

**Disrupting Escalation of Terror in Russia to
Prevent Catastrophic Attacks**

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I. Executive Summary

The wave of deadly terrorist attacks in Russia in the summer and fall of 2004 prompted President Vladimir Putin to declare that terrorism networks are waging “a total and full-scale war” against his country. This paper analyzes the recent trends in this war and concludes that the logical outcome of the ongoing escalation in number, scope, and cruelty of terrorist attacks in Russia will be an act of catastrophic terrorism.¹ The horrendous hostage-taking drama in the North Ossetian town of Beslan, in which more than 330 people—186 of them children—were killed, demonstrates that ideologically driven extremists in the North Caucasus have already passed the moral threshold between conventional acts of terror and catastrophic terrorism.²

This report argues that networks of these extremists are trying to expand their organizational and operational capabilities with the aim of inflicting greater damage on Russia, either by conventional means or through the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) materials. It asserts that the Islamist wing of these networks is more violent and better organized than the secular wing and is increasingly motivated to resort to acts of catastrophic terrorism as it sees “conventional terror” failing to either coerce Russia to withdraw from Chechnya or at least begin negotiations with the leaders of these networks. Such attacks would be indiscriminate, but still “acceptable” for religion-driven extremists, since they perceive Russian civilians to be “legitimate targets” due to their “tacit approval” of “infidel” combatants in a holy war.

¹ This article acknowledges existing differences in the expert and academic communities on what constitutes a terrorist attack. For purposes of clarity and concision, this article relies on a definition of a terrorist attack commonly found among mainstream researchers of this subject. We define a terrorist act as an act of political violence that inflicts harm on non-combatants, but is designed to intimidate broader audiences, including state authorities, and is an instrument of achieving certain political or other goals. This essay defines an act of catastrophic terrorism as a terrorist attack involving the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear materials or weapons of mass destruction, or conventional techniques to kill a significant number of people (1,000 or more).

² This article will refer to those religiously motivated and separatist insurgents who have the motivation and capability to stage acts of catastrophic terrorism as “ideologically driven extremists,” as distinct from “conventional insurgents,” who would limit themselves to “conventional” guerilla warfare and terrorist attacks of limited scale.

This report also identifies other actors who can either assist the ideologically driven extremists in terrorist attacks of catastrophic proportions in Russia, or can be used unknowingly in preparation and execution of such attacks. These actors include apocalyptic and messianic sects and extremist secular parties. The latter have displayed preparedness for political violence, and the former have demonstrated their ability to disperse into decentralized networks of cells, often remaining below the radar of law enforcement and security agencies. We argue that not only can members of religious sects and fringe political parties be recruited or used unknowingly to assist in acts of terror, but also that increasing pressure on these sects can prompt their messianic leaders to order their subservient followers to try to stage an apocalypse through catastrophic terror acts. Likewise, we contend that the corruption and ideological conversion of law enforcement and security personnel multiply capabilities of extremist groups as they prepare and carry out terrorist attacks. The unrestricted expansion of the anti-terrorist powers of the law enforcement and security agencies is fraught with abuses in the absence of oversight, and this expansion will backfire as indiscriminate repressions generate popular resentment. Such resentment considerably eases the work of terrorist organizations' recruiters.

Finally, this paper concludes with the recommendation that Russian authorities identify potential terrorists and terrorist networks, analyze their capabilities and motivations, and then proceed to dismantle those which pose the gravest threat, while keeping remaining agents of terror on the run. Efforts to keep agents of terror on the run should be focused and thoroughly regulated to prevent indiscriminate abuses that are not only illegitimate, but also counterproductive.

II. Agents of Catastrophic Terrorism Threats in Russia

1. Ideologically driven extremists in the North Caucasus

Ideologically driven extremists based in Chechnya and neighboring regions of the North Caucasus have demonstrated the capability and motivation to inflict massive indiscriminate casualties in their attacks, including the hostage-taking raid on Beslan in 2004 and the bombing of an apartment building in the southern Russian city of Buinaksk in 1999.³ In addition to setting off time- and remote-controlled bombs, these extremists have also sent “human bombs” to wreak havoc.

In 2004, two women acting on orders from Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev blew up two planes, killing themselves and everyone on board.⁴ Suicide bombers have become one of

³ A Russian court sentenced two natives of Dagestan, Isa Zainudinov and Alisultan Salikhov, to life in prison for their involvement in the deadly apartment bombing in the Dagestani city of Buinaksk. Russian prosecutors insisted that it was Chechnya-based warlord Ibn-ul-Khattab who ordered the blast that killed sixty-two people when a powerful bomb went off in front of an apartment building in Buinaksk on September 4, 1999. Simon Saradzhyan, “After One Year, Blast Probe Still Drags On,” *Moscow Times*, September 15, 2000.

Russian law enforcement officials also maintain that Khattab ordered the bombings of apartment buildings that killed some 220 people in Russian cities during the fall of 1999. One of the alleged bombers and a native of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Adam Dekkushev, was arrested in 2002 and told investigators of the Federal Security Service (FSB) that it was this salafite-minded warlord who issued the order through his subordinate Sheikh Abu Omar, deputy chief of FSB Operations and Search Directorate Yevgeny Kolesnikov told reporters in Moscow on July 17, 2002 (Rossiya Television, July 17, 2002). Dekkushev also told investigators that the alleged terrorists had initially planned to bomb a dike in southern Russia to flood several settlements in hopes of killing thousands, but then changed their mind. Alexander Shvarev, “Zrya My S Rebyatiami Etim Zanimalis,” *Vremya Novostei*, February 19, 2003.

According to Alexander Litvinenko, former Lt. Colonel of the FSB, however, it could have been the FSB that organized the apartment bombings. Litvinenko, who claims to have spoken to Gochiyaev, has not backed his allegations with any direct evidence, however. Yuri Felshitsinskii and Alexander Litvinenko, *Blowing Up Russia: Terror From Within* (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2001). Fragments from the book are available at <http://2001.NovayaGazeta.Ru/nomer/2001/61n/n61n-s00.shtml>.

⁴ After days of intensive search and analysis, the Federal Security Service (FSB) announced on August 30, 2004, that bombs had brought down two planes, which crashed almost simultaneously on August 24, 2004, killing all eighty-nine people on board. “Today without a shadow of a doubt we can say that both airplanes were blown up as a result of a terrorist attack,” Lieutenant-General Andrei Fetusov of FSB told a Russian news agency.

Initial examination of the crash debris offered no evidence to suggest that the planes had been brought down by terrorists, according to the FSB. However, as the search progressed, FSB investigators found traces of a powerful explosive in the debris of both planes. Amanta Nagayeva and Satsita Dzhebirkhanova are the two Chechen women whose names were registered among the passengers of the two flights. Both worked in the Chechen capital of Grozny and shared an apartment there. While a Chechen police official told *Izvestia* that a background check on both women revealed no ties to the rebels, this newspaper managed to establish that Nagayeva’s brother has been missing since he was detained by federal servicemen in 2001 in Chechnya. Vadim Rechkalov, “Drugie Dve Shakhidki,” *Izvestia*, August 30, 2004. The FSB and other government agencies have blamed Chechen rebels for the

the most worrisome manifestations of the growing determination of Islamist extremists to win the war by all means.⁵ The religious motivations of suicide bombers in Russia—most of whom are women—are often coupled with the desire for personal revenge for the loss of their relatives. In one case, two wives and a sister of a killed Chechen warlord blew themselves up in successive attacks.⁶ The large-scale terrorist attacks, such as the hostage-taking raids in Moscow in October 2002 and in Beslan in September 2004, featured female suicide bombers.

The most horrendous casualties registered in a single attack to date were in Beslan, when a group of gunmen from Chechnya and Ingushetia took more than 1,200 people hostage in a local school. More than 330 hostages were killed in explosions blamed on the terrorists and in the cross fire between rescue teams and the terrorists, who were acting on orders of the most notorious Chechen warlord, Shamil Basayev.⁷ The capacity of the extremist groups in the North Caucasus for attacks of similar and larger proportions is formidable and growing.⁸ The multi-pronged attack by about 200 militants on the city of Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, in October 2005, represented the end of a relative lull in this restive region which has lasted for more than year. The Nalchik attack, which was organized by Basayev, demonstrated the lasting commitment by networks of insurgents and terrorists to try to destabilize the North Caucasus in the hope of wresting part of this region from Moscow's control. This attack and the summer

attacks, which the Russian press speculated could have been carried out by two female natives of Chechnya that were among the passengers. In September 2004, Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev claimed responsibility for these and other attacks with the participation of the suicide fighters in August-September 2004.

⁵ After the raid on the Moscow's Dubrovka theater in October 2002, Chechen suicide bombers led eleven attacks that reportedly claimed the lives of 295 people, mostly Russian civilians. Several attacks were averted. Shamil Basayev claimed responsibility for all the attacks, repeatedly acknowledging on the rebel website Kavkazcenter.com that he has trained some forty more female suicide bombers.

⁶ Sergei Dyupin, "Vdova ne Prihodit Odná," *Kommersant*, August 10, 2004.

⁷ Several witnesses and victims of the Beslan raid contested the official version in court in 2005, claiming that the explosion and the following fire in the crowded school were set off by actions of the Russian special forces and the military servicemen.

⁸ While Russian authorities' count of terrorist attacks is flawed (it includes attacks on combatants and excludes some politically motivated assassinations), it is still useful for the purpose of tracing the dynamics of the terrorism threat in Russia. According to the Emergency Situations Ministry, more than 650 people died in what it defined as terrorist

2004 raids on the Ingush city of Nazran and the Chechen capital Grozny also showed that the groups subordinate to Basayev and other warlords are not only motivated, but also trained and equipped for coordinated simultaneous attacks on multiple guarded facilities.⁹

The capabilities of these groups to prepare and carry out attacks are also multiplied by sympathetic and corrupt public servants, including law enforcement officers. In addition to local recruits and supporters, these groups also receive logistical support and personnel reinforcements from foreign extremist and terrorist organizations, including al-Qaida.¹⁰

In addition to plotting and executing attacks with the use conventional arms and explosives, the extremists in Chechnya have sought to acquire chemical and nuclear materials with the intent to use them in terrorist attacks. During Russia's first military campaign in Chechnya in between 1994–1996, Chechen separatists acquired radioactive materials,¹¹

attacks in the first eleven months of 2004, 2.5 times more than the number of those killed in such attacks over the same period in 2003.

⁹ In June 2004, some 300 Ingush and Chechen insurgents simultaneously attacked eleven military and police facilities in Ingushetia to kill eighty-eight people, including sixty law enforcement and military officers. Two months later Chechen rebels attacked several police facilities in the Chechen capital Grozny, killing more than eighty policemen and soldiers. These raids became a striking manifestation of the insurgents' capability to plan and implement multi-pronged operations requiring a high degree of planning and discipline.

¹⁰ Osama bin Laden has been actively involved in the terrorist insurgency in Chechnya since 1995, sending al-Qaida agents to the North Caucasus and sponsoring Chechen rebels, according to a declassified U.S. intelligence report released by Judicial Watch, a U.S. public corruption watchdog, in 2004. Bin Laden sent Jordanian-born warlord Khattab, who is now dead, and nine instructors to Chechnya in 1995 to set up terrorist training camps, according to the six-page U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency report, which was based on notes from an unspecified person in 1998 and is marked at the top as not "finally evaluated intelligence." It says bin Laden met several times in 1997 with Chechen and Dagestani Wahhabis and "settled the question of cooperation -- agreeing to provide 'financial supplies' to Chechen militants."

"U.S. Report Links Bin Laden, Rebels," *Moscow Times*, November 22, 2004.

In addition to Khattab, of several senior figures in Chechen-based groups probably tied to al-Qaida was Abu Dzeit, a Kuwaiti national and suspected al-Qaida liaison who was killed by Russian security forces in February 2005. A video purportedly showing Basayev preparing for the 2004 Beslan school attack shows Abu Dzeit sitting next to Basayev. "Video Apparently Shows Basayev Planning Attack," *Associated Press*, September 1, 2005. Also a Jordanian named Abu Majahid, who FSB believes to have arrived in Chechnya in 1992 and served as an emissary of al-Qaida, was the organizer of foiled chemical attacks in the cities of the North Caucasus in 2005. "FSB Says Major Terror Attacks Foiled," *Moscow Times*, May 6, 2005

¹¹ Chechen fighters removed several containers of radioactive materials from the Grozny branch of Russia's Radon nuclear waste collection site prior to the seizure of the facility by federal troops in January 2000, according to a Russian magazine's sources in the Russian Ministry of Defense. Yury Gladkevich, "Poshel v Gory," *Profil*, March 20, 2000, quoted in "Radwaste Reported Removed from Radon Facility in Grozny," NIS Nuclear Trafficking Database, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies Nuclear Threat Initiative, <http://www.nti.org/db/nistraff/2000/20000230.htm>.

threatened to attack Russia's nuclear facilities,¹² plotted to hijack a nuclear submarine,¹³ and attempted to put pressure on the Russian leadership by planting a container with radioactive materials in Moscow and threatening to detonate it.¹⁴ During the second campaign that began in 1999, Chechen separatists planted explosives in chemical storage tanks, scouted Russian nuclear facilities, and established contacts with an insider at one such facility.¹⁵ During the second war, the warlords also planned attacks using poisons and toxic substances in the capitals of the North Caucasus region and several large regional centers elsewhere in Russia.¹⁶

While the intensive fighting in Chechnya subsided long ago, reports of Chechnya-based extremists seeking WMD continue to surface. As of 2005, there has been a continuous stream of intelligence from the Federal Security Service (FSB) that terrorist groups based in Chechnya and elsewhere are developing plans that target the Russian military's nuclear arsenals, according to General Igor Valynkin, head of the twelfth Main Directorate of the Russian Defense Ministry

¹² Then-Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev warned that his fighters might attack nuclear plants in Russia in 1992 to discourage Moscow from trying to counter his republic's independence bid. He issued a similar threat again in 1995 when the military campaign was already underway in the republic. "Dudayev Grozit Perenesti Voinu v Glub' Rossii," *Vecherny Chelyabinsk*, February 1, 1995.

¹³ "V Chechne Nashli Plan Zakhvata Rossiiskoi Lodki," *Lenta.ru*, February 4, 2002, www.lenta.ru/vojna. Also reported in "Nachalnik Operativnogo Shtaba Maskhadova Gotovil Plan Zakhvata Rossiiskoi Atomnoi Podlodki," *RIA-Novosti*, April 25, 2002.

¹⁴ Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev tried to blackmail Russian leadership with a crude radiological device. Basayev began with threats to organize undercover attacks with radioactive, chemical, and biological substances against Moscow and other strategic sites in Russia unless peace negotiations, which began on July 5, 1995, proved successful.

In July 1995 talks failed, and four months later—on November 23, 1995—a Russian TV crew found a lead container filled with radioactive cesium-137, which had been planted by Basayev's men, in Moscow's Izmailovsky Park. In addition to tipping off the media, Basayev also claimed that his agents had smuggled in four more such packages, and that at least two of them contained explosives, which could be detonated at any time, turning the containers into "dirty bombs." Grigorii Sanin and Aleksandr Zakharov, "Konteyner Iz Izmailovskogo Parka Blagopoluchno Evakuirovan," *Segodnya*, November 25, 1995.

¹⁵ "Tver Region. Captain of A Regiment Which Guards Kalininskaya NPP Is Suspected of Having Supplied Secret Information To Chechens," *Regnum*, November 19, 2002.

¹⁶ A specially equipped cache containing a cyanide-based substance was discovered during the course of combat in an unnamed settlement on the Chechen-Ingush border. Experts have concluded that the application of these strong-acting poisons in minimal doses in crowded places, in vital enterprises, and in water reservoirs could produce numerous victims," the FSB said. "According to experts, the contents of a single 4-gram container could kill around 100 people. "FSB Says Major Terror Attacks Foiled," *Moscow Times*, May 6, 2005.

(twelfth GUMO), which is the Defense Ministry's nuclear security and maintenance department.¹⁷

“We have special information continuously incoming from the Federal Security Service on terrorist groups' plans against our facilities,” the general told *Izvestia* after a June 22, 2005 press conference.¹⁸ He cited two cases where individuals tried to penetrate security perimeters as evidence that terrorists have been casing Russian nuclear arsenals. In both cases, the attempt involved one civilian intruder. Both facilities are located in the European part of Russia, he said. Both attempts “were averted by our mobile units and security at the facilities.” The intruders were apprehended and handed over to the FSB. The first attempt was made in 2002, and the second in 2003. Valynkin would not elaborate on either of the two cases. However, he pointed at Chechen groups when asked what actors pose the most serious threat of nuclear terrorism to Russia. “It is, of course, Chechen terrorist groups,” the general said.

According to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the suspects tried to case two separate facilities located in the Saratov region. A Russian daily quoted a “well-informed source” in the Defense Ministry as saying that that two ethnic Chechens, who resided in Saratov, tried to collect intelligence on the facilities' security systems as well as “determine the possibility of gaining access to the arsenals.”¹⁹

The Federal Security Service also makes no secret of its intelligence that terrorist groups are making attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear and biological weapons with practical use in mind. “The terrorists are striving to obtain access to biological, nuclear and chemical weapons. We record this, and we have such information,” FSB director

¹⁷ Igor Valynkin made these and following statements at a press conference in Moscow on June 22, 2005 [Is there any newspaper that reported some of the comments that you could cite as well? - No I had transcripts of this press conference].

¹⁸ Dmitry Litovkin, “Predotvrashcheny Dve Popytki Yadernogo Terrorisma,” *Izvestia*, June 23, 2005.

Nikolai Patrushev said at a meeting with his counterparts from other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States in Aktau, Kazakhstan in August 2005.²⁰ The FSB and its counterparts in the CIS, as well as the militaries of these countries, have been conducting joint anti-terrorist exercises for years, but they will train specifically to repel a terrorist attack on a nuclear power plant in Armenia in 2006 to prepare for a joint response to the threat of nuclear terrorism.²¹

These statements demonstrate that Russian authorities do not only acknowledge the threat of WMD terror to Russia, but are genuinely concerned that Chechen-based extremists continue to seek WMD in the wake of Beslan and other horrific, but still conventional terrorist attacks. In fact, the Beslan tragedy has pushed the extremists beyond the moral threshold after which massive casualties, characteristic of catastrophic terrorism, become “admissible.” The Beslan organizers cannot possibly be perceived as freedom fighters again, even if they were to downscale their attacks. On the contrary, these terrorists would have to up the stakes by launching an even deadlier attack to preserve “credibility” in the eyes of their followers and sponsors in order to reinforce the belief that they may eventually win this war.²²

¹⁹ Vladimir Ivanov, Andrei Terekhov, Anton Trofimov, “Generaly Pugayut Inostrannykh Investorov,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 23, 2005.

²⁰ Simon Saradzhyan, “FSB Says Terrorists Are Trying to Secure WMD,” August 22, 2005.

²¹ Patrushev said the Federal Security Service, or FSB, was evaluating security and accountability in the defense industry and other enterprises that are or have been involved in the development and production of WMD to ensure that they are impenetrable to terrorist groups. He said the FSB was focusing on preventive measures.” In light of the aim of terrorists to get access to weapons of mass destruction, we must perfect this work.” Simon Saradzhyan, “FSB Says Terrorists Are Trying to Secure WMD,” August 22, 2005.

²² Also Doron Zimmermann of the Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, Switzerland argues that there is a dynamic of reciprocal threat perception between perpetrators and victims of mass casualty attacks. “In an age in which the specter of “superterrorism” reigns supreme and has successfully undermined governmental and public confidence in the past decade, most PVMs (political violence movements) very likely are under increasing pressure to reinforce the popular nightmare of mass casualty terrorism that is the obsession of Western governments, their allies, and the mass media alike. Doron Zimmermann, “Terrorism Transformed: The “New Terrorism,” Impact Scalability, and the Dynamic of Reciprocal Threat Perception,” *Quarterly Journal “Connections,” Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, March 2004.*

The self-confessed organizer of the Beslan attack, Shamil Basayev, said in an interview taped in June 2005 that he had miscalculated that the Russian authorities would risk lives of children in Beslan by storming the school. Rather than give up after seeing that Beslan failed to advance his objectives, Basayev said he is seeking new ways. “We are always looking for new ways. If something doesn’t work, we look for something else. But we will get them,” the warlord said in the interview broadcast by the U.S. television network *ABC* on July 28, 2005. In the interview, Basayev vowed to “do everything possible” to end the second Chechen war. “I am trying not to cross the line. And so far, I have not crossed it,” said Basayev, who ordered the planting of radioactive containers in Moscow and who has threatened to resort to WMD terror in the past.

Moreover, Basayev is no longer constrained in planning and executing terrorist attacks since the popularly elected, separatist president of the Chechen republic of Ichkeria and its commander-in-chief, Aslan Maskhadov, is now dead. Even when Maskhadov was alive, the signs of the separatists’ “evolution” towards “terrorist methods” were numerous. Maskhadov himself proclaimed in July 2004 that Russian cities were legitimate targets for the rebels, and that the murder of Russian civilians was also legitimate.²³ He also blamed Western governments for siding with the Kremlin on the Chechnya issue, adding that the separatist cause would not seek legitimacy with such a corrupt partner. The statement removed constraints that the “moderate” secular wing of the Chechen rebels, which Maskhadov formally commanded until his death, is facilitating closer cooperation between the separatist wing and Islamists in implementing terrorist attacks. The killing of Maskhadov in March 2005 de-legitimized the notion of a “secular moderate wing” in the Chechen insurgency, since his successor, the little-known Chechen cleric Abdulkhalim Sadulayev, does not have either the legitimacy or the clout

²³ The full text of the interview is available at Maskhadov’s website, <http://www.chechenpress.info/news/2004/07/18/08.shtml>.

of his predecessor. He handed over the effective control and coordination of operations to two extremists, Shamil Basayev and Doku Umarov.²⁴ Both are firmly inclined to pursue Chechnya's secession from Russia by violent means, while the former also frames the rebels' struggle as jihad against infidels.

Basayev had initially been a champion of the secular model, but when Islamism emerged at the end of the first military conflict in Chechnya, he quickly adopted this ideology and befriended a chief proponent of Wahhabism in Chechnya: Jordanian-born warlord Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Khattab arrived in Chechnya with several dozen Arab Islamist fighters to fight the "infidels" in 1996, and remained there even after the Chechen rebels won the war and achieved de facto independence.²⁵

Khattab's arrival and the subsequent growth of his influence in Chechnya signified a shift in ideology in the Chechen movement, from that of secular indolence to holy war. In the absence of support from international donors and neighbors, this shift was a prerequisite for the separatists—Islamism was the fastest and easiest way to expand the sympathetic constituency abroad and gain financial and political support. As a result of this ideological shift, the goals of the movement had to shift as well. In August and September 1999, Basayev and Khattab led two raids into the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan under the proclaimed goal of establishing an Islamic state on the territory of the Caucasus.²⁶

²⁴ Sadulayev appointed Basayev in August 2005 to the post of first deputy prime minister in the separatist government, in what may reflect the growing influence of religious radicals in the rebel cause. Maskhadov had previously suspended Basayev from his posts in the rebel hierarchy and formally launched an investigation into his actions after Basayev claimed responsibility for ordering a hostage-taking raid on a Moscow theater in October 2002.

²⁵ Khattab reportedly was fighting against the Soviet Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s and retained connections to what later emerged as al-Qaida. After the first war in Chechnya, Khattab set up at least seventeen training camps in Chechnya. Michael Wines, "Russia Releases Tape to Support Claim of Chechen Rebel's Death," *New York Times*, April 27, 2002.

²⁶ The text of Basayev's Islamic Shura declaration of the Islamic State of Dagestan on August 10, 1999 can be viewed at the *Rusky Zhurnal's* news archive at <http://www.russ.ru/politics/news/1999/08/10.htm#7>.

Russia responded to this incursion with force, and the ensuing war was immediately framed by the Islamist wing of the Chechen-based religious extremists as a crackdown on true believers, while their struggle was depicted as *jihad*.²⁷ To date, these extremists continue to fight and use Islam to legitimize their actions and to frame their struggle as part of the worldwide *jihad*.²⁸

When Wahhabism and other forms of militant salafism took root in Chechnya in the mid-1990s, it became a training ground for jihadists from all over the world. “Students” from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Volga region, as well as citizens of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, China, Pakistan, and Malaysia learned explosive techniques, guerilla warfare and Wahhabi theory at camps run by Khattab and other warlords in Chechnya.²⁹ Alumni of Chechnya’s training camps have become the core of the extended anti-Russian terrorist networks of “Wahhabis”³⁰ in

²⁷ See Basayev’s numerous statements on the rebel website Kavkazcenter.com.

²⁸ Reacting to this shift, the U.S. Department of State designated three Chechen rebel groups—Islamic International Brigade, Special Purpose Islamic Regiment, and Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs—as foreign terrorist organizations in February 2003. The Chechen rebels’ *jihad* doctrine is represented by judgments of the major ideologue of violent *jihad* and the mentor of Osama bin Laden, Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, taken out of his work *Defense of the Muslim Lands*, and of a Muslim theologian Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), a favorite theorist of radical Muslims. Both encourage the participation of women and children in the fighting.

Operatives of another al-Qaida-linked network, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, have been spotted in Russia. Three IMU members suspected in a March attack in Uzbekistan that killed forty-seven people were arrested in May and June of 2004 in Russia’s Muslim-populated Volga regions.

Compared to other neighboring ethnic groups preaching Islam, the Chechens have not developed a indigenous school of religious thought and have retained many ancient animist traditions and beliefs. The extremely formalized and de-spiritualized Wahhabism that perceives *jihad* as external warfare (contrary to the Northern Caucasus’ traditional sufi Islam, that views *jihad* as a struggle of a Muslim with his own vicious impulses) quickly took root among the Chechen youth, who saw it as a revolutionary and “purifying” doctrine.

Inside Chechen terror networks, the preaching of mullahs defines the rebels’ modus operandi, since both sources of religious and operational authority coincide in their leadership, called the *Majlis-ul Shura* (People’s Council). The *Shura* unites warlords, Wahhabi scholars, and the Chechen rebels’ few foreign envoys. Any criticism from religious authorities from outside the rebels’ cause is repelled by the *Shura*, which denies their legitimacy because of their siding with Moscow.

²⁹ Gennady Troshev, “Emir Khattab: Shtrihi k Portretu,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, April 27, 2002.

³⁰ Islamist radicals are commonly, but incorrectly, referred to in Russia as Wahhabis. Not all those that Russian officials and media brand as Wahhabis are followers of cleric Al Wahhab and his teachings, and not all of those who are indeed Wahhabis are preaching or practicing violence. It would be more appropriate to describe such Islamist fighters, who seek to establish an Islamist state that would include all Muslim republics of the North Caucasus as militant salafites. Salafites are Islamists who stand for Salafiya, which means “pure Islam.” Many ascribing to Salafites support radical actions in search of pure Islam. Again, we should note that not all Salafites in the North Caucasus are militant and ready to use force in order to establish an Islamist state. For instance, only 1,000 out of

Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, and Dagestan, actively participating in the anti-government insurgency.

In Dagestan, militant salafites—led by Dagestani warlord Rappani Khalilov— have already demonstrated that they may easily resort to indiscriminate and massive terrorist attacks. Russian prosecutors believe that Khalilov’s group was behind the bombing of the Victory Day parade in Kaspiisk on May 9, 2002 that claimed the lives of forty-three Russian servicemen and civilians and wounded over 200. In addition to targeting the military, Khalilov’s terrorist group, Jennet, has also proclaimed a war against the Dagestani and federal law enforcers. Law-enforcers estimate that members of this group were behind killings of some eighty officers from June 2003 to June 2005.

Dagestani ‘Wahhabis’ did not hesitate to launch indiscriminate attacks as well. They carried out the first in the series of deadly apartment building bombings in Russian cities, which preceded the second Chechen war. Sixty people died when an apartment building collapsed after a powerful bomb exploded in the Dagestani city of Buinaksk in September of 1999.³¹ The insurgent network in Dagestan has demonstrated formidable resilience, remaining active in carrying out attacks on law enforcers even after a massive police crackdown on its members, in which dozens of them, including the major plotter of the terrorist attacks, Rasul Makasharipov, were ambushed and killed in 2004 and 2005.

In Ingushetia, the local “Wahhabi” cells are an increasingly potent force. They participated in the June 2004 raid in which groups of Chechen and Ingush extremists led by

21,000 salafites in Dagestan could be described as “militant” as of 2000, according to estimates by Alexei Malashenko in *“Islamic Factor in the Northern Caucasus,”* Gendalf, Moscow, 2001.
<http://pubs.carnegie.ru/books/2001/03am>.

Due to all of the above factors, we will use the definition as militant salafites or put the word Wahhabi inside quotation marks to stress that it is the term used by Russian officials and media.

³¹ Several natives of Dagestan were convicted of this bombing and Khattab was implicated by Russian officials in ordering the attack. Nabi Abdullaev, “Buinaksk Apartment Bombers Convicted,” *Moscow Times*, March 20, 2001.

Basayev launched simultaneous attacks on police and military installations in Ingushetia. The attackers purposefully executed sixty Ingush police officers and prosecutors, and about thirty civilians were killed in the crossfire. In Beslan, nine out of thirty-two hostage-takers were Ingush, according to Basayev.³² Russian officials confirm that most of the attackers were ethnic Ingush and Chechen, but gave no break-down as nine bodies of the suspected terrorists remained to be identified as of September 2005.³³ Both sides concur that the preparations into the Beslan terrorist raid by dozens of militants were carried out in a forest camp on the territory of Ingushetia and lasted for several days. Police officials from the nearby Ingush villages denied any knowledge of these preparations on their turf.

These and other events demonstrate that extremist groups in Ingushetia—which had been initially perceived as a branch of the Chechen groups—have developed into full-fledged independent networks with their own agenda. One strong manifestation of this development is the string of bombings and ambushes aimed against republican officials, including the attack against Ingush President Murat Zyazikov in 2005. The attacks were framed as a warning to Zyazikov’s government to put an end to a string of extra-judicial seizures by law-enforcers of male Ingush with suspected ties to rebels, but with no firm evidence to back it up.

In the latest high-profile assassination attempt, two roadside bombs exploded in the Ingush capital Nazran on August 25, 2005, badly wounding Ingush Prime Minister Ibragim Malsagov and killing his driver. A week before that attack, Nazran police chief Dzhabraïl Kostoyev was wounded when unknown assailants detonated a radio-controlled land mine as his car was passing.

³² “Abdullah Shamil: Operation Nord-West in Beslan...” September 17, 2004, Kavkazcenter, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2004/09/17/25985.shtml>.

³³ “My Ne Islyyuchaemn Vozmozhnosti Vozbuzhdenia Dela v Otnoshenii Rukovodstva Silovykh Struktur,” interview with Deputy Prosecutor General Nikolai Shepel, *Gazeta*, September 18, 2005.

Another sign of the local networks' organizational evolution is the emergence of strong local leaders. Once subordinate to Chechen warlords, in 2004 some of these Ingushetia-based networks appeared to have been operating under the command of an individual who is only known through his radio alias—Magas. The individual using that name in short-wave radio-communications coordinated the attack on Nazran in June 2004. Federal and local law-enforcers have claimed several times that Magas had been killed, but as of August 2005 he was still at large. According to accounts in the Russian press, Magas could be former Ingush policeman Ali Taziyev. Taziyev was kidnapped by Chechen gunmen in the fall of 1998 and thought to have died in captivity, but then resurfaced as one of the Beslan organizers.

In Karachaevo-Cherkessia, there has emerged one of the deadliest and most motivated groups of jihadists in the entire region.³⁴ The first public manifestation of growing Islamist sentiments in Karachaevo-Cherkessia occurred even before the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union. Taking advantage of the Soviet leadership's drive to ease restrictions on independent political and public activities, ethnic Karachai and radical Islamic leader Muhammad Bidzhi Ulu united local salafites into the Party of Islamic Revival in 1990-1991. The party drew emissaries from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan to recruit followers. Karachai "Wahhabis" also reached out beyond the border of the republic, establishing contacts with like-minded radicals in Kabardino-Balkaria and in Chechnya and other neighboring provinces, while maintaining a relatively low profile in their homeland. One of the "Wahhabi" cells was established in the republic's second largest city—Karachaevsk—in the form of Muslim Society No. 3 led by Achemez Gochiyev.³⁵ It was not until the apartment bombings in Moscow and

³⁴ The information on Karachayevo-Cherkessia militant salafites is taken from "Karachai 'Wahhabis' re-emerge as a threat," Simon Saradzhyan, *ISN Security Watch*, October, 2004.

³⁵ By the end of 1997, Muslim Society No. 3 reportedly had 200 members, including ethnic Karachai, Nogay, and Russians - some of whom reportedly underwent training in camps run by Khattab in Chechnya and later fought alongside Chechen rebels during Russia's second military campaign. Gochiyev's cell did manage to stay below the

Volgodonsk in 1999 that police and security services launched a hunt for the leaders of Muslim Society No. 3, whose members allegedly organized and carried out the bombings. Russian authorities maintain that the Moscow explosions were ordered by the warlord Khattab and carried out by this group, the bulk of whom were Karachai “Wahhabis” led by Gochiyaev. Several members of this group were arrested, tried, and convicted for these terrorist acts, including Kazbek Shailiev, who replaced Gochiyaev as the leader of Muslim Society No. 3, after Gochiyaev fled.

As a result of the police crack-down, most of the aboveground “Wahhabi” network was dismantled in Karachaevo-Cherkessia by 2002, and there are only about 220 practicing “Wahhabis” on the republican police force files as of 2005. However, authorities failed to completely disband the movement, and its members re-emerged as the culprits of several deadly terrorist attacks in Russia in 2004. Moscow chief prosecutor Anatoly Zuev announced in 2004 that his office believed that Gochiyaev’s group had organized the suicide bombing at the Rizhskaya subway station in Moscow and the suicide bombing of two airliners over central and southern Russia earlier that year.³⁶ The prosecutor also said Russian law-enforcers had finally managed to identify the man who blew himself up in a Moscow metro station in February 2004, as another member of Gochiyaev’s group, twenty-year-old Anzor Izhayev.³⁷ Zuev’s revelations prove that, despite authorities’ ongoing efforts to dismantle the Karachai “Wahhabi” networks, the latter continue to operate, taking advantage of their contacts with like-minded actors in neighboring republics to escape the hunt and plan new operations. Unable to expand their

radar of law enforcement officers and he managed to escape prosecution even though local police found guns and a grenade in a car he was riding in August 1998.

³⁶ According to the chief prosecutor, Gochiyaev’s accomplice and Karachai “Wahhabi” Nikolai Kipkeev escorted the suicide bomber to the Rizhskaya station area on August 31, 2004, and died in the blast when the bomb accidentally detonated earlier than planned.

support base to a level that would threaten Karachaevo-Cherkessia itself, they continue to pose a serious threat to the overall stability in the region.

In Kabardino-Balkaria, local “Wahhabis” were led by the Shogenov brothers, who helped Basayev to organize female suicide bombings in Moscow in 2003. In August 2003, Russian security services killed the Shogenovs in a massive crackdown on Islamist cells in the republic. However, the local “Wahhabi” organization Yarmuk was not wiped out; in August 2004, two police officers were killed in a confrontation with the “Wahhabis” near the capital Nalchik, and the ensuing search operation led to another clash, in which a cache of explosives was seized by law-enforcement officers.³⁸ In January and April 2005, the local policemen managed to track down and kill several leaders of Yarmuk in massive sting operations. However, deadly attacks on republican law enforcers didn’t only continue in the republic unabated, but also escalated into a multi-pronged offensive staged on Nalchik on October 13, 2005. Up to 200 militants, most of them members of Yarmuk and allied salafites, participated in the Nalchik attacks which targeted the headquarters of the republican branch of the Federal Security Service, the regional Interior Ministry building, the regional border guard offices, a local prison and a military unit guarding the city’s airport. Chechen warlord Basayev assumed responsibility for organizing the attacks, which left more than 100 people dead.

In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the Muslim republics of Russia’s central Volga region, “Wahhabi” cells have also been active. In 1999, Tatar religious extremists bombed the major Urengoi-Pomara-Uzhgorod natural gas pipeline traversing the republic. Ten bombers have been sentenced to prison terms of between twelve and fifteen years.³⁹

³⁷ Izhayev, who lost his father at the age of seven and was a high school drop out, studied at the radical Uchkeken madrassa in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. It was his mother that brought him to the madrassa, hoping that studies there would turn her problem child into a good Muslim, according to *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.

³⁸ Timur Samedov, “Prishol, Uvidel, Upustil (Came, Saw, Missed),” *Kommersant*, August 20, 2004.

³⁹ “Za Vzryv Gazoprovoda Vahhabita Prigovorili k 15 Godam Kolonii,” *RIA-Novosti*, November 28, 2002.

Envoys of the Chechnya-based religious radicals were actively recruiting among Tatar and Bashkir youth to attend terrorist learning camps in Chechnya during its de-facto independence between 1996-1999. A member of Achemez Gochiyayev's group, Denis Saitakov, an ethnic Tatar who was born in Uzbekistan but then relocated to Tatarstan's town of Naberezhnye Chelny, attended the radical Yildyz madrassa there in 1996.⁴⁰ One of the Tatar individuals detained in Afghanistan by U.S. forces in 2001, Airat Vakhitov, studied in that madrassa for five years. The Yildyz madrassa, run by visitors from several Arab countries, was shut down in September 2000 after some of its former students were implicated in terrorist attacks. Two of the eleven convicted in a December 1999 bomb attack on the Urengoi-Pomary-Uzhgorod gas pipeline, which traverses Tatarstan and supplies several European countries, had attended Yildyz.⁴¹

Also, three residents of Tatarstan and one resident of Bashkortostan were detained by U.S. troops in Afghanistan in late 2001. These individuals—known at home as religious dissidents—claimed to have traveled to Afghanistan in search of an ideal Muslim society. Both U.S. and Russian investigators failed to find these individuals guilty of terrorist activities and released them in 2004. In early 2005, two of them, Timur Ishmuradov and Ravil Gumarov, were arrested in Tatarstan on suspicion of blowing up a natural gas pipeline there on January 8, 2005. In September 2005, they went on trial but were found not guilty by a jury.

Elsewhere in Russia, agents of the North Caucasian militant salafites have been recruiting ethnic Slavs to convert them to their radical beliefs and use them to prepare and stage terrorist attacks. Ethnic Slavs are less suspicious in the eyes of the Russian police, which routinely engages in racial profiling. One such convert was identified by the FSB in January 2005 as Pavel

⁴⁰ Elmira Yakovleva, "Denisa Saitakova Uzhe Net V Zhivykh," *Vecherniye Chelny*, September 13, 2000.

⁴¹ Nabi Abdullaev, "From Russia to Cuba via Afghanistan," *Moscow Times*, December 18, 2002.

Kosolapov. Kosolapov, an ethnic Russian from the Volgograd region, was expelled from a Rostov-on-Don military academy in the late 1990s for breaking rules and was later recruited by Chechens living in Volgograd to fight against federal troops in Chechnya, according to Federal Security Service investigators. In Chechnya, he converted to Islam, received training from Arab instructors and was picked by Basayev in late 2003 to head a group to carry out terrorist attacks in Russia.

The first attack, which Kosolapov helped to arrange, was the February 6, 2004 suicide bombing on a train traveling between the Paveletskaya and Avtozavodskaya metro stations in Moscow, in which some forty passengers perished. Several weeks later, Kosolapov and two Kazakh citizens blew up four gas pipelines and set mines under three electric gridline poles outside Moscow, the FSB said. Basayev has claimed responsibility for all of those attacks in statements posted on the rebel Kavkaz Center Web site. The FSB also believes that Kosolapov organized a bombing at a Samara outdoor market in July 2004, which killed eleven, and two bus stop bombings in Voronezh in June 2004, which resulted in the death of one man.⁴²

In May 2005, law-enforcers in Voronezh unveiled that they had arrested an ethnic Slav, who they identified as Maksim Panaryin, on suspicions that he helped to organize the bus stop bombings in Voronezh in 2004 and was planning to stage another terrorist attack in this city on Victory Day of this year (May 9, 2005).⁴³ In a statement to the State Duma in May 2005, FSB director Nikolai Patrushev mentioned Panaryin as among key members of a terrorist group responsible for at least nine attacks, including the series of explosions in Voronezh in 2004 and in 2005, the suicide bombings outside Moscow's Rizhskaya metro station, and on the train heading to the Avtozavodskaya metro station in 2004. Patrushev said FSB officers have detained

⁴² *Vremya Novostei*, January 13, 2005

⁴³ "Prizrak Kosolapova," *Vremya Novostei*, May 13, 2005.

Panaryin and two more people suspected of having organized the attacks. He identified them by their last names, Khubiyev, Panaryin, and Shavorin.⁴⁴

The majority of the above-listed groups believe that:

- Fighting Russian “infidels” and collaborators is a holy duty for ideologically driven extremist groups, and a defeat would be unthinkable;
- Fighting reflects their core identity and dignity;
- In Chechnya, since the warring sides are in a stalemate and the war cannot be won in real time or in real terms if limited to conventional arms, it must be reconceived on a sacred basis that evokes grand scenarios, blurring the notion of Chechen separatism as a political cause, and allowing indiscriminate attacks on an open-ended range of targets.

The radicalization of the insurgency in the North Caucasus is in line with these beliefs. What is more, large-scale attacks, such as Beslan, the Moscow theater siege, and the twin plane hijackings demonstrate that there are no barriers to whom these terrorists will kill. It is therefore likely that such large-scale attacks will “pave the way” for an act of catastrophic terrorism.

Fortunately, none of the groups of ideologically driven extremists operating in the North Caucasus have thus far managed to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Apart from Aum followers, no members of radical Russian sects or political radicals have sought such weapons. While realizing that an attack with nuclear, biological, or chemical materials may fail to produce heavy casualties, however, the ideologically driven extremists may conceive of an attack on a conventional facility, which could have catastrophic consequences. Some conventional industrial facilities, for example, if attacked or sabotaged skillfully, could explode and cause widespread damage and a high number of casualties. Facilities such as fertilizer plants and industrial

⁴⁴ Simon Saradzhyan and Carl Schreck “FSB Chief: NGOs a Cover for Spying,” *Moscow Times*, May 13, 2005.

refrigeration warehouses could, under certain conditions, be turned into “weapons of mass destruction.”⁴⁵

2. Messianic and Totalitarian Sects

Another threat is posed by religious messianic and totalitarian sects operating outside of the North Caucasus. On the surface, this threat currently appears far less robust than the menace of Islamist extremists in and around Chechnya. However, we should not underestimate the long-term destructive potential of messianic sects. Russian law enforcement agencies and other government agencies by running checks on their finances and paperwork and creating other hurdles with tacit encouragement of those religious organizations that have traditionally been dominant in Russia. These are the Russian Orthodox Church and the Sunni branch of Islam, which are strongly opposed to the emergence of new religious groups and organizations.

The demise of the Soviet Union left an ideological vacuum, with religious groups that were well established in pre-revolutionary Russia (such as the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam) but were suppressed under the Soviet regime. As a result, not only did various “benign” traditional religious groups begin to reclaim believers in the post-Soviet era, but also a number of what the authorities have branded as “sects” or “cults,” groups seeking to establish new religions, began to scout for new recruits in Russia and other Soviet republics.

Russian government and Orthodox Church experts estimated that there were anywhere between 300 and 500 “sects” operating in Russia as of 2003.⁴⁶ In addition, there were up to one million followers of sects and other “non-traditional” religious organizations in Russia, with 70

⁴⁵ “Terrorism in the Metropolis: Assessing Threats and Protecting Critical Infrastructure,” PIR Center, Moscow, 2003.

⁴⁶ Roundtable discussion, “Totalitarian Sects—Weapons of Mass Destruction. Program of Disarmament,” held in the Central House of Journalists in Moscow in October 2003 and organized by the Russian Orthodox Church’s Center for Religious Studies. (Where specifically—what organization was the sponsor?)

percent being young men between eighteen and twenty-seven.⁴⁷ According to the director of the Research Center for Development Strategies and National Security, Igor Oleinik, some of these sects have begun to develop ties with terrorist organizations. Alexander Dvorkin, Russia's leading expert on these religious groups, also alleges that "totalitarian sects merging with...terrorism" in his recent book.⁴⁸

The Japanese doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo is the most illustrative example of how a messianic sect can expand across Russia unhindered by law enforcement despite its efforts to recruit defense industry specialists and acquire WMD technologies. At one point, this cult, which dispersed anthrax spores in Tokyo in 1993 and sprayed sarin gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995, had more followers in Russia than in any other country, according to the U.S. Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.⁴⁹ The cult actively recruited scientists and technical experts in Russia in order to develop weapons of mass destruction. Aum allegedly managed to recruit followers among employees of the Kurchatov Institute.⁵⁰ The sect also infiltrated the town of Obninsk, where the Institute of Nuclear Power Engineering is located, which had a functioning reactor until 2002.⁵¹ In addition to recruiting followers, the cult sought to acquire various weapons in Russia as well.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Alexander Dvorkin, "Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie," *Nizhni Novograd*, Russia, 2003.

⁴⁹ A report from the Russian State Duma's Security Committee put the number of Aum's Russian followers at 35,000, with eleven branches outside of Moscow and at least seven inside of the Russian capital. Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," October 31, 1995, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm.

⁵⁰ For instance, there are references in the documents seized from Aum's "construction minister," Kiyohide Hakawa, to the desired purchase of nuclear weapons. The documents contain the question, "How much is a nuclear warhead?" and lists several prices. Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," October 31, 1995, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm.

⁵¹ S. Romanyuk, "Totalitarian Sects in Russia," *Observer* 5 (1999).

⁵² Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," October 31, 1995, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm.

It was only after the 1995 attacks in the Tokyo subway that Russia's law enforcement machine finally swung into action, with Aum's facilities across the country either raided or closed and the sect banned in the same year. Russian members of the sect demonstrated both their motivation and capability to stage acts of terror after the arrest of the cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, in Japan. Four activists planned to stage a series of terrorist attacks and take hostages in Japan in 2000 to blackmail the Japanese authorities into releasing Asahara, so that they could covertly ship him to a secret location in the remote settlement of Slavyanka in Russia's Primorsky Krai region.⁵³ The crackdown has failed to break the will of some of Aum's Russian followers, and some 300 members could have still been operating in Russia as of April 2004.⁵⁴

To date, Aum Shinrikyo remains the only cult that has been publicly known to seek WMD technologies in Russia with practical use in mind. However, there are other cults active in Russia, operating as networks of largely underground cells, virtually unhindered despite the fact that their leaders have preached that the "judgment day" is imminent and their followers have displayed readiness to sacrifice their lives.

The so-called White Brotherhood has proved to be, perhaps, one of the most sophisticated of messianic cults that have survived a crackdown by authorities. This sect was established in Ukraine by an electronics engineer, Yuri Krivonogov, who studied methods of influencing the psyche at a KGB institute during the Soviet era. The cult, which stated its messianic ambitions in July 1990, quickly expanded into Russia, with branches operating in as many as forty-five Russian cities as of 1993. Members of this sect believed that Krivonogov's

⁵³ Dmitry Sigachev and his three accomplices were arrested by Russia's Federal Security Service in the summer of 2000, and subsequent searches of their apartments revealed an arsenal of guns, photographs of populous areas of Tokyo and other Japanese cities, as well as enough explosives to stage twelve "powerful explosions." The four went on trial, and Sigachev confessed during one of the hearings in a Primorskii Krai court to having planned terrorist attacks in Japan. "A Member of the Russian Branch of Aum Shinrikyo Found Unfit to Stand Trial," *Kommersant*, 2002. Sigachev was sentenced to 8 years, while two of his three accomplices were sentenced to 6.5 and 4 years respectively.

then wife, Maria Tsvigun, was simultaneously the mother, wife, and re-incarnation of Jesus Christ, and referred to her as “Mary David Christ.” Krivonogov positioned himself as the re-incarnation of John the Baptist. The sect’s doctrine said Tsvigun would at one point ascend to Heaven, with Judgment Day soon to follow. According to their teachings, only 144,000 faithful followers will survive Judgment Day, and sermons delivered by its leaders contained calls to kill those who oppose the White Brotherhood. The sect’s newspaper at one point called on the followers to prepare “as 12,000 souls should perish as sacrifice,” and told them that it is “their duty to wash off the sins of unfortunate mankind with your blood.”⁵⁵

The cult’s members planned a mass suicide on November 24, 1993 in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. The suicide was supposed to coincide with the “assumption” of Tsvigun, but Ukrainian police cracked down on the sect two weeks earlier, after Tsvigun and her supporters tried to seize the Sophia Orthodox cathedral in Kiev. This helped to avert the mass suicide, but it reinforced the followers’ preparedness to sacrifice themselves. The fact that one sect member committed suicide after being expelled from the sect demonstrates the followers’ deep-seeded commitment to the White Brotherhood.⁵⁶ More than 600 sect members, including Tsvigun, were detained in Ukraine in late 1993. To protest the arrests, more than 150 cult members went on a hunger strike. Tsvigun was tried and convicted in 1994, along with several other leaders of the sect, including Krivonogov. The sect was widely believed to have fizzled out in the wake of the convictions of its leaders and a ban imposed on the White Brotherhood by Ukrainian authorities.

These beliefs turned out to be groundless, however, as the sect continued to operate underground. The sect maintained its low profile when Tsvigun was released in August 1997 and Krivonogov walked free in 2000, but followers of Krivonogov have re-emerged in several

⁵⁴ “Aum Shinrikyo Changed Its Name,” *Vesti* news program, Rossiya Channel, April 16, 2004.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Russian regions.⁵⁷ The sect has managed to survive despite the jailing of its leaders. It became decentralized to operate in small cells, probably in accordance with a contingency plan.

Members of the sect would live in rented flats with an average of fifteen to twenty people per apartment, and they would regularly change apartments. Activists were advised to spend not more than three days in one city, a practice that made both the apprehension of the leaders and an examination of their activities difficult.

Such a structure and operational mode has allowed the White Brotherhood to retain its potential, which could be easily expanded the way a peace-time army regiment can be quickly brought up to full strength in case of war. The sect maintains a Web site that can be used to alert members in coded messages. Both Russian and Ukrainian law enforcement agents have expressed concern that there is a “high probability” that members of this sect have the capability to engage in terrorist acts.⁵⁸

Some totalitarian sects, such as the “New Generation Church,” use systemic violence to subordinate their members. Leaders of this sect beat their followers, including children.⁵⁹ The fact that sects such as Aum and the White Brotherhood have managed to recruit thousands of followers and operate across Russia demonstrates that messianic cults and groups—including al-

⁵⁶ *New Religious Organizations of Destructive and Occult Character in Russia*, Second Edition (Belgorod: Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1997).

⁵⁷ Followers of the sect re-emerged in the Vladimir region in August 2000. “Emissaries of the White Brotherhood Appear in the Vladimir region,” *Mayak* radio station, August 8, 2000. In a more recent development, two young women surfaced in the central Russian city of Orel in May 2003 to praise Maria Tsvigun, whom sect members refer to as “Mary David Christ” and solicit donations. One of the women said there were only a few members of her organization in Orel, but their number is growing. “Orel: A Totalitarian Sect Re-emerges in the City,” *Regnum* news agency, May 12, 2003. The sect’s followers were also seen in 2003 singing the praises of the White Brotherhood in suburban trains that shuttle between the Ural city of Yekaterinburg and neighboring towns. The local followers applied for registration as a religious organization in the Sverdlovsk region, but their application was rejected, probably in accordance with the Yeltsin-era law on religion. “Yekaterinburg: Followers of the White Brotherhood Re-appear in the Urals,” *Novyi Region* news agency, June 18, 2003.

⁵⁸ *New Religious Organizations of Destructive and Occult Character in Russia*, Second Edition (Belgorod: Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1997).

⁵⁹ Alexander Dvorkin, “Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie,” *Nizhni Novogrod*, Russia, 2003.

Qaida cells, whose leaders strive for catastrophic terrorism—can operate without the awareness of Russian law enforcement agencies.

The White Brotherhood leadership is known to have recruited members in Russia's depressed defense industry towns, and we can only guess what suicidal missions their leaders may assign to their followers if they are cornered in the current crackdown on "non-traditional" religious groups, which has outlawed even Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow.⁶⁰ One sect, named "Mother of God Center," even had officers of the elite Special Forces Division, which is stationed in the Moscow region, serving as their "priests" to "baptize" their soldiers. This Russian-based sect also maintains a Praetorian Guard manned with physically fit men known as the "Legion of the Mother of God."⁶¹

Just as police and secret services in Japan failed to identify what Aum's real intentions were until the 1995 subway attack, it may prove difficult for Russian law enforcement and security agencies to discern whether the White Brotherhood and other messianic cults harbor similar terrorism ambitions until they actually strike. It may also prove extremely difficult to locate and neutralize all branches of a messianic terrorist organization even after it strikes, as is the case with al-Qaida cells in North America.⁶²

Of course, one can accept the rather common notion that leaders of some such sects are rational and are positioning themselves as messiahs in order to achieve power through their

⁶⁰ In June 2004, the Moscow City Court prohibited Jehovah's Witnesses from engaging in religious activity under a provision that allows courts to ban religious groups considered to incite hatred or intolerant behavior. "City Court Backs Ban of Jehovah's Witnesses," *Associated Press*, June 17, 2004.

The first major step to curb "non-traditional" religious groups was made in 1997 when then President Boris Yeltsin signed into law a controversial bill on religion that critics said placed strict restrictions on freedom of worship in Russia. The law granted special status to Russia's conservative Orthodox Church. It also said faiths not registered with the state since 1982, when the Communist regime was in control, must register annually for fifteen years before they can proselytize, publish, or invite missionaries to Russia without restrictions. Dmitry Zaks, "Final Religion Bill Signed by Yeltsin," *Moscow Times*, September 27, 1997.

⁶¹ Alexander Dvorkin, "Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie," *Nizhni Novograd*, Russia, 2003.

⁶² Simon Saradzhyan, "Russia: Grasping Reality of Nuclear Terror," ISP Discussion Paper, Discussion Paper 2003-02, Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, March 2003.

followers. But it could just as easily be the case that they, like Asahara, truly believe in what they preach, and may one day order their followers to begin the Judgment Day, or the faithful themselves can decide it is time to for such a day and try to stage an act of catastrophic terrorism. Whether it is the day Asahara is put to death or a leader of another sect is apprehended, we may learn only after a sect—some of which are known to have had nuclear weapons experts and special forces commandos among their members—stages such an attack, unless authorities act to both disrupt such cults and deny them the capabilities to carry out a catastrophic attack.

3. Extremist Political Groups

While they currently do not appear to be harboring any intentions to stage acts of catastrophic terrorism, activists from Russia's extremist youth organizations have shown the capability to slip through gaps in security arrangements to embarrass Russia's law enforcement community by their public attacks on top officials and infiltration into public buildings. The National Bolshevik Party (NBP), led by the writer Eduard Limonov, has excelled in carrying out symbolic assaults on government officials and facilities, ranging from throwing food at Prime Minister Kasyanov in December 2003, capturing the premises of the Health Ministry in Moscow in August 2004 and of the guarded reception office of the presidential administration in December 2004. In Russia, the NBP has staged acts of protest against liberal economic reforms. The party has also carried out several symbolic attacks and protests in CIS countries, demanding more rights for ethnic Russians living there. Police and security officials have responded extremely harshly to these actions, stimulating the sense of victimization and glorification of the NBP activists.⁶³ In July 2005, forty-eight members of the NBP were serving prison terms, most

⁶³ See the party's website www.nbp-info.ru for examples of glorification of the party's activists and the chronicle of government crackdowns on the party.

of them on charges related to their political actions.⁶⁴ Another 39 activists who participated in the seizure of the reception office of the presidential administration in December 2004 were found guilty of public disorder by a Moscow court in December 2005. 31 received suspended sentences and 8 got prison terms of 18 months to three and a half years. Since 2004, the NBP has been in a legal war with the Russian authorities aiming to disband the party on premises that its members have engaged in extremist activities. The party was banned by the Russian Supreme Court in November 2005. The NBP leaders vowed repeatedly in 2005 that, if banned, the party, which counts over 25,000 members in 50 Russian regions, would operate underground.⁶⁵

The use of such brutal tactics against the NBP clearly helps the organization to accumulate a pool of young operatives who have no fear of potentially violent confrontation with the state. As NBP activists see no effect from their actions other than publicity and repression, some of them may start to wonder whether more serious attacks will have the desired impact on authorities and the public.

A more disturbing development is that hatred toward the government itself—which is understandably represented by its most powerful institution, the Federal Security Service (FSB)—has already led to several actual terrorist attacks against the agency by young leftist radicals. Although nobody died in these and other bombings of symbolic establishments, several leftist extremists have been convicted over the past several years to prison terms as long as nine years.⁶⁶ The most notorious attack, against the FSB building in Moscow in April 1999, was led by four female members of the Russian Communist Labor party. The party perceives itself as revolutionary, and blames the parliamentary Communist Party of the Russian Federation for

⁶⁴ Interview with Limonov by authors on June 29, 2005.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Nabi Abdullaev, “4 Women Sentenced in FSB Bombing,” *Moscow Times*, May 15, 2003.

cooperation with authorities.⁶⁷ The emergence of the aggressive pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi in 2005, whose mission is to counter opposition groups, both leftist and liberal, may further radicalize the opposition youth groups.⁶⁸

None of the above-mentioned political opposition groups have apocalyptic scenarios in their doctrines. However, the set of skills and expectations acquired by some of their followers may gradually transform them into violent political entrepreneurs whose experience and knowledge may be used by those who mastermind massive terrorist attacks. This probability will increase if the government continues to crack down on these largely benign radicals, and their frustration with the futility of their own relatively nonviolent tactics grows.

Such scenarios have already played out in several societies, where ultra-leftist organizations could not earn any public attention to their causes without deciding to resort to terrorism. The examples include the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in Germany, Shining Path in Peru, and the Japanese Red Army.

⁶⁷ Another member of this organization, Alexander Biryukov, was convicted in 2001 for another FSB bombing in 1998. A member of Russian Communist Youth Union of Bolsheviks, Andrei Sokolov, was convicted in 2001 for bombing the monument to the family of the Russian tsars in Moscow in 1997. The bombings and other acts of protest led the FSB to announce the existence in 1999 of the so-called New Revolutionary Alternative, an underground leftist umbrella organization that stood behind the attacks.

⁶⁸ After a group of up to thirty Nashi activists attacked a meeting of the NBP and another leftist group, AKM, in Moscow on August 30, 2005, Limonov said that NPB will have to resort to an equally violent response. Carl Schreck, "Masked Men Attack NBP Activists," *Moscow Times*, August 31, 2005.

III. Corrupt and Converted Law Enforcement Agents Multiply Terrorists' Capabilities

Corruption and ideological conversion of law enforcement officers by extremists in the North Caucasus has emerged as a major security threat, as the investigations of almost every new terrorist attack unearth cases of corrupt or ideologically driven police officers who have assisted the attackers. The latest in the deadly string of attacks was organized by an Ingush policeman who had switched sides after disappearing in Ingushetia six years ago, according to investigators from Prosecutor General's Office. Officer Ali Taziyev was serving in the Ingush police department for protection of facilities when he was kidnapped by Chechen gunmen in the fall of 1998. Taziyev was thought to have died in captivity, and was even declared officially dead by an Ingushetian court, only to resurface as one of the organizers of the Beslan hostage-taking attack. Taziyev used a fake passport, which identified him as "Magomed Yevloyev," and it was he who could have used the Magas alias in radio communications during the attacks in Ingushetia in 2005. An individual using this alias, along with Shamil Basayev, led a group of Ingush and Chechen gunmen into the Ingush city of Nazran in June of 2004 to stage simultaneous attacks on a number of government buildings, military barracks and police stations.

After these raids, four local policemen, including Lt. Magomed Aspiev, commander of a platoon of the Ingush OMON police commando force, and his deputy, Alikhan Dolgiev, were arrested on suspicion of assisting the attackers. Upon his arrest, Aspiev testified that Dolgiev had been recruiting policemen upon the orders of extremist commanders. A subsequent search in Dolgiev's house revealed not only a cache of arms, but also brochures and books preaching extremist Wahhabism, an indication that this policeman might have been fighting for an idea rather than money.

More disturbingly, a senior detective in the Ingush police internal affairs department reportedly used his ID to sneak Basayev in and out of Ingushetia before and after the attack. In

2003 and 2004, another police officer, Bashir Pliev, drove Basayev to Ingushetia in his own car, and also tipped him off to upcoming police raids and helped to deliver weapons.⁶⁹ The highest-ranking of the alleged turncoats is the former interior minister of Ingushetia, Daud Korigov. Korigov, who served as the republic's interior minister from 1997 to 1998 and held the rank of police colonel, gave rebels the use of a house he owned in the Chechen capital, Grozny, and was even seen there among the militants' captives, according to Vyacheslav Izmailov, a former army major who has worked on commissions to resolve kidnappings in Chechnya.⁷⁰

In Dagestan, the republican Interior Minister Adilgirei Magomedtagirov admitted publicly in March 2005 that a mole inside his Ministry had provided the local militants with the list of senior officers of police and the republican prosecutor's office with their addresses and phone numbers. The list was found on a militant killed by the Dagestani police on March 6, 2005. The website of the Chechen rebels, kavkazcenter.com, several days later posted the list of the details on 140 Dagestani officers on the Internet, saying that it had been given to militants by senior police officials in exchange of guarantees of personal safety.

There have also been cases in which Chechen extremists either changed their identity or surrendered to join pro-Moscow police forces in order to feed information to their accomplices, or even to participate in attacks staged by the extremists. Policemen have been repeatedly caught trying to sell arms to extremists, while cases of policemen either letting vehicles pass without inspection or issuing fake passports or residence registrations in exchange for bribes are reported almost monthly. Most recently, two policemen were arrested in Chechnya for not only selling arms to extremists, but also using their authority to ship these arms for them and give sanctuary to warlords.

⁶⁹ Irina Khalip, "Provodnik Basayeva: Im Okazalsya Sotrudnik Otdela Sobstvennoi Bezopasnosti MVD Ingushetii," *Novazya Gazeta*, August 18, 2004.

It is this corruption and ideological conversion of law-enforcers that have in part prevented Russian troops, security services and police from catching the most notorious of the Chechen warlords. For instance, several policemen were arrested for helping Shamil Basayev, Russia's most wanted man, to slip in and out of the North Caucasian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria in 2003. Basayev lived for one month in a private house in the republic's town of Baksan.

While cases of policemen converting to extremist Islam on religious or other grounds (such as strong clan ties) have been mostly limited to the North Caucasus, corruption of law enforcement and other agencies is a nation-wide phenomenon that allows terror groups to strike Russian cities hundreds of miles away from their bases. A Kislovodsk court sentenced a local traffic police officer, Stanislav Lyubichev, to four years in prison for letting a shipment of explosives—a truckload of six metric tons of hexogen—drive by without checking it in 1999. These explosives were later allegedly used to blow up apartment buildings in Moscow in September 1999. More recently, a Moscow policeman was sentenced in February 2004 to seven years for registering Luiza Bakueva as a legal resident in Moscow in 2002 in exchange for a bribe. Bakueva went on to participate in the hostage-taking at the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in October 2002.

Even more alarming is evidence that extremists could have tried to recruit an insider at a nuclear power plant, which, if sabotaged, could wreak havoc of catastrophic proportions. In October 2002, the FSB detained a serviceman from a special unit that was guarding the Kalininskaya nuclear power plant in the Tver region. The FSB found on the officer a map of the plant with all "secret facilities" identified on it, as well as a list of coded phone numbers. FSB

⁷⁰ Burt Herman, "Former cop allegedly among Russia school attack masterminds, one of many turncoats in law enforcement," *Associated Press*, September 16, 2004.

agents managed to decode the phone numbers only to find out that they belonged to “natives of Chechnya.” The agency said that the arrest of the captain, whose identity has not been released, coincided with the storming of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow on October 26, 2002.⁷¹

In early 2005, a Moscow bailiff working at the Justice Ministry was arrested on suspicion of being an accomplice to terrorists who carried out a suicide bombing at the Rizhskaya metro station in Moscow on August 31, 2005, which claimed the lives of ten civilians. Murat Shavayev, an ethnic Balkar, allegedly made his Moscow apartment available to at least one of the terrorists and was a liaison between them and Achemez Gochiyayev, an individual whom Russian officials accuse of planning and carrying out a series of apartment building bombings in Moscow and the southern Russian city of Volgodonsk in 1999.⁷²

As demonstrated above, cases of policemen either switching sides or turning a blind eye after being bribed by terrorists prove that corruption of law enforcement agents has become routine practice for the networks of ideologically driven extremists in the North Caucasus and other groups. Should these networks try to resort to catastrophic terrorism, their capability to stage attacks will be increased by the assistance of corrupted or converted law enforcement officials.

⁷¹ Simon Saradzhyan, “Russia: Grasping Reality of Nuclear Terror,” March 2003.

⁷² Irina Petrakova, “God Posle Rizhskoi,” *Gazeta.ru*, Aug. 31, 2005, available at http://www.gazeta.ru/2005/08/31/oa_169093.shtml.

IV. Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia’s War on Terror⁷³

An analysis of the trade-offs between security⁷⁴ and liberties in Russia’s war on terror demonstrates that enhancing the powers of the security apparatus at the expense of civil liberties in a given region may help reduce the threat of terrorism in the short term, as local agents of terror divert part of their operations to “freer regions.” However, our research indicates that such a strategy eventually backfires at the local level, as suppression of civil liberties generates political resentment that is among the root causes of terrorism.⁷⁵

Russians elected Vladimir Putin as their president in 2000 partly, if not mostly, because he promised to curb terrorism in the wake of the apartment bombings that shocked the nation less than a year before. Putin and the majority of the general public then equated terrorism with Chechen separatism, and it was the latter that the Russian army successfully quashed during the first years of Putin’s presidency. However, while putting an end to the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, the Russian army did not and could not possibly have eradicated terrorism as such. As Russia’s Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov observed in 2004, trying to have army units

⁷³ This chapter represents an abridged version of Nabi Abdullaev and Simon Saradzhyan, “Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia’s War on Terror,” research paper written for the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, American University.

⁷⁴ While acknowledging that there is a broad spectrum of systemic threats to Russia’s security, the authors of this report focus on those posed by extremist and terrorist groups. We believe it is these groups that pose the most serious threat to Russia’s national security and their actions are both a genuine cause and a pretext for infringements on and outright suppression of liberties in Russia. The report highlights trade-offs between liberties and security in four parts of Russia that the authors found to be most representative for this purpose; however, due to a lack of evidence, this paper is by no means a comprehensive nationwide study and should not be considered as such. There are simply not enough data in the public domain for a quantitative analysis even by methods of basic multiple regressions. While there is a wealth of quantitative data on Russia as a country, making it possible to identify variables for a multiple regression comparing Russia to other nations (using, for example, independent indexes of freedoms and so on), such indexes are not available for individual regions of Russia.

⁷⁵ While noting that resentment over suppression of freedoms and rights is among the root causes of terrorism and militancy, the authors also acknowledge that poverty and slow economic growth make it easier for insurgents to recruit new foot soldiers, as argued in a recent authoritative and extensive study of factors that explain which countries run the risk of sinking into civil war. (See James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” Department of Political Science, Stanford University, Stanford, August 2002.) In fact, this paper argues that political resentment is not among the factors that significantly increase the threat of a civil war. The focus, however, is on trade-offs between liberties and security and, thus, the authors do not dwell on economic factors; the report mentions the latter in passing, noting the stratification of society and using the relative share of

fight terrorist groups is “like chasing flies with a sledgehammer.” Moreover, as demonstrated above, the networks of terrorism and insurgency, once based mostly in Chechnya and dominated by ethnic Chechens, have now proliferated across the North Caucasus, with natives of neighboring republics forming their own cells to fight guerilla war and stage terrorist attacks within and outside of the North Caucasus.

Almost every major terrorist attack in Russia has sparked a debate in Russia’s policy-making community on how to stem the tide of terrorism. With Putin’s ascent to the presidency and the subsequent consolidation of the Kremlin’s grip on the executive and legislative branches of power, this debate almost invariably ended with calls for new laws boosting the powers of the law enforcement community at the expense of individual liberties. Even the September 2004 hostage-taking tragedy in Beslan failed to convince federal authorities that terrorism cannot be reined in by mechanical increases in law enforcement agencies’ budgets and powers.⁷⁶

Admittedly, the Kremlin’s post-Beslan policy was more multifaceted than previous responses to terrorist attacks. The authorities, for example, made some official attempts to identify the root causes of Beslan rather than dismissively labeling it an act of fanaticism. Overall, however, the government continued to rely on a heavy-handed, incomprehensive approach, calling for further centralization of the Kremlin’s power at the expense of regional administrations and strengthening its coercive forces (i.e., law enforcement agencies) at the expense of individual liberties. Instead of being subjected to fundamental, systemic reform, the law enforcement agencies have been routinely pumped up with more powers and cash in the hopes that their ability to prevent terrorist attacks will make a magical qualitative leap forward.

small businesses as a watch point—an indirect measurement of the overall level of liberties and freedoms—since, as a rule, the more liberal the regime, the easier it is to open a small business.

⁷⁶ Such a demonstrative reaction does help create the impression that authorities are doing their best to protect the public from the menace of terrorism, especially when covered favorably by state-owned television channels, as is the case in Russia.

Among other measures, the Putin administration has scrapped the popular election of governors, removed single-mandate districts in national and regional parliamentary elections, given new powers to the law enforcement community and restricted media coverage of terrorist attacks. While submitting these and other measures in the form of bills to the parliament, President Putin and members of his government also put pressure on regional elites and mass media to toe the Kremlin's line on what it describes as a "war against international terrorism." Bowing to this pressure, Russia's leading broadcast media responded by adopting a convention in April 2003 that set strict rules for covering terrorist acts and anti-terrorist operations.⁷⁷

The law on countering extremism has become a landmark in terms of expanding law enforcement officials' powers in their day-to-day war on terror. The July 2002 law gives such a broad definition of terrorism that law enforcement agencies can apply it to an extremely broad spectrum of political and religious organizations and individuals. The law bans the dissemination of information that "substantiates or justifies ethnic or racial superiority," regardless of whether this information poses a threat or not. This provision allows prosecutors to classify many religious texts as extremist material. The law also defines any activity that "undermine[s] the security of the Russian Federation" as extremist. Law enforcement officers have already used this broad and vaguely worded definition to harass environmental whistle-blowers who have exposed cases of toxic and radioactive waste dumped by the Russian military. Another provision of this law expands the range of groups and individuals who can be prosecuted for assisting in extremist activities. This assistance can be defined very broadly, covering, for instance, those whose only relationship with a terrorist was as a landlord, or even someone who provided funds

⁷⁷ The convention emphasized that during terrorist attacks or anti-terrorist operations, rescue efforts and "the human right to life take priority over all other rights and freedoms." The convention said that media outlets have the "right and duty of contributing to the open discussion of the problem of terrorism" and that the threat of terrorism must not be used to restrict media freedoms, but it subjects signatories to limitations from the government and sets guidelines on issues ranging from interviews with hostage-takers to the "tone" of coverage. "Media Firms Sign a Terrorism

or office equipment without knowing that they would be used for extremist activities. Such people can be identified as “extremists” and found liable under this law.

The law gives the authorities a fast track for liquidating any organization suspected of extremist activities, which violates citizens’ right to association. The Prosecutor General’s Office or Justice Ministry can find an organization in violation of the law and issue it a warning. If the warning remains “unheeded,” either of the two agencies can issue a second warning and go to court to ask for the organization to be shut down. The law also allows prosecutors to suspend the organization’s activities without any court warrant at all, although the organization can appeal such a decision. Regrettably, the procedure for closing a media outlet is very similar to that for shutting down an organization suspected of extremism.

Two other key bills passed in 2000-2004 by the parliament and signed into law by President Putin as part of the legal response to the escalation of terrorism include numerous amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedures Code and give longer sentences to convicted terrorists. These amendments allow police to keep terrorism suspects in custody for up to thirty days without charging them. In comparison, those suspected of other crimes can be detained for up to three days without charges. This measure clearly violates the freedom of movement and an individual’s right to impartial justice, allowing investigators to put more pressure on a suspect in custody and giving them time to come up with evidence in cases where they lack it.⁷⁸ The year 2004 also saw the State Duma pass an initial draft of a new and more repressive law on fighting terrorism to replace the existing 1998 law. The bill would allow the

Pact,” *Associated Press*, April 10, 2003.

⁷⁸ According to personal accounts of several individuals convicted in Dagestan over the past two years for participation in terrorist groups and/or engaging in terrorist activities, investigators used the first weeks of detention to force the suspects to testify against themselves using torture. This was acknowledged by Dagestan’s Minister of Information, Zagir Arukhov, in an interview by the authors on October 10, 2004.

FSB to declare a state of emergency in an area threatened by “terrorist danger” for up to sixty days based on information—even if unverified—about preparations for a terrorist attack.⁷⁹

Law enforcement officials in the North Caucasus have extensively relied on the existing laws in their efforts to fight terrorism, but they have also abused the powers given to them by cracking down on dissent that has little to do with terrorism, as demonstrated below in the case study of Dagestan. In Chechnya, law enforcement agencies have gone greatly exceeded their authority in conducting extrajudicial executions during the shift away from large-scale operations to seek-and-destroy patrols.⁸⁰

During the researched period, Russian authorities also gave the law enforcement and defense agencies a silent nod on assassinations of suspected insurgency terrorist leaders both in Russia and abroad. Additionally, while the Federal Security Service did not hesitate to assume responsibility for killing warlord Khattab in Chechnya after he died of poisoning in April 2000, no Russian agency would admit to having killed the vice president of Chechnya’s self-proclaimed separatist government, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, in Qatar in February 2004. While refusing to assume responsibility, Russian authorities demanded and succeeded in obtaining the transfer of two Russian agents convicted of the assassination back to Russia under the order of a Qatar court.

⁷⁹If passed into law, the bill will grant the security services the right to monitor private communications, ban demonstrations and prevent the movement of people and vehicles in zones where a terrorist alert is declared. Under the bill, the power to declare a state of emergency would reside with the head of the counterterrorism operations headquarters, a ranking FSB officer appointed by the prime minister.

Under the existing law, a state of emergency can be called for the duration of a counterterrorism operation. The bill does not specify how often a state of terrorist danger can be declared. The bill also sets out legal procedures allowing the military to participate in counterterrorism operations—including, for the first time, those beyond Russia’s borders—under the overall direction of the FSB, the country’s lead counterterrorism agency. The bill would oblige journalists to cover terrorist attacks only within limits set by the FSB’s counterterrorism operations headquarters. It was not clear from the bill whether all media outlets covering a terrorist attack, including those not reporting from the scene, would need to obtain FSB permission, or whether the headquarters would have the authority to block media coverage.

Overall, despite some targeted operations, the law enforcement's response to the escalation of terrorist attacks and conventional guerilla operations has been excessive and indiscriminate. There should be no doubt that the federal authorities are aware of the scale of abuses suffered by residents of the North Caucasus at the hands of local authorities and law enforcement officials, especially in regions such as Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia. The Kremlin prefers to turn a blind eye to these abuses, however, in a tacit trade-off where Moscow provides firepower and cash, and local authorities demonstrate loyalty and brutally suppress signs of separatism. This arrangement is undoubtedly failing. The dynamics of insurgency in these three regions and several neighboring areas in Russia's North Caucasus demonstrate clearly that they are on the brink of becoming "failed republics." Local leaders are as abusive and corrupt as in the 1990s, but they are also becoming increasingly impotent, unable to curb the escalation of insurgency and terrorism.

Paradoxically, federal and local authorities, while excessively active and creative in broadening the powers of the repressive apparatus to react and, to a far lesser extent, to interdict terrorist groups, have done relatively little to improve the deterrence of terrorism, especially through economic and financial tools. Although companies and organizations whose associates are found guilty or charged with terrorism can expect investigations into their finances, Russian law prohibits the indiscriminate confiscation of property of convicted terrorists, which could be a much more effective tool for discouraging potential sponsors or accomplices than fines or liquidation of their companies. In fact, the collateral damage inflicted on liberties and freedoms in this "war on terror" has already raised questions about the potential for further damage.

⁸⁰ The introduction and impact of the law designating Chechnya a zone of counterterrorist operations is described in the Chechnya case study. The impact of a local law on countering Wahabbism and political extremism, passed by the Dagestani parliament in 1999, is described in the Dagestan case study.

One question is whether the authorities, in implementing their campaign, are striving to tighten their grip on the Russian public, which is, on one hand, becoming less and less sensitive to the growing death toll in the ongoing war on terror in the North Caucasus,⁸¹ but, on the other hand, is prepared for a further curtailment of liberties if this is what it takes to stem terrorism. A nationwide poll conducted by the independent Levada Center polling agency in the wake of the September 2004 Beslan tragedy revealed that 58 percent of those given multiple choices when asked what needs to be done to prevent hostage-takings by terrorists believe that the moratorium on capital punishment should be lifted. Another 26 percent of respondents called for the punishment not only of accomplices of terrorists but also of their relatives. As many as 33 percent would ban Chechens from either traveling or living in Russian cities.⁸² A nationwide poll on terrorism conducted by the state-controlled All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) revealed an even greater preparedness to sacrifice freedoms for security. A September 2004 poll showed that 84 percent would favor the execution of terrorists even though a moratorium on capital punishment is a prerequisite for Russia's membership in the Council of Europe. Another 44 percent, given a multiple choice of answers about measures they would back in the "war on terror," said they would support media censorship. Some 35 percent would support "limitations of individual rights of citizens," including tougher ID checks, phone tapping and body searches.⁸³ About a third, 33 percent, indicated they would support the suspension of opposition political organizations. Such a formidable percentage demonstrates in and of itself how incumbent officials can use the war on terror when running for re-election.

⁸¹ Nikolai Petrov, a scholar with the Carnegie Moscow Center, described this insensitivity in his May 2005 peer review of this report as the "colossal inflation of the value of life."

⁸² Yuri Levada Analytical Center, a respected Russian polling agency, surveyed 1,200 individuals in different Russian regions in September 10–13, 2004. The margin of error was 3.2 percent.

⁸³ The All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center, or VTsIOM, surveyed 1,541 individuals in different Russian regions on September 18–19, 2004. The margin of error was 3.4 percent.

The preparedness on the part of the Russian public to trade freedoms and liberties for security is rooted not only in the traumatizing experience of past terrorist attacks such as Beslan, but also in their growing concern that the threat of nuclear terrorism is becoming increasingly real and imminent

The authors of this report believe that the repressive laws and practices presented by authorities as the price that the public has to pay in the war on terror can bring only limited short-term gains in this war, while producing a lasting detrimental effect on freedoms and civil liberties in Russia. Moreover, given the fact that Russia is in a state of transition, the intended and unintended effects of the authorities' anti-terror policies in the researched period, and beyond, could determine the course of Russia's political development.

Being fully aware of the limited range of research, the authors can nonetheless discern from studying the trade-offs between liberties and security in Russia that Russian policy-makers' formula of suppressing liberties for the sake of enhancing security is flawed. The absence of stringent official and public oversight allows law enforcement agencies to put in play illicit excessive violence, which not only fails to diminish the existing terrorist threat, but also radicalizes those groups and individuals who might have otherwise limited themselves to non-violent means.

Even in a veritable police state like Chechnya, terrorism persists after a four-year "anti-terrorist campaign" that has involved a suspension of basic freedoms and an expansion of the law enforcement's powers. Such an approach can put a check on terrorism in the region in the short to medium term, but cannot provide a long-term solution. Down the road, such heavy handed methods of suppression could backfire because they generate more resentment and radicalize a greater number of people, making it increasingly difficult to do battle with radicalism.

Moreover, repressive methods in Chechnya, coupled with the maximum enhancement of law-enforcers' powers, have led to the proliferation of terrorist networks in neighboring areas of the North Caucasus and the export of terrorism to the country's most affluent, if not most liberal, constituent territory—Moscow. Terrorists' search for allies has been most intensive in Dagestan, which is perhaps second only to Chechnya when it comes to suppression of liberties and brutality of local authorities. Moreover, in their attempts to broaden their popular support base, terrorist groups often co-opt the rhetoric of civil liberties, thereby devaluing these concepts in the eyes of the general public.

Yet these groups' efforts to win popular recognition as "freedom fighters" succeed in those regions where authorities suppress freedoms to such an extent that opposition is driven underground. Radical groups in both Chechnya and Dagestan have won support not only by voicing general criticism of official suppression of religious and other freedoms, but they also often point out specific violations, such as grossly falsified election results, to fan public discontent with authorities. It would be much more difficult to win wide popular support using such criticism in Moscow and St. Petersburg, which fare much better than the North Caucasus in terms of both oversight and observance of rights and freedoms.

Even when the law guarantees a certain degree of freedom in a region, terrorism will grow in the absence of public and official oversight to prevent and prosecute abuses by law enforcement, as is the case in Dagestan and Ingushetia. Both republics have seen dozens of law enforcement bodies attacked. And the groups which claimed the attacks in Ingushetia in June 2004 and made an attempt on the life of Ingush President Zyazikov in 2005 claimed that their main mission was to deliver a strong message to Zyazikov and his administration to put an end to the alleged abductions and extrajudicial detentions by local law-enforcers of people with suspected ties to the rebels.

Russian and local Ingush officials essentially came to the same conclusion in explaining the attacks, but with a different twist. They said the attacks were revenge on Zyazikov for trying to prevent Chechnya-based rebels from entering and regrouping in Ingushetia and for cracking down on Ingushetia's own extremists, and that these "warnings" to stop "non-existent kidnappings" were an attempt by the groups to hijack the liberties to try to broaden popular support for them. In comparison, the regions that have relatively abundant liberties and freedoms and robust public oversight of law enforcement possess no endemic terrorist threat, as is the case in Moscow.

Even strong public oversight, however, would not be sufficient to rid these two regions of endemic extremist groups in the absence of stringent official oversight of law enforcement agencies. While robust public oversight can be effective in preventing and uncovering abuses by law enforcement officials, it cannot force their inert agencies either to dismantle extremist groups or to shift their focus from investigating traditional crimes to preventing terrorism. Only strong official oversight, not just by prosecutors, but by the State Duma as well, can lead to such systemic change.

Nonetheless, such reform would not fully protect any region from external agents of terrorism. Leaders of terrorist groups from other regions would continue to target Moscow, the place where they can have maximum impact on target audiences: the national government, the nation as a whole and the international community. A nearby region could be nearly as rich with symbolic targets and have a weaker law enforcement regime, but terrorists would still target what they see as the largest "schwerpunkte" in the country.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

As demonstrated in this paper, the threat of catastrophic terrorism in Russia is becoming increasingly real and imminent. It is a direct result of the existence of violent political actors and of the expansion of their organizational and operational capabilities, coupled with increasing availability of the means for catastrophic terrorist attacks (ranging from WMD and nuclear, biological, and chemical arsenals to potentially dangerous industrial facilities).

We argue that the Russian authorities have insufficient resources at their disposal to harden all of the potential targets, such as research reactors in cities and key industrial facilities. If the authorities do boost security at these facilities, given the creativity that terrorist groups have displayed, the latter would still be able to identify and select targets in the sprawling urban infrastructure that, if skillfully sabotaged, could cause massive casualties and damage.

We believe that a reorientation of security policy toward preventing investigation remains the only proactive approach that promises to decrease the threat of a catastrophic terrorist attack. This effort will require not only reforming the country's security apparatus, but also establishing effective public oversight over its work and boosting intelligence data exchange and other forms of cooperation between Russian law enforcement agents and their foreign counterparts.

Therefore, we recommend that the president establish a non-partisan commission that would bring together security, law enforcement and public administration officials, and independent experts to evaluate Russia's intelligence and law enforcement community. The panel needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of these agencies' structure, budgets, the skills of their leaders and other personnel, their interaction with the community, and their overall performance to determine whether these agencies are adequately financed and manned, empowered, fine-tuned and focused on countering terrorism. The panel should also look into other countries' experiences in fighting terrorism and follow best practices.

The panel should also share its non-classified findings with the expert and academic community to formulate a full range of policy options and recommendations from which the leadership of the country can choose, whether it be such a daring option as a complete overhaul of the intelligence community, as recommended by the U.S. Senate's 9/11 Commission, or larger budgets for human intelligence. The president also needs to enhance civilian oversight of the law enforcement and security community to ensure that they remain focused on implementing enhanced anti-terrorist policies.

Beyond immediate and direct anti-terror related measures, we recommend a change in Russia's heavy-handed policy in the North Caucasus, including an end to abuses of the civilian population by police and troops, preventing ethnic strife, and defusing the political and economic frustrations that feed terrorism.

The practice of forming entire elite commando units of the Russian armed forces with ethnic Chechens in Chechnya should be applied to the rest of the North Caucasus. It is critical, however, to ensure that these units observe Russian laws and human rights. Federal authorities also need to tame corruption among officials of law enforcement and other agencies in the region and elsewhere, in order to limit terrorist groups' capabilities and to prevent them from easily gaining access to both materials and targets.

As stated above, we believe Russia can fight terrorism without major sacrifices of individual and collective freedoms if its law enforcement and security agencies focus their powers and resources on identifying and preventing terrorist attacks and keeping agents of terror on the run. However, while relentlessly pursuing agents of terror, these agencies must not be indiscriminately cracking down on all groups and individuals suspected of radicalism.

To ensure discrimination and limit abuses, the powers and resources of these agencies should not be excessive and must be clearly defined.⁸⁴ Anti-terrorism and security legislation should set clear limitations on these powers, as well as on authorities' responses not only to attacks, but also to the threat of an attack. The laws and regulations should classify threats and specify responses to each type, including the possible duration of the response. The more detailed these regulations and limitations, to which authorities and specific agencies would have to adhere when fighting terrorism and other security threats, the better. Vaguely worded laws, manuals and standard operating procedures give plenty of opportunities for abuses by law-enforcers. In addition to clear-cut laws and regulations, robust official and civilian oversight would not only help to prevent abuses and the illegal repression of liberties, but would also impel law-enforcers to be earnest and focused in their work.

Furthermore, the criteria used to evaluate the performance of law enforcement agencies must be changed. Currently, these evaluations are largely based on crime-solving rates, encouraging officers to cover up crimes and abuse suspects to wrestle confessions from them. Rather, the performance of law enforcement agencies engaged in fighting terror should be evaluated on their ability to stop attackers rather than punish them.

Finally, these changes will not be comprehensive and will not enjoy popular support if they are made by top officials behind closed doors. These reforms do not stand a chance of being effective, fair and supported by the general public unless they are debated by the expert community and society at large before being codified into law.

⁸⁴Further recommendations can be found in Nabi Abdullaev and Simon Saradzhyan, "Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror," written for the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, American University.

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