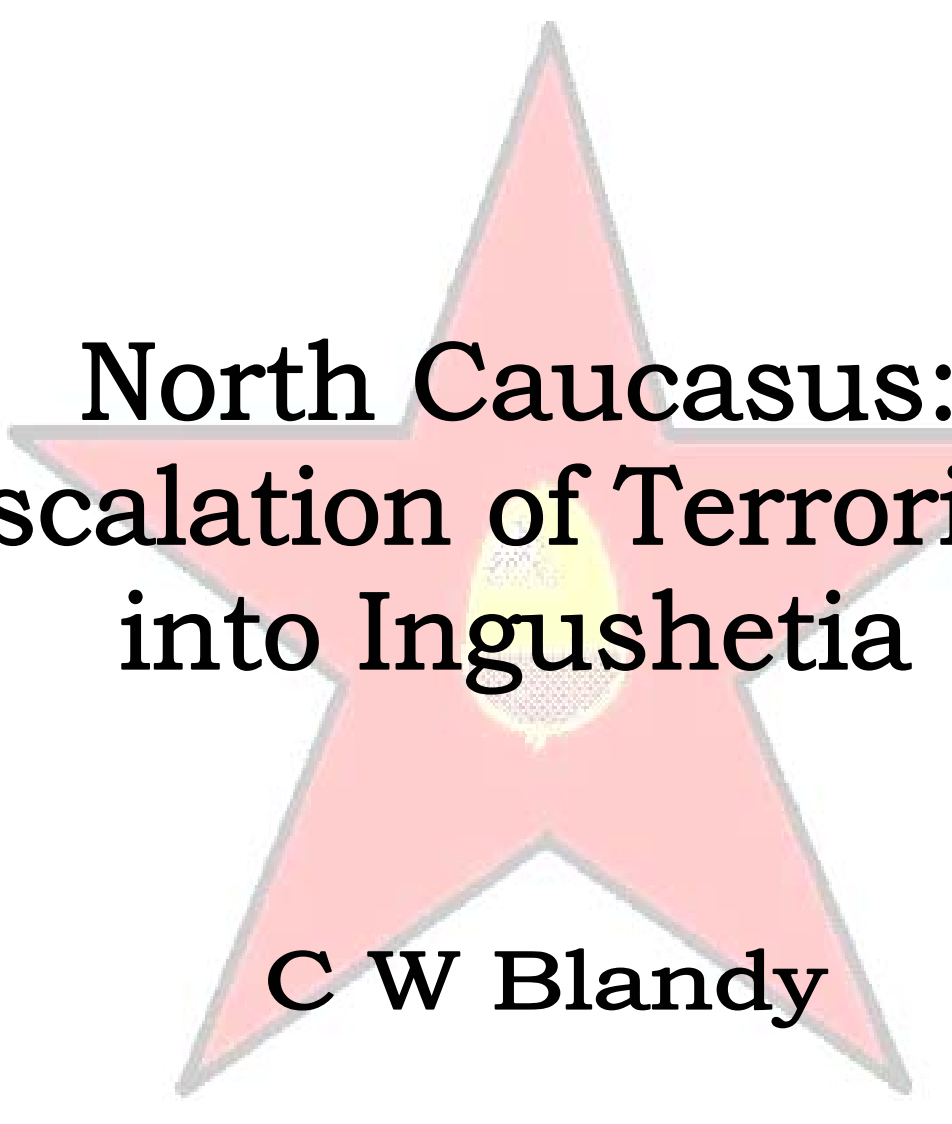


Conflict Studies Research Centre



**North Caucasus:
Escalation of Terrorism
into Ingushetia**

C W Blandy

June 2004

North Caucasus: Escalation of Terrorism into Ingushetia

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Key Points

- * The South Caucasus cannot be considered in isolation from the North Caucasus and vice-versa.
- * Terrorism emanating from Chechnya has continued to focus on Ingushetia.
- * The June raid employing 200 fighters divided into different bands showed in-depth planning, successful mobilisation, target selection and coordination.
- * The raid was a direct challenge to the authority of Murat Zyazikov, President of Ingushetia, Moscow's nominee in the presidential election two years ago.
- * Chechen separatism is still a factor to be reckoned with despite federal plans for Chechen presidential elections on 29 August 2004.
- * The unstable situation will escalate during the election campaign, aided by plentiful forest cover.
- * In the aftermath, fighters unable to return to their base location could well try to cross into Georgia.
- * Border zone restrictions in Karachayevo-Cherkessia should be noted.
- * Problems over the status of Abkhazia and South Osetia could result in attempted migration to Russia.

THE NORTH CAUCASUS



General Staff Map Section, GSGS 12379(CAD), Edition 1-GSGS, June 1998
 Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative 474/98

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There is often a failure to grasp the connection between the North Caucasus and South Caucasus and the fact that they are one geographical and ethnic entity, not to be looked at in isolation from each other. The effects of the second Russo-Chechen conflict in recent times on relations between Russia and Georgia bear witness to this fact, in the flood of Chechen refugees to Shatili in 1999, the crisis over the Pankisskoye Gorge in 2001-2002 when Russia claimed the right to destroy extremist nests in the gorge, and Chechen field commander Ruslan Gelayev's moves from Pankisi into the Kodori Gorge and Abkhaz territory in 2001.

A recent paper¹ drew attention to the escalation of terrorist acts in the North Caucasus emanating from Chechnya, namely the attack on strategic economic targets in Dagestan on 2 April and the assassination attempt on Murat Zyazikov, President of Ingushetia, on 6 April.

Following the assassination of Chechen President Akhmad-Khadzhi Kadyrov on 9 May 2004, the raid by some 200 fighters into Ingushetia on 21/22 June serves as a reminder that despite previous comforting words from the combined group of forces in Chechnya, the situation is far from being under the control of the federal authorities. It was a coordinated raid involving several bands, directed at Ingush law enforcement organs and agencies, namely the Interior Ministry building and base of 137 FSB border detachment in Nazran', armouries at Karabulak, the town militia detachment, the Internal Troops (OMON) HQ at Karabulak, and the *stanitsy* of Sleptsovskaya and Ordzhonikidzyevskaya. Fighters even tried to break through to the presidential palace at Magas but were prevented by the militia.

Senior members of the law enforcement organs were killed.² Initial casualties amounted to 59 people killed (law enforcement organs – 49 and civilians - 10). The wounded amounted to 54 persons from the law enforcement organs and a minimum of 34 civilians.³ However, by 24 June the final total had risen to 98 dead and 104 wounded.⁴

The Russian head of state considers that the aim of the raids was the destabilisation of the situation in Ingushetia and in the North Caucasus as a whole.⁵ Given the recent announcement of Aslan Maskhadov on Radio "Svoboda" on 21 June that "*We plan to change our tactics. Earlier our efforts were concentrated on acts of sabotage, but soon we will plan to begin active combat operations*"⁶ it is possible to suppose that the Ingush operation was also directed at destabilisation in Moscow and at the European Union, to remind everyone that Chechen separatists still exist and they need to be considered. On the other hand Maskhadov's special representative in Europe, Akhmad Zakayev, stated to Reuters that Maskhadov had not participated in the assault into Ingushetia.⁷

There were statements from a number of people caught up in the events of 21/22 June that the predominant language spoken by the raiders was Ingush. If this is true it adds to the seriousness of the situation in the North Caucasus, for it must be considered as evidence that even the Ingush, who have a milder approach to life than the Chechen, are heartily fed up with the results of the manipulated election of some two years ago which foisted an FSB Major General on them as their president. The aim of this operation was certainly to destabilise the position of Murat Zyazikov, probably still shaken from the assassination attempt on 6 April.

Whilst the majority of fighters after the raid would have made for the forest depths, made attempts to return to Chechnya or simply remained in Ingushetia, there is a danger of further border violations along the Russo-Georgian border as in the past, exacerbating tension between Moscow and Georgia in addition to the problems over Abkhazia and South Osetia, where many of the inhabitants have taken Russian citizenship.

Karachayevo-Cherkessia is the first of the republics of the North Caucasus to have decided to introduce a border zone “*in the interests of the creation of the necessary conditions for the protection of the state border of the RF*”.⁸ The primary purpose of the zone is to counter the spread of religious radicalism, particularly from Abkhazia and Georgia.⁹ This will give law enforcement organs greater control over the areas where Wahhabi *dzhamaaty* are found and concentrated. According to Milrad Fatullayev,¹⁰ more than a year ago *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* had written about the fact that in the border zone with Georgia the villages of Khurzuk, Uchkulan, Uchkeken and Karachayevsk of Karachayevo-Cherkessia were functioning independently from the Spiritual Directorate of Mosques and were the greatest ‘toothache’ for Cherkessk. In these villages they preached openly about ‘pure Islam’. The independent *dzhamaats* are now included in the border zone.

The border zone follows the line: “*settlement of Kurdzhinovo – stanitsa Pregradnaya – stanitsa Zelenchukskaya – stanitsa Kardonikskaya – settlement Kumysh – town of Karachayevsk – aul Nizhnaya Mara – aul Verkhnyaya Mara*”.¹¹

In accordance with the presidential decree the new rules include entry, residence, movement of people and transport means in the regime zone only by permission of the local militia. Local inhabitants will need to carry special documents proving their right to be in the zone. Fatullayev found it difficult to find out the depth of the zone even from the republic’s Interior Troops.¹² In Soviet times the border zone with Turkey was up to 75 km. Recently Moscow has been trying to introduce a 5km border zone throughout the North Caucasus, in particular in Daghestan.

However, sanatoria, rest-houses and other large civilian residences have not been included in the border zone. In addition to talking about the strengthening of the border with Georgia, in Cherkessk they have noted that now with the help of the army the authorities will be better able to preserve the natural riches of the kray, notably the pine-oak forests. For over the last 20 years they have been the prey of rapacious exports to Turkey.

One result of the raid could be an adverse effect on the return of Cossacks to Ingushetia. In contrast to the large exodus of Cossacks and Russians from Chechnya and the lands north of the River Terek, there is evidence of their return to Ingushetia, to the three longstanding Cossack *stanitsy* of Ordzhonikidzeyevskaya, Troytskaya and Nesterovskaya lying close to the Chechen border.¹³ One should not forget that there are a number of Cossack *stanitsy* in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, such

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as Zelenchukskaya where there have been repeated ‘agitations’ for autonomous status.

Finally, the Ingush raid must also be set within the general upsurge of violence connected with the Russian North Caucasus – the assassination in Moscow of Yakov Sergunin, a former deputy prime minister in the Chechen government and accountant “*through whose hands serious financial documents passed*”¹⁴ and the continuing spate of assassinations in Dagestan. One must also take into account the difficult situation in South Osetia and Abkhazia. Perhaps we will see movement of people already in possession of Russian citizenship to North Osetia.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability and Conflict*”, Caucasus Series 04/11, CSRC, May 2004.
- ² The dead included “the interim MVD Minister of Ingushetia Abulkar Kostoyev, Deputy MVD Minister Zyaudin Khatiyev, the head of the republic’s postal service directorate, Mukhabek Mal’sagov, the Nazran town procurator Mukhabrek Buzurtanov, procurator of Nazran’ rayon Bilan Khamchiyev, and the former director of the Ingush territorial migration service Magomed Gireyev. <http://www.politcom.ru/2004/zloba4326.php> Politkom.Ru, 23 June 2004, “*Ob’yavleniye voyny*” by Georgiy Kovalev.
- ³ <http://www.politcom.ru/2004/gvozd401.php> Politkom.Ru, 23 June 2004, “*Nochnoy Pozor*” by Ivan Preobrazhenskiy.
- ⁴ <http://gazeta.ru/firstplace.shtml>, *Gazeta.ru*, 24 June 2004, “*Ot prezidenta skryli pravdu o napadenii boyevikov*” by Il’ya Zhegulev.
- ⁵ “*Nochnoy Pozor*” by Ivan Preobrazhenskiy.
- ⁶ http://gazeta.ru/2004/06/21/oa_124492.shtml, *Gazeta.ru*, 21 June 2004, “*Maskhadov nachinayet novuyu voynu s Rossiyey*” by Kseniya Solyanskaya. In the interview with Radio Svoboda Maskhadov stated that “despite the terror of the GRU, FSB and other punitive services, Chechen resistance was not frightened, the number of fighters is growing. The stronger the repression of Kadyrov’s employees, the stronger they will make simple Chechens against them. Those who join us recently, do this out of a feeling of despair.”
- ⁷ <http://www.smi.ru/04/06/23/2535126.html>, 23 June 2004, “*Bez Basayeva*” by Vsevolod Vosledov -vosledov@smi.ru. “Akhmed Zakayev stated in his own words that “Maskhadov did not lead the *boyeviki* and did not plan the attack. The attack was led by an Ingush known as Magomet. Zakayev did not give his surname. However, he remarked that Magomet participated in [other] combat operations in Chechnya under the command of Maskhadov.”
- ⁸ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2004, “*Karachayevo-Cherkessia vozvodit novyye granitsy*” by Milrad Fatullayev.
- ⁹ It should be remembered that Basayev’s Abkhaz battalion rendered considerable military assistance to the Abkhaz in the early 1990s.
- ¹⁰ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2004.
- ¹¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2004.
- ¹² *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2004.
- ¹³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 September 2003, “*Iz Rossii – V Rossiyu*” by Aleksey Borisov.
- ¹⁴ <http://gazeta.ru/firstplace.shtml>, 25 June 2004, “*Ubit bukhgalter Kadyrova*” by Irina Petrakova.

Want to Know More ...?

See: C W Blandy, "*Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability & Conflict*",
Caucasus Series 04/11, CSRC, May 2004,
<http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

Dr Tracey German, "*Faultline or Foothold? Georgia's Relations with
Russia & The USA*", P41, CSRC, January 2004,
<http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

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