the same day.

Georgia

The interdicted attack in Georgia, prevented when police discovered and defused a bomb under an Israeli diplomat’s car, was the only jihadi violence in that country during 2011. Georgia therefore may come to regret its decision last year to grant visa-free travel to Iranian citizens and as well as North Caucasians from Russia, opening a route of free travel that effectively extends from Pakistan along a southern arc through Afghanistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to Russia’s North Caucasus. Iraq and Turkey might also become more accessible as a result of Tbilisi’s policy. As in Azerbaijan, the thwarted Iranian attack in Georgia was the only jihadi-related event recorded in that country during 2011. Armenia shows no jihadi or Islamist activity.

Part II of IIPER’s Special Report “Jihadist and Islamist Trends in Eurasia in 2011” will appear in issue No. 55.
First Suicide Bombing of 2012 in Russia Occurs in Dagestan

The first suicide bombing in Russia and Eurasia occurred in Dagestan on March 6th when a female suicide bomber detonated her bomb in Karabudakhkent. Five policemen were killed, and two were wounded. The shakhidka or female suicide martyr was identified as one Aminat Ibragimova (born in 1986) from the village of Khebda in Makhachkala Raion. According to a March 7th report, Russia’s Investigative Committee (SKR) had determined that Ibragimova was the wife of the Zaur Zagirov, reportedly the amir of the Caspian sector or Jamaat of the CE’s Dagestani network, the so-called Dagestan Vilaiyat. Zagirov was said to have been killed in a special operation carried out by the security services in February, according to the SKR statement.

An earlier report held that she was the wife of Magomedkhabib Daudov, the son of the late amir of the DV ‘Salikh’ Ibragimkhalil Daudov. Both Daudovs and Zagirov were killed together on February 10th in a special operation carried out by law enforcement and security organs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS


ABOUT IIPER

Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER) is a project of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. It focuses on all politically-relevant issues involving or bearing on Islam, Islamism, and Jihadism in Russia and Eurasia writ large. All issues of IIPER will soon be permanently archived at http://csis.org/program/russia-and-eurasia-program. All back issues temporarily remain archived at: www.miis.edu/academics/faculty/ghahn/report.

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IIPER welcomes submissions on any aspect of Islamic, Islamist, or Jihadist politics in Eurasia as well as financial contributions to support the project. For related inquiries or to request to be included on IIPER's mailing list, please contact:
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