



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics: Security and Human Rights Issues

Jim Nichol, Coordinator

Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs

Elaine Halchin

Specialist in American National Government

John W. Rollins

Specialist in Terrorism and National Security

Alex Tiersky

Analyst in Foreign Affairs

Steven Woehrel

Specialist in European Affairs

January 26, 2014

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

R43383

Summary

The President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced on July 4, 2007, that Sochi, Russia, had been selected as the host city for the Olympic Winter Games and Paralympics. The Olympic Games, which will be held February 7-23, 2014, are the first to be hosted by Russia as a successor state to the former Soviet Union. Reportedly, some 230 U.S. athletes out of approximately 2,900 from some 88 countries, and about 10,000 U.S. visitors, are expected in Sochi. Olympic events will take place at two main locations: a coastal cluster along the Black Sea and a mountain cluster in the Krasnaya Polyana mountains.

Since the 2007 selection of Sochi as the site of Olympic Games, many observers, including some in Congress, have raised concerns about security and human rights conditions in Sochi and elsewhere in Russia. Sochi is in Russia's North Caucasus area, which has experienced ongoing terrorist incidents, including several bombings in recent weeks. Through hearings, legislation, oversight, and other action, some Members of Congress have expressed concerns over Russia's hosting of the Sochi Olympic Games and Paralympics, particularly the risks that terrorism and human rights violations might pose to U.S. athletes and visitors. Other broader congressional concerns have included whether the United States should participate in the Games in the face of increasing tensions in U.S.-Russia relations and the Russian government's growing restrictions on the civil and human rights of its citizens. Some Members of Congress have called for boycotting the Games. Others have cautioned that U.S. citizens should carefully weigh the security risks of attending, and have urged greater U.S.-Russia counter-terrorism cooperation to ameliorate threats to the Games. In the period during and after the Games, Congress may continue to exercise oversight and otherwise raise concerns about the safety and human rights treatment of U.S. athletes and visitors and the impact of the Games and other developments in Russia on the future of U.S.-Russia relations.

On January 24, 2014, a senior Administration official stressed that the full resources of the U.S. government were being readied to support U.S. athletes, the official delegations, and other citizens attending the Games. Administration officials have argued that U.S.-Russia security cooperation is adequate for safely holding the Games, but have added that conditions are being monitored and U.S. athletes and the public will be notified if they change. They also have stated that there are contingencies for emergencies, including the possible evacuation of U.S. citizens if necessary. Some observers have raised concerns about whether security is adequate and have criticized Russia for not cooperating more with the United States on safeguarding the Games.

One non-sport-related factor that has added an additional dimension to the Olympics beyond security has been the issue of human rights. In 2013 the Russian legislature, at the urging of President Putin, adopted a series of anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) laws. In reaction, in late July 2013, the State Department called on Russia to protect freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression of U.S. citizens attending or participating in the Olympic Games, including LGBT persons and others traveling to Sochi. In late December 2013, the Obama Administration announced that the U.S. delegates to the Games would not include top-level officials, but would include several LGBT sports figures. The State Department's January 2014 travel alert reflects human rights concerns when it advises U.S. visitors that they should have "no expectation of privacy," and that all means of communication should be assumed to be monitored. The travel alert also cautions that the anti-LGBT propaganda law applies to foreigners, who may be fined, jailed, and/or deported.

Contents

Background.....	1
Providing Security During the Games	4
Terrorist Incidents in Past Olympics.....	4
Recent Terrorist Incidents Related to the Games.....	4
Russian Security Preparations for the Games.....	7
Russian Arrangements for International Security Cooperation.....	8
U.S. Government Security Support for the Sochi Games	9
Other International Assistance.....	12
Human Rights Issues	13
Implications for Russia.....	15
Implications for U.S. Interests	17
Concerns About Threats to U.S. Athletes and Visitors and About Bilateral Security Cooperation	17
Concerns About Human Rights.....	19
Other Concerns About U.S.-Russia Relations	20

Figures

Figure 1. Sochi Olympic Sports Clusters.....	2
Figure 2. The Sochi Area	7

Contacts

Author Contact Information.....	21
---------------------------------	----

This report will focus on security and human rights issues. Other issues, such as environmental concerns or those associated with the preparations of the U.S. athletes, are not addressed.

Background

In July, 2007 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that Sochi, Russia had been selected as the host city for the XXII Olympic Winter Games.¹ The Games, which will be held February 7-23, 2014, are the first to be hosted by Russia as a successor state to the former Soviet Union.² It is expected that approximately 2,900 athletes from some 88 countries will participate in 15 Olympic Games disciplines at two main locations: a coastal cluster along the Black Sea and a mountain cluster in the Krasnaya Polyana mountains.³ (See **Figure 1**.) Previously, Moscow had hosted Olympic Summer Games in 1980. Moscow had been a candidate city for the 1976 and 2012 Summer Olympics, but was not selected for either of those games.⁴

Security is one of the evaluation factors in the selection of a city to host either the winter or summer Olympic Games. Stage I of the selection process concludes with the IOC's acceptance of three cities as candidate cities. The three candidate cities for 2014—Pyeongchang, South Korea; Salzburg, Austria; and Sochi, Russia—were required to complete the IOC's candidature questionnaire and obtain the required guarantees. Theme 12 of the questionnaire involved security and included 15 sets of questions; a table for describing the experience of a candidate city (and its region and nation) in organizing security for major international events; and two security guarantees. Under the latter guarantees, "the highest government authority," as well as relevant local officials, pledge "the safety and the peaceful celebration of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games."⁵

¹ The following cities submitted applications to host the 2014 games: Almaty, Kazakhstan; Borjomi, Georgia; Jaca, Spain; Pyeongchang, South Korea; Salzburg, Austria; and Sofia, Bulgaria. Subsequently, the IOC Executive Board accepted three of them as candidate cities: Pyeongchang, Salzburg, and Sochi. International Olympic Committee, "2014 Host City Election, Sochi Elected Host City of the 2014 Winter Games!" at <http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/bidding-for-the-games/past-bid-processes/2014-host-city-election/>.

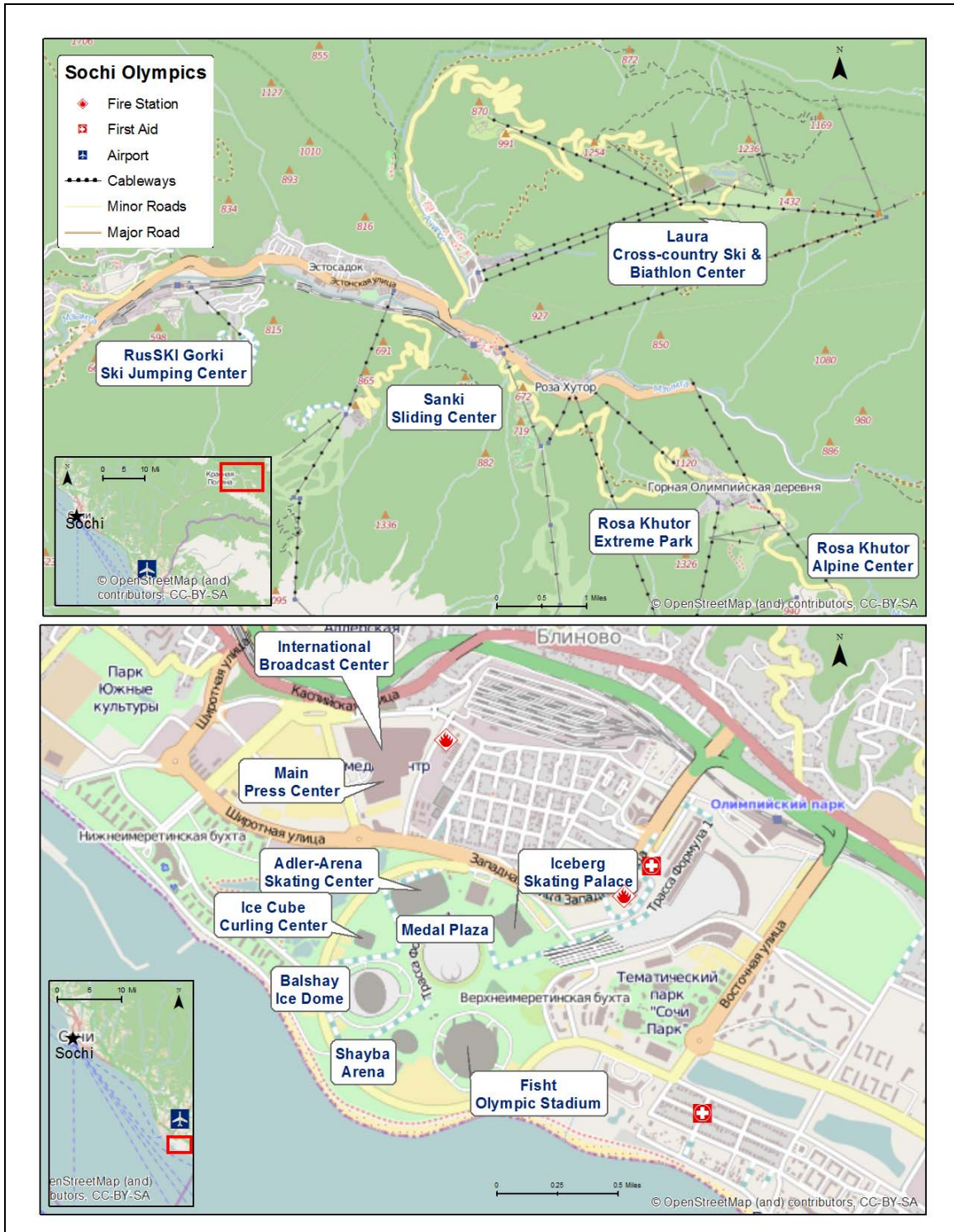
² In addition to the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Winter Games will be held in Sochi on March 7-16, 2014. Approximately 1,650 Paralympians from 45 countries are expected to compete in the Paralympics. "Sochi 2014: Winter Olympics by the Numbers," *CNN*, January 10, 2014.

³ International Olympic Committee, *About Sochi 2014*, at <http://www.olympic.org/sochi-2014-winter-olympics>; Tim Newcomb, "All-new Sochi Olympics Venues a Spectacle of Lights, Ice," *SI.com*, January 9, 2014; Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee, *Press Center*, at <http://www.sochi2014.com/en/press-center-about>.

⁴ The host cities in 1976 and 2012 were Montreal and London, respectively. International Olympic Committee, *Factsheet, Host City Election Facts and Figures, Update, June 2007*, at http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents_Factsheets/Host_city_election.pdf.

⁵ Other evaluation factors, which the IOC refers to as "themes," are: Olympic Games concept and legacy, political and economic climate and structure, legal aspects, customs and immigration formalities, environment and meteorology, finance, marketing, sport and venues, Paralympic Games, Olympic Village(s), medical services and doping control, accommodation, transport, technology, media operations, and Olympism and culture. International Olympic Committee, *2014 Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire, XXII Olympic Winter Games in 2014*, June 2006, pp. 69-223, at http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_1078.pdf.

Figure I. Sochi Olympic Sports Clusters



Source: Map produced by CRS using data from ESRI, Sochi2014.com, and GADM.

The IOC Evaluation Commission, which is appointed by the President of the IOC, reviewed the candidate cities' completed questionnaires and related materials and issued a report to the IOC. The *IOC 2014 Evaluation Commission Report* described each candidate city's plans for hosting the 2014 games. Regarding Sochi's bid and the subject of security, the commission noted that the "Government of the Russian Federation ... guaranteed that it would bear the full responsibility and cost of security for the preparation and staging of the Olympic and Paralympic Games."⁶ The IOC Evaluation Commission also commented that the Russian police force has "excellent experience in hosting major international and sports events," including in Sochi. The IOC called for Russia to set up an Olympic Security Steering Committee at ministerial level to provide strategic policy and guidance and an Olympic Security Task Force, supported by a "dedicated multi-agency Olympic Security Coordination Center," to be established for security planning and delivery.

Another aspect of the IOC's *2014 Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire* involves the recommitment of the prospective hosts to the organization's Code of Ethics. The code's preamble states, in part, that the Olympic parties shall uphold the Olympic Charter and in particular its fundamental principles.⁷ The Olympic Charter contains seven fundamental principles of the Olympics. Two principles address discrimination. Principle 4 notes that "[t]he practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play." Principle 6 reads as follows: "Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender, or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement."⁸

In his personal appeal in early July 2007 for the IOC to permit Russia to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, President Putin pledged that Russia would ensure that athletes and visitors have as safe and pleasant a stay as possible. As preparations for the Games were being finalized, President Putin emphasized on January 17, 2014, that the Games would display Russia's "new face and its possibilities," demonstrate that the country can successfully hold such an event, show that it has improved its economic and military power and prowess in sports, and boost its development and international relations. He argued that the major reasons for hosting the Olympics in Sochi included developing the southern area as a resort for foreign visitors and vacationing Russians (so they would not need to travel abroad); building training facilities for Russian athletes to replace those lost after the breakup of the Soviet Union; and encouraging sports and health among Russians.⁹

⁶ International Olympic Committee, *IOC 2014 Evaluation Commission Report*, 2007, p. 23, at http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_1187.pdf.

⁷ International Olympic Committee, *2014 Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire, XXII Olympic Winter Games in 2014*, p. 43.

⁸ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter*, September 2013, p. 12, at http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf.

⁹ "Full Version of Putin Speech (2014 Winter Olympics)," *Russia Times* (RT), July 5, 2007, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aNo3DxWaW4; The Kremlin, President of Russia, *Interview to Russian and Foreign Media*, January 19, 2014.

Providing Security During the Games

Terrorist Incidents in Past Olympics

The threat of terrorism has been an increasing concern at Olympic Games. Three Olympic Games have been the target of terrorist actions, the most deadly of which occurred in 1972, at the Summer Games in Munich, when members of the Palestinian group Black September killed two members of the Israeli Olympic team and took nine others hostage. The remaining hostages were subsequently killed during a clash between the terrorists and law enforcement authorities. In 1992, a Basque separatist group threatened an attack on the Barcelona Summer Games, but it never materialized. The Centennial Olympic Park, a venue at the 1996 Atlanta Games, was the site of a bombing that killed one person and injured 100.¹⁰

Recent Terrorist Incidents Related to the Games

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of Russia, ethnic conflict has been most intensive in the North Caucasus area, the site of the Sochi Olympics. Most of this violence has taken place during two active conflicts in Chechnya in 1994-1996 and 1999-2003, although since then low-level insurgency has continued throughout the North Caucasus and occasionally elsewhere in Russia. Krasnoyarsk Krai, where Sochi is located, was not a battleground during the Chechnya conflicts, but has suffered from some terrorist attacks. According to the U.S. government's Open Source Center, there were 5,472 terrorist incidents in Russia over the past five years, averaging about 2-3 per day, with a decline from 1,381 in 2009 to 741 in 2013. Over this period, 1,672 security personnel and civilians were killed, along with 1,921 suspected terrorists. The bulk of these incidents and deaths were in the North Caucasus, and Russia's Dagestan republic has become a locus of incidents and deaths, as well as a source of attacks in other areas of Russia (see below).¹¹

Sochi was historically the capital of an area populated by the Circassians (encompassing the Adyghes, Kabardians, Shapsugs, and Cherkess), peoples of the North Caucasus who speak dialects of the Circassian language. Most Circassians are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. In the mid-19th century, Russia conquered the area and drove out most of the Circassians, killing hundreds of thousands, according to some accounts. According to the 2010 Russia census, there are about 718,000 Circassians, most residing in the North Caucasian Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkess republics and the Adyghe republic, an enclave in southern Krasnodar Krai, near Sochi.¹²

The January 10, 2014, U.S. travel alert (updated on January 24) warns that past terrorist incidents have been broad in range and scope over the past fifteen years, taking place at Russian government buildings, airports, hotels, tourist sites, markets, entertainment venues, schools, and residential complexes. There also have been large-scale attacks on public transportation including subways, buses, trains, and scheduled commercial flights. Although the focus here is on possible

¹⁰ Excerpt from CRS Report RL32497, *Athens Olympics 2004: U.S. Government Involvement in Security Preparations*, by Elaine Halchin.

¹¹ To compare in terms of casualties, 1,826 U.S. troops were killed in Afghanistan during the same period.

¹² *Russia: New Harassment of Olympic Critics*, HRW, December 19, 2013; *CEDR*, May 20, 2013, Doc. No. CEL-71890426; *OSC Analysis*; January 14, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-61023164; Russia: John Colarusso, *The Circassians and the Sochi Olympics*, at <http://www.johncolarusso.net>.

terrorist threats to U.S. athletes and visitors, the U.S. travel alert points out that besides terrorist threats, organized crime, protests, and other civil disorders may pose threats.

Russian officials have stated for several years that there are about 500-1,000 terrorists in the North Caucasus area. Many of these are gathered together in several dozen small groups, most of which are linked to some degree to Chechen terrorist Doku Umarov, the head of the self-proclaimed Caucasus Emirate. Concerns about terrorism related to the Olympic Games were heightened in July 2013, when Umarov called for renewed attacks against civilian targets throughout Russia (he ostensibly had called off attacks in February 2012 just before the presidential election in Russia) and for jihad against the Sochi Olympics. In December 2013, another shadowy group threatened cyber warfare against the Olympic Games for defiling the Circassian homeland.¹³ It is uncertain to what extent recent terrorist incidents in the North Caucasus are related to Circassian interests; several prominent Circassian organizations have publicly foresworn violence.

Among recent terrorist incidents,

- On May 10, 2012, Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee—NAK; an interagency coordinating and advisory body—announced that Russian and Abkhazian security agents had uncovered a plot by Umarov to launch a large-scale attack at the planned 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Several large stashes of grenade launchers, surface to air missiles, mines, and other weaponry were discovered in Abkhazia (a breakaway region of Georgia bordering the North Caucasus, and recognized as independent by Russia).¹⁴
- On October 21, 2013, a female suicide bomber blew up a bus in Volgograd, Russia, in the Southern Federal District which includes Sochi, resulting in seven deaths and over three dozen injuries. Volgograd is about 430 miles northeast of Sochi and is a transportation hub between Moscow and southern Russia, leading to added speculation that the attacks were aimed against the Sochi Olympics. Russian media linked the bomber to the Dagestan jamaat (organization or front), linked to the Caucasus Emirate. This was the first operation by the jamaat since a bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport in January 2011. In mid-November 2013, Russian officials reported that police in Dagestan had killed the bomber's husband and others reputedly involved in the bombing. (See **Figure 2**.)
- On December 27, 2013, three people were killed when a car bomb exploded outside a police building in Pyatigorsk, Stavropol Kray, the administrative center of the North Caucasus Federal District. Six of the presumed terrorists were arrested in Kabardino-Balkariya. (See **Figure 2**.)
- On December 29-30, 2013, two suicide bombings occurred in Volgograd, the first at a rail station and the second on a trolley car. Together they resulted in nearly three dozen deaths and over 100 injuries. On January 18, 2014, a video was released that allegedly showed the two suicide bombers as they planned their attacks. They claimed membership in Ansar al-Sunna, a unit of the Dagestan jamaat. They warned that more attacks would be carried out until Russia permits the North Caucasus region to secede, including a bloody "present" for participants and visitors to the Olympic Games. (See **Figure 2**.)

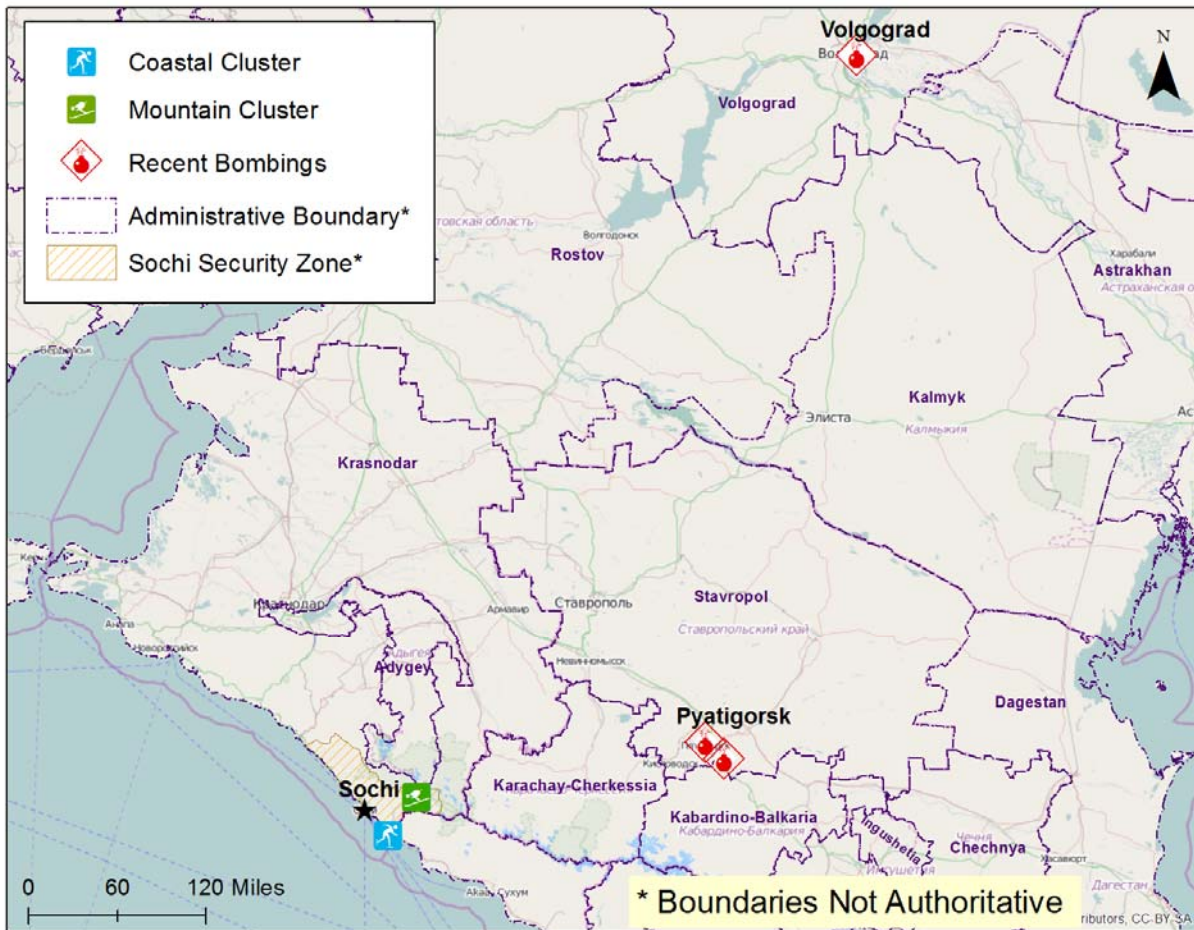
¹³ *RFE/RL*, December 29, 2013.

¹⁴ *CEDR*, May 10, 2012, Doc. No. CEP-6019, and Doc. No. CEP-950199.

- On January 8, 2014, four cars with the bodies of six men were discovered near villages in southern Stavropol Kray, just southeast of Pyatigorsk. Improvised explosive devices had been placed near the cars, apparently to target police and rescue workers, but only one harmlessly detonated. (See **Figure 2**.)
- On January 12, 2014, a website associated with the Caucasus Emirate published a Fatwa justifying the Volgograd attacks. Citing Osama bin Laden, the Fatwa argued that such attacks were “essential” since they “enraged the infidels,” who were responsible for Muslim deaths in the North Caucasus and Syria (through Russia’s support for the Syrian government).¹⁵
- On January 15, 2014, three Russian security officers and four alleged terrorists were killed, and five officers wounded, in a shootout in Dagestan. Russia’s National Anti-Terrorism Committee stated that one of the alleged terrorists was responsible for the car bomb attack in Pyatigorsk (see above).
- On January 21, 2014, Russian police warned that a female terrorist bomber—termed a “black widow” in media, from a popular conception that such a suicide bomber was taking revenge for the killing of her husband—had infiltrated Sochi. In another incident, the USOC and Olympic committees in other countries reported receiving letters threatening their athletes if they attended the Games; the letter was later deemed a hoax.

¹⁵ *CEDR*, January 14, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-53389107.

Figure 2. The Sochi Area



Source: Map produced by CRS using data from ESRI, Sochi2014.com, and GADM.org.

Several analysts have suggested various scenarios for possible terrorist incidents before and during the Games, involving either attacks at Olympic venues or attacks elsewhere in Russia, possibly consisting of hostage-taking, suicide and other bombings, or armed violence. Some analysts have warned that Russian embassies and other interests abroad could be targets, or even countries sending athletes to the Games.¹⁶ There are some reports that Russian authorities have ordered a media ban on reports of terrorist incidents during the Games.

Russian Security Preparations for the Games

Ensuring the security of the Games has been a paramount consideration since Sochi was chosen in 2007, and such concerns have influenced the layout and design of facilities built for the Games. Under a December 2007 law and an August 2013 presidential decree, a broad “controlled”

¹⁶ North Caucasus insurgents have carried out at least two attacks targeting sports events. In 2004, Chechnya’s then—President Akhmad Kadyrov (the father of current Chechnya President Ramzan Kadyrov) and five others were killed when a bomb hidden during construction work exploded at a stadium. In 2010, a bomb went off at a Kabardino-Balkaria race track, injuring 30 and killing one.

security zone around the Olympics site was established. Extra inspections and restrictions on individuals and transport vehicles entering and leaving this zone, including air traffic, are authorized beginning in early January 2014. The inspection of mail also is mandated. Along with the Olympics facilities, enhanced security measures are put in place at bridges, railway tunnels, power facilities and grids, schools, hospitals, hotels, restaurants and stores. In addition, sales of firearms and dual use chemicals and other items are banned. Vehicles without special registration are not permitted to enter the zone, and local car owners generally are asked not to drive and to take their cars to parking lots 50 miles from Sochi. Even tighter security pertains for screening Olympic visitors and support personnel at Olympic venues.

An additional “prohibited zone” bans most access to the area inside Russia’s border with Georgia’s breakaway Abkhazia, to airspace and waters near the Olympics site, and to a national park. The zones stretch approximately 60 miles along the Black Sea coast and up to 24 miles inland. (See **Figure 2**.)

The inter-agency “Operational Headquarters” providing security includes the Federal Security Service (FSB) as the lead agency, the Interior (police) Ministry, the Emergencies Ministry, the Defense Ministry and other bodies. Military personnel in the zone are in combat readiness. According to reports, among the tens of thousands of forces providing security (variously stated by Russian officials to number up to 100,000) are 22,000 military troops using 2,000 vehicles and 72 aircraft, 40,000 police, 8,900 Emergency Ministry personnel with 1,600 vehicles, and an unreported number of FSB personnel. To assist police in providing security, several hundred Cossacks (traditional militia forces) are deployed. According to some estimates, the number of Russian security personnel deployed at the Games is much greater than that provided for the London Summer Olympics.¹⁷

The Operational Headquarters has organized myriad exercises to test security. One exercise in November 2013 included 7,000 military, Interior Ministry, and FSB troops and involved thwarting a hypothetical large-scale hostage incident at a hospital.

Among other security measures, special troops are patrolling the mountain areas, speed boats are safeguarding coastal areas, sonar is protecting against underwater threats, and space satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles, and dirigibles are monitoring from the air. Air defense missile batteries also have been deployed. All electronic transmissions reportedly are subject to possible interception, and several thousand cameras are monitoring Olympics sites. The Black Sea Fleet’s small missile ship Ivanovets and missile boat Shtil have been redeployed to the coastal area.

According to some reports, the heavy attention to security in the zone around Sochi has contributed to reduced counter-terrorism efforts elsewhere, which Putin aimed to address with his order at the end of 2013, after new bombings in Volgograd, Russia, that security be boosted throughout Russia.

Russian Arrangements for International Security Cooperation

In November 2013, Russian General Oleg Syromolotov, head of the Operational Headquarters and the Deputy Director of the counter-intelligence branch of the FSB, reported that representatives of the intelligence services of dozens of countries would attend the Games as part of their national delegations. He indicated that the Operational Headquarters had facilitated cooperation with these intelligence organizations since 2011 with the creation of an expert group

¹⁷ AP, November 15, 2013. There were about 32,000 police and military personnel deployed during the London Olympic Games, and several thousand private security guards. *NBC News*, July 25, 2012.

that had met several times in Sochi, and that cooperation had included exercises at sports facilities in Sochi.¹⁸ President Putin reported in early September 2013 that Russia had agreements with the United States and several European countries on cooperation on Olympic security. On January 17, 2014, he stressed that security personnel from several countries were represented at the Operational Headquarters and thanked “all our partners from ... the United States, Europe, and Asia who actively cooperate with their Russian law enforcement and special services’ counterparts.”¹⁹

U.S. Government Security Support for the Sochi Games

The Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Bureau (DS) is formally the head of U.S. government security support for the Games (as it has been for prior Olympics and other major international events such as the World Cup, and other events attended by Heads of State).²⁰ The State Department’s responsibility for the protection of Team USA during major international events was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Olympic Committee in November 2010.²¹

Washington-based interagency coordination for the Sochi Games has been channeled through the International Security Events Group (ISEG), the standing Washington-based coordination mechanism for major international events such as the Olympic Games. It consists of some 20 federal law enforcement and security agencies and offices “responsible for the interagency security and law enforcement community’s long range security planning, coordination, and implementation for major events overseas.”²² Under the leadership of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security’s Major Events Coordination Unit, the ISEG’s purview includes coordination and U.S. government liaison, as well as supporting host nation efforts in counterterrorism, security, crisis management planning and intelligence sharing.

Agencies participating in ISEG include the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, Energy, Justice (including the FBI), and intelligence community representatives (including the National Counter-terrorism Center and the Central Intelligence Agency), among others.²³ Besides the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security, other State Department units also contribute.²⁴ For example, State’s Counterterrorism Bureau chairs two Subcommittees of the ISEG, including one which assesses events with an eye to ensuring adequate preparations are made for potential crisis response by the U.S. government, in particular the potential deployment of the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST).²⁵

¹⁸ “Increased security for Sochi Olympics to start in January - Russian official,” *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, November 8, 2013; *Interfax*, September 20, 2013.

¹⁹ The Kremlin, President of Russia, *Interview to Russian and Foreign Media*, January 19, 2014.

²⁰ Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification, Vol. 1, Department of State Operations, April 25, 2013, p. 367.

²¹ Department of State, *Vigilant in an Uncertain World*, Diplomatic Security 2010 Year in Review, March 2011, p. 17.

²² Department of State information provided to CRS, January 16, 2014.

²³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Olympic Security: Better Planning can Enhance U.S. Support to Future Olympic Games*, GAO-06-753, June 2006, p. 12.

²⁴ Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, “Programs and Initiatives,” <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/index.htm#ISEG>.

²⁵ According to the State Department, “‘Contingency’ FESTs were deployed to ensure safety at the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece (Summer 2004) and Turin, Italy (Winter 2006).” See <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/about/c16664.htm>.

While the ISEG is chaired by State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the White House announced on January 23 that Lisa Monaco, the President's Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor and Deputy National Security Advisor, was leading "a White House and interagency coordination body to ensure that the full resources of the U.S. government are aligned in support of our athletes, delegations, and Americans attending the Olympics."²⁶ It is not clear if the announcement was referring to ISEG specifically, or an additional coordination mechanism.

Among the most visible steps taken by the Department of State in advance of the Games was the January 10, 2014 Travel Alert it issued to the public (updated on January 24). The alert recommended that, while "there is no indication of a specific threat to U.S. institutions or citizens," travelers should be aware of their surroundings and exercise prudence.²⁷ Department officials pledged to immediately communicate information regarding any "specific and credible threat" to the public through Embassy Moscow's website and the Department's travel website.

While the State Department and other ISEG member agencies have been engaged in planning for the Sochi games since their first visit there three years ago, Department of State officials emphasize that Russian authorities will maintain responsibility for overall security for the Games and for meeting International Olympic Committee security standards, and that U.S. Diplomatic Security agents will be in Russia in order to liaise with Russian security and law enforcement.²⁸

U.S. plans for Sochi, developed through coordination with Embassy Moscow and Russian officials, include a security concept of operations spanning more than 20 U.S. government agencies. As part of that effort, the DS Bureau designated an Olympic Security Coordinator, who oversees the U.S. government security footprint and has been in Sochi since August 2013; and an Olympic Coordination Officer, whose role is to coordinate with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the official U.S. delegations.

The State Department has also established an inter-agency Sochi Olympic Coordination Office, which is responsible for coordinating all U.S. Government operations in support of the Games. The Office seeks to ensure the provision of appropriate assistance and protection to "U.S. athletes, businesses, facilities, citizens, and other U.S. Government interests."²⁹ The office also serves as the primary Sochi-based conduit for information or assistance requests between Russian authorities and the U.S. Government.

At least one Diplomatic Security agent will be present at each Olympic venue and all three Olympic villages, and will act in a liaison role between Team USA and Russian security authorities, as agreed with Russian authorities. The DS agents serve in a liaison role with other American citizens in Sochi as well.³⁰ U.S. personnel will man a Joint Operations Center, which will serve as an information hub, and use the standing Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) to provide information to American businesses and subscribers.³¹

In order to serve the needs of the approximately 10,000 U.S. citizens who are expected to attend the games, the Olympic Coordination Office will also include members of the U.S. Embassy's American Citizens Services (ACS) unit during the Olympic and Paralympic Games to provide a

²⁶ The White House, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney*, January 23, 2014.

²⁷ Department of State, *Russian Federation Travel Alert*, January 10, 2014 and January 24, 2014.

²⁸ Department of State information provided to CRS, January 16, 2014

²⁹ Department of State information provided to CRS, January 9, 2014.

³⁰ Department of State information provided to CRS, January 16, 2014.

³¹ Department of State, *Background Briefing on Security at the Sochi Olympics*, Press Release, January 24, 2014.

range of services (such as assistance to citizens incarcerated abroad, or with lost or stolen passports) to U.S. citizens in need.³²

It appears these efforts are in line with steps taken by the Diplomatic Security Bureau to secure past Olympic games.³³ At the London Summer games in 2012, State reported that DS deployed three Olympic security coordinators and more than 75 DS agents and established a multi-agency Joint Operations Center (JOC) as well as a Threat Integration Center. It also provided six members of its Office of Intelligence and Threat Analysis to assess and disseminate threat information.³⁴ For the Vancouver Winter games in 2010, State reported that the Bureau oversaw a 150-member interagency team providing security and established and staffed a Joint Operations Center as well as an Olympic Coordination Center. DS special agents were also present at competition venues and athletic villages.³⁵

Among other agencies reportedly participating in ISEG efforts to ensure the safety of the U.S. Olympic team, the Director of the FBI stated that his agency “would deploy ‘at least a couple dozen people in Moscow and maybe a smaller number but still a dozen or more people of different specialties’ in Sochi.”³⁶ *USA Today* reported that the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security held a briefing in early January 2014 for the national governing bodies (NGBs; covering skiing and snowboarding, figure skating, biathlon, bobsled and skeleton racing, curling, hockey, luge, and speedskating).³⁷

General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, on January 21, 2014 in Brussels, to discuss military-to-military cooperation. The Defense Department reported that General Gerasimov stated that the armed forces were supporting the Olympics by providing air and maritime defense, chemical and biological warfare defense, backup medical support, and management and protection of the electronic spectrum. The Defense Department also reported that Gerasimov had expressed interest in U.S. technology for countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and that the United States would share technical information, hopefully in time for the Games.³⁸

On January 23, 2014, Defense Department Press Secretary John Kirby reported that General Philip Breedlove, Commander of European Command, would be in charge of military contingency operations in case U.S. military assets were requested by the State Department and approved by Russia during the Sochi Olympics. He also verified that the U.S. Navy was moving two ships to the Black Sea as a contingency.³⁹ Reportedly, some U.S. aircraft in Germany also are being made available for possible evacuations.

³² Information on American Citizens Services provided by the Department of State is available at http://travel901d.his.com/law/citizenship/citizenship_775.html.

³³ Information on the U.S. preparations for the Athens Olympics of 2004 is available in CRS Report RL32497, *Athens Olympics 2004: U.S. Government Involvement in Security Preparations*, by Elaine Halchin.

³⁴ Department of State, *Diplomatic Security 2012 Year in Review*, June 2013, p. 23.

³⁵ Department of State, *Vigilant in an Uncertain World*, Diplomatic Security 2010 Year in Review, March 2011, p. 17.

³⁶ “U.S. Issues Travel Alert for Sochi,” *AP*, January 10, 2014.

³⁷ “U.S. Figure Skating Officials Discuss Security in Sochi,” *USA Today*, January 9, 2014.

³⁸ Jim Garamone, “U.S., Russian Leaders Discuss Afghanistan, Sochi, History,” *News, American Forces Press Service*, January 21, 2014. According to Administration officials, efforts to share IED information have been underway for some time. Perhaps differing from the Defense Department account, an Administration official stated that Russia had made no formal request for specific assistance on IEDs in relation to the Olympics. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, *Special Briefing: Senior Administration Officials Teleconference*, January 24, 2014.

³⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Press Briefing with Rear Admiral Kirby from the Pentagon*, January 23, 2014.

Some private companies may be involved in providing security at Sochi. For example, the company Global Rescue will provide support to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) at the 2014 games, as it did previously for the USSA at Turin, Italy (2006 Winter Games) and Vancouver, Canada (2010 Winter Games).⁴⁰ According to news reports, another NGB,⁴¹ U.S. Figure Skating (USFS), indicated it has not arranged for a private firm to provide security for its team.⁴² It is not known whether the remaining six NGBs (U.S. Biathlon, USA Bobsled and Skeleton, USA Curling, USA Hockey, US Luge, and US Speedskating) have entered into agreements with private companies. However, the Deputy Commissioner of the National Hockey League, which is the source of most, if not all, of the hockey players on the men's U.S. ice hockey team, reportedly said that "more than a handful" of league security officials would go to Sochi,⁴³ and added that this approach is no different from what the NHL has done for other Olympic Games.⁴³

Other International Assistance

Many nations and other entities will provide support to the Sochi Olympics to safeguard the athletes and attendees. While Russia has the lead for security of the Games, and the United States is providing significant support (see above), other nations and organizations are also providing resources and expertise.⁴⁴ Representative examples of security-related support to the Sochi Olympic Games include the following (information gleaned from open-source reporting):

- Great Britain has provided ongoing support to the Russians⁴⁵ in the form of engineering and technical expertise with the desire to "ensure security at the Olympic Games."⁴⁶
- Ukraine has reportedly sent 400 Cossack security professionals to Sochi and "will take part in maintaining security all the way to the end of the Paralympic Games."⁴⁷
- INTERPOL, the international organization that facilitates police cooperation, is reportedly receiving airline passenger information from the Russian authorities and querying its databases for individuals that pose a threat to the Olympic Games.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Global Rescue, *Global Rescue to Support U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association at 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games*, news release, November 25, 2013, at <https://www.globalrescue.com/about.cfm?view=news&article=116>. Global Rescue offers "medical assistance, evacuation, and security services for travelers, expatriates, and corporations." Global Rescue, *Global Rescue Anytime Anywhere*, at <https://www.globalrescue.com/>.

⁴¹ A national governing body is an amateur sports organization which has authority, among other things, to "serve as the coordinating body for amateur athletic activity in the United States" and "recommend to the corporation [U.S. Olympic Committee] individuals and teams to represent the United States in the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, and the Pan-American Games." 36 U.S.C. § 220523(a)(3) and (6).

⁴² "U.S. Figure Skating Officials Discuss Security in Sochi," *USA Today*, January 9, 2014.

⁴³ Jeff Z. Klein and Stu Hackel, "Spate of Injuries in N.H.L. Keeps Olympic Rosters in Flux Worldwide," *New York Times*, January 4, 2014; "Safety Concerns High As Games Draw Nigh," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 26, 2014.

⁴⁴ The services and resources provided by other nations may take many forms to include the providing of intelligence and investigative support, best practices for securing facilities, and the utilization of current and emerging technologies.

⁴⁵ "Russia's FSB, Britain's MI6 Resume Cooperation Ahead of Sochi Olympics," *The Voice of Russia*, November 9, 2013.

⁴⁶ "Britain to Provide Security Support for Sochi Olympics," *Rianovosti*, October 5, 2013.

⁴⁷ "Sochi Drafts Cossacks for Olympic Security," *Rianovosti*, January 9, 2014.

⁴⁸ "The Sochi Olympics: Inside Russia's Extensive Security," *Vocativ*, December 12, 2013.

- Israeli and Austrian consulting companies have been identified as providing “security at the Winter Olympics in Russia under contracts totaling 1 billion Euro.”⁴⁹
- At a State Department background briefing on January 24, 2014, an Administration official stated that the “Five Eyes” intelligence agencies (of the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) were closely coordinating their efforts related to the Sochi Olympics.⁵⁰

Human Rights Issues

Since the 2007 selection of Sochi as the site of Olympic Games, many observers have raised concerns about the protection of human rights of athletes and visitors to the Games, the residents of Sochi and its environs, workers involved in the construction process, and other groups. Concerns also have been raised about alleged restrictions on media reports about problems in Sochi. Authorities in Russia have maintained that the rights of Sochi’s residents and construction workers have been respected in the main, and that the government has moved to investigate and prosecute abuses.⁵¹

Possible restrictions at the Olympic Games that may violate the human rights of visitors or even athletes include intrusive electronic surveillance such as the monitoring of cell phone calls and Internet transactions; extensive video surveillance of movement into and out of Olympic sites; the gathering of personal data in order to obtain tickets to events; and restrictions on transportation into and out of the Sochi area. President Putin and other Russian officials have stressed that such restrictions will be at the minimal level that will guarantee reasonable security for the Games. In October 2013, one official of the Federal Security Service (FSB; a successor to the Soviet KGB) rejected suggestions that limiting transportation access amounted to a human rights violation, asserting that Sochi “will in no way resemble a concentration camp.”⁵² On January 17, 2014, Putin pledged that security measures would not be so intrusive or conspicuous that they would foster anxiety among participants in the Games.⁵³

At the end of June 2013, Putin signed a law amending a law on the protection of children from harmful information by adding fines for individuals and organizations that propagandize “non-traditional sexual relations,” which Russian policymakers said referred to homosexuality. The law prohibits propaganda presenting the “attractiveness of non-traditional sexual relations, a distorted picture of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations, or [information] causing interest in such relationships....” The law also calls for arresting and deporting foreigners who engage in such propaganda, raising concerns among some LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) individuals and organizations that they may be targeted if they travel to Sochi.

⁴⁹ “Sochi Olympics pose security challenge,” *Intelligence Online - Global Strategic Intelligence*, December 18, 2013.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, *Special Briefing: Senior Administration Officials Teleconference*, January 24, 2014.

⁵¹ *Letter to the International Olympic Committee: Update on Human Rights Concerns Related to Sochi Games*, HRW, May 5, 2013. For a discussion of oppositionist Boris Nemtsov’s criticism of human rights problems in Sochi, see Open Source Center, *OSC Analysis*, June 19, 2013; Open Source Center, *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), March 8, 2013, Doc. No. CER-37632047.

⁵² *Interfax*, October 2, 2013.

⁵³ The Kremlin, President of Russia, *Interview to Russian and Foreign Media*, January 19, 2014.

Responding to international concerns over the law, including the possible impact on the Olympics, in early September 2013 President Putin asserted that “Russia will strictly stick to the Olympic principles which forbid any kind of discrimination [against] people on any basis.” He claimed that the law only was aimed to block propaganda that might encourage minors to make choices that would result in fewer births in Russia.⁵⁴ On January 17, 2014, Putin favorably compared the law to those in other countries that he claimed criminalized homosexuality and even imposed death sentences. He argued that in 1980 the Soviet Union was one of these countries, but Olympic Games nonetheless were held there. He claimed that four U.S. states have such laws, and that many U.S. citizens support criminalization, but that he would not argue against holding international sports events in those states. He claimed that criticism of the law was part of Western efforts to restrain Russia’s development and violated the Olympic spirit of building new bridges of interstate relations. He termed such criticism support for pedophilia and appeared to suggest that the law would be applied to those attending the Sochi Games.⁵⁵

Other human rights problems have included those faced by residents of the Sochi area, in particular the confiscation of property without due process and adequate compensation, the harassment of activists protesting against the construction process and results, and other restrictions on assembly, speech, and movement before and during the Games. Various decrees and laws have limited local rights, including a 2006 federal program for the development of Sochi, a 2007 law granting the president wide control over public safety in Sochi, and provisions in 2007 establishing a state corporation to carry out much of the construction.⁵⁶ Some residents of the Sochi area reported that they received inadequate compensation when their homes were demolished. In some alleged cases, individuals who openly protested and refused to relinquish their properties suffered when the properties were forcibly seized and no compensation was given. Local authorities allegedly have attempted to prevent journalists from reporting such cases.⁵⁷ In the latter part of 2013, media reported that security services were making efforts to investigate and expel non-residents and other persons deemed undesirable from the Sochi area. In January 2014, civic activists and a defense lawyer in Sochi reported that they were put on a list of individuals “inclined to extremist activity” and were required to fill out police forms.

President Putin issued a decree in August 2013 that banned protests and demonstrations in the Sochi area for the duration of the Games and Paralympics. On January 4, 2014, Putin eased the ban by permitting protests and demonstrations not related to the Olympics to be held in a small village about seven miles from the nearest site of the Olympic Games. However, it was required that such actions had to be approved by Sochi city officials and regional offices of the FSB and Interior Ministry. Critics voiced doubts that approvals would be forthcoming.

Among other human rights abuses associated with building in Sochi, several observers have alleged that the working and living conditions for many of the tens of thousands of workers employed at Olympic construction sites have not met humane standards. Hundreds of complaints have been reported by labor migrants from Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan to the Sochi office of Russia’s Memorial human rights organization, including

⁵⁴ *Interfax*, September 4, 2013.

⁵⁵ The Kremlin, President of Russia, *Interview to Russian and Foreign Media*, January 19, 2014; *CNN*, January 17, 2014.

⁵⁶ Open Source Center, *OSC Analysis*, May 1, 2013.

⁵⁷ Alex Malashenko, *Controversy and Concern over the Sochi Olympics*, Carnegie Endowment, April 2013.

nonpayment or underpayment of wages, failure to provide or abide by labor contracts, and retaliation for complaining.⁵⁸

Implications for Russia

Many observers argue that President Putin seeks to demonstrate at the Sochi Olympic Games that Russia is a modern, developed country and that it has control over the restive North Caucasus. They also maintain that Putin's preeminent leadership role in bringing the Games to Sochi makes them a referendum on his rule. A successful Olympics would further bolster Putin's authority in Russia, while a less-successful performance might give impetus to challenges to his rule from his political opposition and counter-elite groups, according to these observers. Some of these observers also suggest that successful Games might encourage Putin to widen civil and human rights while unsuccessful Games might result in a further crackdown.⁵⁹ A few observers argue that regardless of the outcome of the Games, the heightened security and attendant human rights restrictions being honed in Sochi and elsewhere during the Games constitute a "testbed" for perpetuating restrictions on civil and human rights. They also assert that the Sochi Olympics represents the return of Soviet-type "mega-projects" that distort the economy and retard free enterprise.⁶⁰

The risks confronting President Putin in holding a successful Olympics include underperforming Russian athletes, technological or logistic failures of the facilities, warm weather, and terrorism that potentially endangers athletes or visitors. Athletes and visitors also might object to heavy security and other burdens that they view as oppressive and punitive. Perhaps to dampen domestic expectations for the Games, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev stated in late December 2013, that "I am not sure that everything will be ideal and smooth [at the Games]. But I do not think that we will have the worst scenario either."⁶¹ There are reports that many Russian citizens are either being discouraged or are reluctant to attend Olympic activities, so Russian officials and security forces may constitute the dominant host presence in Sochi.

President Putin's goals for holding the Games in Sochi include bolstering economic development in the North Caucasus, in order to reduce social unrest and inducements to terrorism. In the near-term, however, it appears that bringing the Games to Sochi has been a rallying call for some terrorists and may have increased the terrorist threat faced by Russians (as well as possibly placing Olympic athletes and visitors at risk). Some Russian officials and others have warned that the terrorist threat may be further exacerbated by the return of some Chechens and other Russian citizens from Syria, where they have honed their terrorist combat skills. If terrorists are able to launch attacks during the Games, they may thereafter be able to attract more recruits, funding, and sympathy for their calls for secession of the region from Russia, some observers warn.

Some critics doubt whether the prestige and putative economic benefits of the Games will bolster regime loyalty in the North Caucasus. They point out that security precautions have inconvenienced residents of the North Caucasus and caution that the opening ceremonies of the

⁵⁸ *Race to the Bottom: Exploitation of Migrant Workers Ahead of Russia's 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi*, HRW, February 2013; *Russia: Sochi Migrant Workers Targeted for Expulsion*, HRW, October 3, 2013; *AP*, November 15, 2013; *CEDR*, October 8, 2013, Doc. No. CEL-52373324; Open Source Center, *Europe: Daily Report*, January 21, 2014, Doc. No. EUL-84079332, and January 22, 2014, Doc. No. EUL-67291251; Zarifmo Aslamshoyeva, "Once Russia's Henchmen, Cossacks Now Helping with Olympic Security," *CNN*, January 25, 2014.

⁵⁹ *CEDR*, January 14, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-45215560.

⁶⁰ Steven Myers, "Putin's Olympic Fever Dream," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2014.

⁶¹ *CEDR*, December 27, 2013, Doc. No. CEL-59104260.

Games reportedly emphasize Russian nationalist themes.⁶² These critics also argue that while the Sochi area may benefit from plans by the federal government to own and subsidize many facilities after the Games, it is uncertain whether hotels and other infrastructure created for the Games can be sustained by tourism, as Putin suggests. Even if Sochi does prosper after the Games, the federal government's development plan for other areas of the North Caucasus—including for building more sports facilities—does not include similar high levels of investment, some critics argue.⁶³

Besides the issue of whether the Games will boost the regional economy, concerns have been raised about the burden of the Games on the federal budget. Russian authorities have given various estimates of total costs, including expenses for Olympic facilities and costs for regional infrastructure such as power plants and roads. On January 22, 2014, Prime Minister Medvedev reported that total costs amounted to about \$50 billion, of which about \$6 billion (other officials have specified \$6.2 billion) was spent on Olympic facilities and the rest on infrastructure in Sochi and the wider region. Of the amount spent on Olympic facilities, private investment accounts for \$3.3 billion, according to Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Kozak, but mostly involves loans to entrepreneurs that are guaranteed by the state. He has rejected comparisons of these costs to those incurred by other countries that have held Olympic Games, arguing that most of the expense in Sochi involves building necessary infrastructure that London or Vancouver did not need. However, critics such as oppositionist Aleksey Navalny have alleged that large-scale corruption has inflated costs. In January 2014, President Putin dismissed such allegations, stating that irregularities have been minor and attributable to the vast scale of the construction effort. Russian officials also rejected an alleged comment by an International Olympic Committee member that corruption had inflated costs.⁶⁴

Since the terrorist bombings at the Boston Marathon in April 2013,⁶⁵ the Obama Administration has maintained that U.S.-Russia counter-terrorism cooperation has increased. Some observers, however, suggest that Russian authorities resisted offers from U.S. agencies of substantial counter-terrorism assistance to bolster security at the Games. On January 5, 2014, the state-owned *RT (Russia Times)* network stated that the United States had offered such boosted aid both before and after the terrorist incidents in Volgograd and mentioned statements by FBI Director Comey, Defense Secretary Hagel, and the White House. However, the article reported that “Moscow insisted that the terrorism threat does not require any additional measures,” and referred to the statement by the president of the Russian Olympic Committee, Aleksandr Zhukov, that all possible security measures already were in place in Sochi. On January 24, 2014, the *Washington Post* reported accounts by former FBI agents that Russia had approved only a fraction of the personnel that the FBI had proposed to send to Russia for the Games. On January 22, 2014, Prime Minister Medvedev stated that U.S.-Russia security cooperation for the Games was “at a good level,” although perhaps it could have been better, he suggested. Some observers have argued that

⁶² *OSC Analysis*, January 10, 2014.

⁶³ Simon Jenkins, “Winter Olympics: One Day the Worm will Turn against these Gods of Sport,” *Guardian*, January 9, 2014.

⁶⁴ *CEDR*, January 22, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-82595635; January 16, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-42578778; January 14, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-68666782; November 4, 2013, Doc. No. CEL-39777259; January 14, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-45215560; January 11, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-47317607; January 16, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-77334060; January 15, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-67249979.

⁶⁵ The bombing allegedly was carried out by two brothers who were native to the North Caucasus. One of the brothers had traveled to the area before the bombings, but it is unclear whether he received any terrorist training or instructions while there. The brothers had accessed terrorist websites.

Russian security services appear unlikely to change their traditional suspicions of U.S. assistance in the days remaining before the Games begin.⁶⁶

Implications for U.S. Interests

Concerns About Threats to U.S. Athletes and Visitors and About Bilateral Security Cooperation

In a White House statement after the Volgograd bombings, the Obama administration stated that “the U.S. government has offered our full support to the Russian government in security preparations for the Sochi Olympic Games, and we would welcome the opportunity for closer cooperation for the safety of the athletes, spectators, and other participants.”⁶⁷ Some observers took this as a subtle suggestion that cooperation with Russian authorities was not as harmonious and comprehensive as it could be. President Obama and President Putin reportedly discussed by phone how best to advance shared U.S.-Russian interests, “including a safe and secure Sochi Olympics, for which the United States has offered its full assistance,” according to the White House.⁶⁸ On January 24, a senior administration official stressed that “the full resources of the U.S. Government are aligned in support of our athletes, our delegation, and Americans attending the Olympics” and that while “we have seen an uptick in security threats,” they are “not unusual for a major international event like this.” Administration officials have argued that U.S.-Russia security cooperation is adequate for safely holding the Games, but have added that conditions are being monitored and U.S. athletes and the public will be notified if they change.⁶⁹

Some U.S. athletes, visitors, and others have expressed concerns about the “uptick” in terrorism reports. In late January 2014, the USOC recommended that athletes not wear their official clothing outside Olympic venues. U.S. interests at risk could include diplomatic facilities or even the U.S. homeland, according to some observers. Among the U.S. athletes attending the Olympic Games, some have expressed increased worries about terrorist risks. While most athletes and visitors appear confident about the levels of U.S. and Russian security at the Games, some athletes and coaches have stated that they will not take their families to the Games and some visitors reportedly have decided not to attend. If a terrorist incident occurs that endangers U.S. athletes or visitors, some observers have raised questions about whether the quality of liaison between U.S. and Russian officials is sufficient to ensure the evacuation of U.S. citizens. While the Administration has stated that it is closely monitoring conditions and preparing to be ready for contingencies such as evacuation, it could be open to criticism that its travel alert was not more cautious about the safety of athletes and visitors.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ “U.S. Offers ‘Closer Cooperation’ on Security, Russia Vows Olympics are Safe,” *RT*, January 5, 2014; F. Michael Maloof, “Olympic Security Uncertain despite Drones, Subs, and Missiles,” *WND*, January 17, 2014; “Can Russia Stop a Terrorist Attack during the Olympics?” *American Thinker*, January 2014; Adam Goldman, “FBI Efforts to Assist Sochi Olympics Limited by Russians,” *Washington Post*, January 24, 2014; *CEDR*, January 22, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-44406973; January 22, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-82595635.

⁶⁷ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Statement by NSC Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on Attacks in Russia*, December 30, 2013.

⁶⁸ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Readout of President Obama’s Call with President Putin*, January 21, 2014.

⁶⁹ Department of State, “Background Briefing on Security at the Sochi Olympics,” Press Release, January 24, 2014.

⁷⁰ Sarah Lyall, “Olympic Fears Rattle Athletes and Families,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2014; “Safety Concerns High as Games Draw Nigh,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 26, 2014; Mark Lazerus, “Dealing with Russian Scare: (continued...)”

Security analysts have expressed a number of other concerns regarding security challenges facing the Sochi games. In Sochi itself, a lack of interconnected roadways could reportedly make emergency response more difficult, as well as creating vulnerable choke points. Regional medical facilities may also be difficult to access by road.⁷¹ Even if the security measures in the immediate area of the games are effective, some analysts warn that the concentration of Russian resources being devoted to the Sochi games may deplete the effectiveness of security efforts elsewhere in Russia, including in major transportation hubs used by U.S. athletes and visitors.⁷² Combined with the deterrent effect of the security cordons around Sochi, this may actually make attacks elsewhere in Russia more feasible and therefore more likely.⁷³ Other concerns include the danger that high levels of corruption may permit terrorists to bribe their way into Olympic venues and the mixed record of Russian security forces in resolving hostage situations or otherwise protecting civilians.⁷⁴

While many security analysts suggest that the addition of security resources from numerous partnering entities could result in a more secure Olympic Games, it is possible that complications could arise in the form of coordinating responses to an actual or perceived event. Security analyst Pavel Baev warns that “the massive deployment of security personnel of every imaginable kind – from air defense units to Cossack patrols – may inevitably result in dangerous cases of miscommunication, since any minor incident might trigger an entirely disproportionate response.”⁷⁵

Members of Congress have also expressed concerns about these issues. On January 19, Representative Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said that “[w]e do not seem to be getting all of the information we need to protect our athletes in the Games ... I think this needs to change, and it should change soon.” Rogers added that Russian officials “are not giving us the full story about what are the threat streams, who do we need to worry about, are those groups, the terrorist groups who have had some success, are they still plotting?” In late January, Representative Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, echoed these views, saying “there are serious concerns, and that we need to do a lot to step up security.” He warned that even if the “ring of steel” around Sochi was effective, attacks could occur “outside the perimeter—more soft targets, transportation modes.” He added that while Russia had taken steps to ensure security and was cooperating with the United States on safety measures, such cooperation “could be a lot better.” Mr. McCaul visited Sochi on January 20 to discuss security issues with Russian officials.⁷⁶

(...continued)

Hawks Going to Sochi are Aware of the Risks but won't be Deterred,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 25, 2014; Michael Arace, “Richards’ Decision Underlines Sochi Fears,” *The Columbus Dispatch (Ohio)*, January 26, 2014; “Government of Canada Warns Against Attending Winter Olympics Citing Terror Threat,” *Postmedia Breaking News*, January 25, 2014.

⁷¹ Bill Gertz, “Sochi Terror Threat is Real,” *The Washington Times*, January 15, 2014.

⁷² James Gordon Meek and Brian Ross, “US Terror Hunters Fear Russia Losing Sochi Olympic Security Race,” *ABC News*, January 10, 2014.

⁷³ Corey Flintoff, “Russia Aims to Implement the Tightest Security in Olympic History,” *National Public Radio*, January 15, 2014.

⁷⁴ J.D. Gordon, “Obama’s Top Olympic Priority Must Be Keeping Americans Safe,” *U.S. News & World Report*, January 16, 2014; Stefan Grobe, “Fresh Warnings from U.S. Security Experts on Sochi Terror Threats,” *Euronews*, January 21, 2014.

⁷⁵ “Shades of KGB spotted at Olympics,” *WND Weekly*, January 16, 2014.

⁷⁶ “U.S. Congressmen Raise Safety Concerns About Sochi Games,” *Moscow Times Online*, January 21, 2014; “Olympics Security Worries U.S. Officials,” *New York Times website*, January 19, 2014.

Concerns About Human Rights

In late July 2013, a State Department spokesperson called on Russia to protect the human rights of U.S. citizens attending or participating in the Olympic Games, “including LGBT persons, and of course, for anyone attending or participating in the Olympics. We are calling on Russia to uphold its international commitments regarding freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression.”⁷⁷ On December 17, 2013, President Barack Obama announced the names of members of the presidential delegations for the opening and closing ceremonies. Neither delegation includes the President or the Vice President. Janet Napolitano, former Secretary of Homeland Security, will lead the delegation for the opening ceremony, which will also include Michael McFaul, United States Ambassador to Russia; Robert Nabors, Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy; Billie Jean King, “member of the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom”; and Brian Boitano, Olympic gold medalist in figure skating.⁷⁸ William Burns, Deputy Secretary of State, will head the delegation for the closing ceremonies. He will be joined by McFaul; Bonnie Blair, “five-time gold medalist and one-time bronze medalist in speed skating”; Caitlin Cahow, “Olympic silver medalist and bronze medalist in women’s ice hockey”; and Eric Heiden, “five-time Olympic gold medalist in speed skating.” Several members of the presidential delegations to the opening and closing ceremonies are prominent members of the LGBT community.⁷⁹

While stating that scheduling problems had prevented the President or Vice President from attending the Games, the Administration also averred that the selection was not the only means through which the President had underlined that “he finds it offensive, the anti-LGBT legislation in Russia, for example. And we take very clear and strong stands on that issue, as well as the curtailment of civil society in Russia, as well as the harassment caused to those who protest corruption in Russia.”⁸⁰ The State Department’s January 2014 travel alert reflects human rights concerns when it advises U.S. visitors that they should have “no expectation of privacy,” and that all means of communication should be “assumed to be monitored.” Some security experts allege that Russian security forces may not only monitor cell phones and personal computers but may use them to track individuals’ movements and to intrude upon and compromise the use of the devices.⁸¹ The travel alert also states that the Russian government has appeared to interpret the anti-LGBT propaganda law broadly as “mak[ing] it a crime to promote LGBT equality in public.” The alert cautions that the law applies to both Russian citizens and foreigners, whom may be fined, jailed, and/or deported.

Some critics of U.S. policy toward Russia—while supportive of the Obama Administration’s decision not to send top-level delegations to Sochi—have called for the Administration to make civil and human rights more central in bilateral relations. Many of these critics have eschewed calling for a boycott of the Olympics, which would deny U.S. athletes the opportunity to compete, but they have urged that Administration concerns over security at the Games not eclipse a focus on the human rights of U.S. athletes and visitors as well as of citizens of Russia. Most

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Daily Press Briefing*, July 31, 2013.

⁷⁸ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *President Obama Announces Presidential Delegations to the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games*, December 17, 2013.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney*, December 18, 2013.

⁸¹ *CBC News*, January 13, 2014.

observers argue that notable human rights violations against U.S. citizens attending the Games could further exacerbate tensions in U.S.-Russia relations.⁸²

Some human rights activists have been critical of U.S. corporate sponsors who allegedly have altered their behavior at the Games to avoid discussing human rights problems, including in order to forestall possible Russian objections to “gay propaganda.”⁸³

Members of Congress have expressed concerns about Russia’s anti-LGBT legislation. In August 2013, a bipartisan group of 87 House Members sent a letter to Secretary Kerry expressing deep concern about the Russian law and calling on the State Department to determine a plan of action to ensure the safety and well-being of LGBT persons and their supporters at the games, and to inform the authors of the letter of the steps being taken in this respect by the United States and other governments. On November 8, 2014, a letter signed by 11 Senators asked IOC President Thomas Bach asking for information that the IOC may receive from the Russian authorities on how it plans to enforce the anti-LGBT law. The Senators also reminded President Bach that the IOC is bound to uphold the Olympic Charter, including its provisions on non-discrimination, which includes LGBT rights.

On November 21, 2013, Senator Jeff Merkley introduced S.Res. 311. The resolution notes that President Putin signed a law in June 2013 barring “homosexual propaganda,” which Russian authorities could use to harass, detain, or deport LGBT persons or those supporting their rights at the Sochi Games. The resolution also mentions other Russian government actions against LGBT rights and recent acts of violence against LGBT persons in Russia. Among other provisions, the resolution calls on calls on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to strongly oppose Russia’s discriminatory law and to insist, as a condition of holding the Olympic Games in Sochi, that the Russian government provide unconditional assurance that no person at the games will be harassed, fined, detained, or otherwise have their human rights, including their right to free expression, violated due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of support for LGBT human rights. The resolution also calls on “the congressionally chartered USOC” to intervene and assist the IOC in establishing the objectives of the resolution.

Other Concerns About U.S.-Russia Relations

Some observers argue that the Obama Administration’s selection of relatively low-level delegations to the open and closing ceremonies is more a reflection than a contributor to strains in U.S.-Russia relations. Others disagree, pointing out that Russian officials and the public have criticized President Obama for not attending. While many leaders also have chosen not to travel to Sochi, others have pledged to do so, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta . Russia and China have hailed Xi Jinping’s visit as demonstrating close Russia-China relations.

Rejecting criticism by “some countries” of human rights and security related to the Sochi Olympic Games, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated on January 22, 2014, that such attitudes reflected bias and dissatisfaction that Russia is now “strong, successful, rich, and healthy.”⁸⁴ That same day, Prime Minister Medvedev similarly rejected international concerns

⁸² Mark Cunningham, *Human Rights Buried Under \$51 Billion Sochi Olympics*, Transatlantic Take, German Marshall Fund, January 14, 2014.

⁸³ John Aravosis, *AMERICAblog*, January 26, 2014.

⁸⁴ *CEDR*, January 23, 2014, Doc. No. CEL-36195610.

that security risks were greater at the Sochi Olympics than at previous Olympics, pointing to “tragic events” at U.S. sporting events as examples.⁸⁵

Some observers argue that although there may be some shortfall in U.S.-Russia counter-terrorism relations, the degree of cooperation that does exist illustrates that the two countries continue to work together on issues of mutual concern. These observers also raise hopes that successful security cooperation during the Games will boost future cooperation and will contribute more broadly to improved U.S.-Russia relations.⁸⁶

Author Contact Information

Jim Nichol, Coordinator
Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs
jnichol@crs.loc.gov, 7-2289

Elaine Halchin
Specialist in American National Government
ehalchin@crs.loc.gov, 7-0646

John W. Rollins
Specialist in Terrorism and National Security
jrollins@crs.loc.gov, 7-5529

Alex Tiersky
Analyst in Foreign Affairs
atiersky@crs.loc.gov, 7-7367

Steven Woehrel
Specialist in European Affairs
swoehrel@crs.loc.gov, 7-2291

⁸⁵ *Interfax*, January 23, 2014.

⁸⁶ Kent Klein, “U.S., Russia Cooperate on Sochi Security,” *Voice of America*, January 22, 2014.