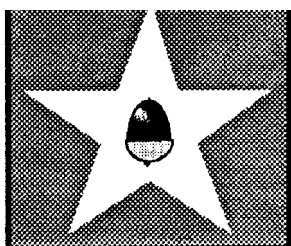


# **Conflict Studies Research Centre**

**C W Blandy**

**Dagestan: The Storm  
Part 2 - The Federal Assault on  
the "Kadar Complex"**

**June 2000**



**P32**

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# **DAGESTAN: THE STORM PART 2 – THE FEDERAL ASSAULT ON THE “KADAR COMPLEX”**

**C W Blandy**

## **SUMMARY**

### **Fundamentalist Islam**

There were many reasons for the arrival of Fundamentalist or Radical Islam in the North Caucasus apart from extremists seeking to threaten the Russian state. In many ways it was quite natural, when restrictions on travel and study abroad were lifted, that ‘educated’ students returning home would question religious practices in the North Caucasus which previously had been denied the wider benefit of Arabic scholarship and contact with mainstream Islamic teaching and learning. This absence of consistent contact made it easier for the traditional North Caucasus form of Islam to adopt alien innovations and borrowings.

It is also quite clear that in very general terms the attraction to Fundamentalist Islam was of a milder nature in Dagestan than in Chechnya. This is partly due to certain basic differences in character between the Chechens and the peoples of Dagestan. In the first place only an insignificant percentage of the population in Dagestan wish to leave Russia. Secondly, in comparison with Chechnya, in Dagestan only a very small percentage of the whole population, perhaps no more than 3% are adherents of Wahhabism. Even among the local inhabitants of the so-called Wahhabi villages of Karamahi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar, possibly only some 10-15% are Wahhabis.

Secondly, Dagestanis were unhappy with the corruption in the upper reaches of the Dagestani government, the lifestyle of those living on ill-gotten riches in the detached residences of Makhachkala’s “Santa Barbara” area and the dishonest activities of the Dagestani militia, the last named contributing to the friction with the Wahhabis.

It is perhaps not so surprising that in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in its bid to create a new state, independent of Moscow, there were those who became orientated towards Fundamentalist Islam and the wider issue of the establishment of a united Muslim North Caucasus. This concept had widespread resonance amongst the more extremist politicians and ideologues in both Chechnya and Dagestan.

The lack of progress of the Maskhadov government in Chechnya with the Federal authorities in Moscow over the status of Chechnya added impetus to the campaigns of extremist elements in Chechnya. The Sufi brotherhoods, the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriya, however, whilst having minor differences between themselves, had become thoroughly alarmed by Fundamentalist Islam, perceiving in the idea of a universal Islam spreading throughout the North Caucasus, a danger for their own ethno-confessional traditions and a threat to their favourable local positions in village communities.

In Chechnya and in Dagestan, echoing the conditions of the Muslim mountain peoples when Muridism took a strong hold at the turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries, Fundamentalist Islam has also found a favourable climate as result of the negative economic factors which stem from the first war with Russia.

### **Combat Operations in Kadar Zone**

As the earlier events in Avaristan showed all too clearly, several mistakes of the Chechen War 1994-1996 were repeated by Federal Forces. The Kadar operation was to be no exception in this regard.

Many of the problems faced by Federal Forces in the Dagestan War were the result of a lack of political will at the highest level immediately following the first Chechen War. At that time, thorough reform and reorganisation of the Armed Forces were required. There needed to have been an all-embracing approach to include Internal Troops MVD, Federal Border Service, and the Security Services to name but a few, in order to ensure Russia's military security not only externally but also internally.

In the Federal operations in Avaristan and Kadar zone, there were basic misunderstandings concerning the concept, scope and role of Internal Troops, including the parameters and limits of their military competence. As a result, deficiencies in command and the execution of operations became manifest, as noted by Major General Vladimir Shamanov: *"I am only able to say as a military man that the Internal Troops were not able to solve a series of tasks. This relates not to professional blunders, but in my view to defects in coordinating joint efforts"*.

Operational command reverted from the MOD to the Internal Troops just prior to the Kadar operation on 27 August 1999. On 4 September 1999 it was transferred back to the MOD following complaints and outright condemnation by the Dagestani State Council on 31 August, 2, 3 and 5 September.

The Commander-in-Chief MVD Internal Troops, Colonel General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, was not trained in commanding troops belonging to different Federal departments. Furthermore due to the unsatisfactory level of cooperation and coordination arrangements over a diverse span of forces and the absence of the necessary support, their effectiveness was not high. As a consequence, soldiers, servicemen and militiamen received unwarranted casualties.

There were several statements by the military to the effect that the fighters would soon be demoralised. General Ovchinnikov himself stated that the operation in Buynaksk rayon of Dagestan would be *"completed by the evening of 2 September, at the very latest by the evening of 3 September 1999"*. There would also appear to have been an incorrect assessment of the fighters' will to resist and of their defensive preparations. *"The fighters' positions took more than a year to prepare with echeloned fire positions protected by reinforced concrete structures and linked together by hidden communication trenches intersecting the terrain, in woods and hollows. Caches of food and weapons were prepared beforehand"*. *"The extremists had turned every house in Karamakhi into an impregnable fortress, and this was especially the case in Chabanmakhi"*. *"Fierce resistance and professionally prepared defensive positions of the fighters were not expected here. After the 'not so easy' victory in Botlikhskiy rayon, it was considered to be a less complicated sector at Karamakhi, particularly when the Kadartsy were less militant than the fighters belonging to Khattab and Basayev"*.

The operation would appear to have taken an inordinate amount of time to complete. Maybe there was genuine concern to preserve troop fighting strength, but the published casualty figures for Federal Forces still do not provide the whole truth. Those concerning the extremist elements and Wahhabis appear inflated.

## INTRODUCTION

The first paper in this series<sup>1</sup> sought to identify some of those underlying questions to which, as yet, there are no firm answers arising from the 'invasion' into Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy rayony of Avaristan, by Chechen bandit formations and Islamic extremists under Shamil' Basayev and Emir Khattab in the first few days of August 1999. It will be remembered that the 'invasion' caused some degree of panic in Makhachkala and appeared in the initial stages even to have caught the Federal power-wielding structures off-balance. However, the 'invasion' of Avaristan was to end in failure as a result of a number of factors and miscalculations. First, both Basayev and Khattab miscalculated the support that they could expect to receive from the local Dagestani Muslim inhabitants, which as events turned out, became notable by its absence. Second, the minds of Basayev and Khattab were fixed on the poor performance of Federal Forces in the 1994-1996 Chechen conflict and perhaps mistakenly relied too much upon the rosy memories of their own earlier successes and Federal shortcomings, based on the "*six Chechen victories*"<sup>2</sup>. How prescient were the words of Sergey Kovalev writing about the first conflict in 1997 and the dangers of a military victory for the Chechens:

*"Who was the victor in this war? The forces of the Chechen resistance won the military victory. In effect, they won in the first three weeks of the war, when the gigantic Russian military machine bloodied its fists trying to take over the smoking remnants of Grozny. This unprecedented humiliation of a great power became the Chechens' decisive moral victory... They [the Chechens] claimed victory after victory and ended the war with a triumphant attack on Grozny. The military victory is theirs. But were the Chechen people victorious? I am afraid that here things are not so simple... There is nothing more dangerous than a military victory. And Chechnya is no exception to this rule"*<sup>3</sup>.

From the viewpoint of Colonel-General Viktor Kazantsev, Commander of North Caucasus Military District, it was clear that Basayev and Khattab had not taken into consideration the fact that "*Over the last three years we have made several important steps forward. Taking account of predictable bandit 'outings', a series of joint exercises were carried out with the MVD, Border Service and FAPSI. And we were ready*"<sup>4</sup>. General Kazantsev also believed that the Chechen and Islamic extremist formations had severely underestimated the strength of reaction and

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<sup>1</sup> C W Blandy "*Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1 - The Questions Surrounding the 'Invasion' of Avaristan*" P30, CSRC, March 2000.

<sup>2</sup> They were: first, the rout in the first days of the war in December 1994/January 1995 of the columns advancing into Grozny; second, the seizure by Basayev's terrorists of the hospital in Budennovsk in June 1995; third, a similar operation by Raduyev in Kizliyar and breakout from the siege of Pervomayskoye in January 1996; fourth, the ambush and rout of a column from 245 Motor Rifle Regiment in April 1996; fifth, the storming of Grozny in March 1996 and, sixth, the second storming of Grozny in August 1996. Vladislav Shevrygin, 'Voyna kotory oni proigrali', *Zavtra*, No 37, September 1996, p3.

<sup>3</sup> Sergey Kovalev "*Russia after Chechnya*", 17 July 1997. Home Archives Subscriptions Books Mailnybooks.com, p3.

<sup>4</sup> *Trud*, 10 November 1999 through Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, "*Interv'yu Nedel'*", "*General Kazantsev: "V Chechnye poydu do kontsa"*". See also M J Orr "*Second Time Lucky?*", JDW, 8 March 2000, p34 for more specific details.

speed with which the Federal command could coordinate and concentrate sufficient forces not only to neutralise the bandit incursions but also to inflict a resounding repulse as a prelude to armed intervention into Chechnya itself. In order to do so, it would first be necessary to neutralise one major centre of support for the bandits in Dagestan: the Kadar complex of Wahhabi villages, which in 1998 had declared itself as independent Islamic territory.

This paper will examine: first, the background to the arrival of the Wahhabi movement in the North Caucasus set against the traditional forms of 'unofficial' Islam practised by the majority of Muslim mountain peoples in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia; second the establishment of a Wahhabi complex in the villages of Kadar, Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi in the Buynaksk rayon of Dagestan, the Kadar zone; third, the reasoning which led to the decision by Federal Forces to conduct an all-out assault operation on the complex and fourth, the course of the operation and the main shortcomings of the Federal forces in clearing this area of Islamic extremists.



## THE WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

To obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of the announcement of an independent Islamic territory in Dagestan it is necessary to look at the background to the serious confrontation between the Dagestani authorities and the Wahhabis of the Kadar zone in August 1998. It is possible to draw an inexact parallel between the impact of Muridism (Sufism) at the end of the 18th Century in the North Caucasus<sup>5</sup>, specifically the reaction of the Tsarist authorities to the arrival of the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya movement<sup>6</sup>, and the response of the Federal structures to the advent of Wahhabism in Dagestan and Chechnya in the last decade of the 20th Century. These factors are shown in Box 1 below.

Whilst there is hostility from those practising the traditional, “unofficial”, Islam of the North Caucasus towards the more recently arrived Islamic Fundamentalists, known more commonly as Wahhabis, one fact stands out. *“Sufism in the Northern Caucasus has always been and still is a revivalist, radical and even revolutionary force. As such, both the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriya have always been **anti-Russian and anti-Communist**”*<sup>7</sup> (emphasis mine - CWB). In contrast, wahhabism in Dagestan, in particular in the Kadar complex, was perhaps tuned more to the absence of an equitable system of government in Makhachkala rather than vehement condemnation of Moscow, although that was present as well amongst other Islamic extremists, such as Magomed Tagayev. Dagestan had not suffered the excesses of armed conflict that Chechnya had undergone in 1994-1996, whereas the Wahhabi element, or perhaps more accurately those following a Fundamentalist tendency in Chechnya, would appear to have been more militant. It was more

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<sup>5</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen & S Enders Wimbush *“Muslims of the Soviet Empire”*, Hurst & Co, London, 1985, p9: “The appearance of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi missionaries in the North Caucasus marked the second phase of Islamic expansion under Russian rule at the end of the 18th Century. It was the Sufis who for a century (1784-1878) organised and led the resistance movements of North Caucasian mountaineers to Russian conquest, known as the Murid movements. Because of their efforts, the Chechens, the western Cherkess, and the Abazas became militant Muslims, a characteristic which is still evident today. Following the defeat of the Naqshbandiyya in 1865, another Sufi brotherhood, the Qadiriya, took root in the North Caucasus and converted the Ingush to Islam.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p158-159: “Unofficial” Islam is represented by two Sufi brotherhoods - the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriya. The Naqshbandiyya was introduced first from northern Dagestan and Chechnia in 1783 (Imam Mansur) and, for the second time, from Shirvan - southern Dagestan - in the 1820s. The Naqshbandiyya led the resistance of the mountaineers to the Russian conquest from 1824 to 1856, and the great revolt of Dagestan-Chechnia in 1920-1922. The brotherhood is very much alive, especially in Dagestan and in eastern Chechnia. The Qadiriya, which was introduced into Chechnia in the 1850s from Baghdad under the name of the Kunta Haji brotherhood, is divided today into five sub-orders (*wird*): the Kunta Haji proper in Dagestan and Chechnia; the Bammut Giray, mainly in Chechnia; the Batal Haji, a conspiratorial order accused by Soviet sources of practising terrorism, mainly in the Ingush territory; the Chim Mirza in Chechnia and the Ingush territory; and the Vis Haji, a new order founded in the 1950s during the deportation of the Chechens and Ingush to the Kazakh SSR. This last order is secret, and active in Chechen-Ingush country, northern Dagestan, Muslim Ossetia, and even Kabarda”.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

extreme in expressing its hatred of the Russian *kafir* in concert with other Chechen extremist elements such as Basayev, Yandarbiyev and Udugov voicing the need to rid the North Caucasus of Russians.

**Box 1 - Parallels between Arrivals of Sufism and Islamic Fundamentalism in the North Caucasus**

**Sufism**, as “*a revivalist, radical and even revolutionary force*”, arrived at a crucial time in the North Caucasus to help the Muslim mountain peoples resist the southward march of Tsarist armies.

**Islamic Fundamentalism**, with no less a revivalist, radical and even revolutionary force, “*seeking to cleanse alien innovations and borrowings to bring back the true form*”<sup>8</sup> of Islam has brought a new dimension in the struggle of the Chechen people against the power-wielding structures of the Federal Centre, the campaign against government and political corruption in Dagestan and to give an impetus to those extremist forces in both Chechnya and Dagestan seeking a Muslim North Caucasus state.

**Sufism** provided the backbone and cement for the establishment of Shamil’s State.

**Islamic Fundamentalism**, in the modern world is the Islam which appeals to or invokes the idea of an Islamic state, returning to “fundamental values”, to Sharia norms, hence it is attractive to more extreme elements. Islamisation is a factor of self-identification in relation to Russia. Chechnya as an Islamic state could not be part of Russian structures.

**Russian Reaction** to Muridism and Islamic Fundamentalism has shown itself to be equally savage through the application of military might.

Whereas traditional Wahhabism was intolerant and distinguished by an extreme hatred of anyone who did not share their ideas of Islam, Aleksey Kudryavtsev provides a somewhat different picture:

**Box 2 - Dagestani Wahhabis<sup>9</sup>**

The majority of today’s Dagestani Wahhabis or, rather, those who are called that there, are tolerant of followers of other schools in Islam. **What is happening now in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi is not a result of religious differences, but an ordinary protest against the corruption and incompetence of the authorities.** Incidentally, there are probably extremists among them too, to whom the term Wahhabi applies more closely and who are trying to spread their influence throughout all of Dagestan. ... A book the “Insurgent Army of the Imam” ... called for the formation of an Islamic state, the annihilation of Russians and their expulsion from the Caucasus. ... In any case it is apparent that, so far, the extremist wing in Dagestani Wahhabism, if it exists at all, has not prevailed. **And the republic’s leaders should not threaten their opponents with force, which plays into the hands of the extremists, but conduct long and painstaking negotiations. Otherwise we will be drawn into a war. When it begins, help for the Dagestani Wahhabis will probably be given by extremists based in Chechnya, for example that same Khattab. And of course**

<sup>8</sup> *Sodruzhestvo NG*, No 8 (20), 22 September 1999, p9 “*Islamskiy radikalizm na prostorakh SNG*” by Igor’ Rotar’.

<sup>9</sup> Aleksey Kudryavtsev, Senior Scientific Associate of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) SU/3324 B/14 [29], 5 September 1998.

**they will not refuse it. The consequences of such a development of events will be extremely tragic.**<sup>10</sup> (Emphasis throughout mine - CWB)

The key point here is the fact that the problem was not so much a matter of religion and differences in religious practice but the endemic corruption throughout Dagestan coupled with the inability of the authorities to curb the creeping, insidious dishonesty of the whole political system. Another factor of course was that it was no secret that information about the many processes which were taking place in the national republics of Russia were perceived by the central government exclusively through the restricted prism of the local power structures. Moscow, governed by the “*nomenclature of corporate ethic, follows on the pretext of local interests which are contradictory to the idea of the unity of the Russian Federation*”<sup>11</sup>, as exemplified by the amendments to the Constitution of the Dagestani Republic enabling the Chairman of the State Council to start a third term in office, in effect dismissing the original safeguards which were put in place to protect the rights of Dagestan's 14 titular nationalities<sup>12</sup>. A blunter, unambiguous description of the electoral system states that “*in Dagestan, yes there were elections, but their multi-step state system which contradicts Federal laws deliberately turns voting into a farce*”<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, Kurdryavtsev's prediction that unless extensive, painstaking talks were conducted between the republic authorities and the Islamic radical elements, war would follow and military assistance would come from extremist elements in the Chechen Republic was surely right!

Another view of Wahhabism is provided by Professor Dzhabrail Gakayev, which appears more to reflect the views of Moscow and the government of the Republic of Dagestan. This is not altogether surprising, since Professor Gakayev occupied a post in the pro-Russian Chechen government of Salambek Khadzhiyev from April to November 1995.

**Box 3 - Views of Dzhabrail Gakayev on Wahhabism**<sup>14</sup>

The Wahhabi movement takes on a special danger, having received in recent times a wide spread in Chechnya and Dagestan. Wahhabis do not recognise nations, they reject the traditional Muslim forms and norms of the Islam of the peoples of the North Caucasus, they sow the seeds of discord, intolerance and enmity amongst believers, they attempt to counter the generations of fathers and children, to undermine traditional foundations of life and cultures of the mountain peoples. On this soil intra-Muslim and inter-confessional confrontations flare up. Wahhabism has become an instrument of the political struggle, an ideology of national-radicalism, separatism. Its supporters receive powerful financial support from foreign centres which are conducting clandestine and undermining work against Russia. In general here it is necessary to be specific, having noted that talk does not

<sup>10</sup> See C W Blandy “*Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions - An Interim Comparison and Assessment*”, P29 CSRC, January 2000, p5, note 3 for examples of hate toward Russians and also Blandy “*Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1 - The Invasion of Avaristan*”, P30 CSRC, March 2000, p34.

<sup>11</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 15 (1722), 19 August 1998, p1.

<sup>12</sup> See Blandy “*Dagestan: The Gathering Storm*”, S38 CSRC, June 1998, p6 to 17 and p47.

<sup>13</sup> *Kommersant Vlast*, No 30 (282), 11 August 1998, “*Pobedonosnoye otstupleniye*” by Anatoliy Petrov.

<sup>14</sup> *NG - Stsenarii*, No 7 (29), 8 July 1998, p13 “*Rossiya - Chechnya: Yest' li vykhod?*” by Dzhabrail Gakayev.

go on about the serious side of the idea of Wahhabism. By itself the idea of the moral cleansing of Islam, of the return to its original sources is beautiful. Talk is about the level of culture of such social surroundings, of the political, religious elite, who seize the idea of armament and strive to realise it, substituting the aim of its achievement with unfitting means. The tragic experience of our peoples testifies that it is possible to change out of all recognition the very humanitarian, national, religious idea converting it into its own opposition, if it falls into immature surroundings and ignorant and mercenary people undertake its realisation. We must keep in mind that all ideologies which have served the building of paradise on earth have in fact made a hell.

Gakayev noted that there were more than a few occupying posts in Khadzhiyev's government who belonged to the Kunta Haji Qadiriya. Kunta-Khadzhi saw that the main danger for his people, after the defeat of Shamil in 1859, was not in the prevention of religion but in the possibility of destroying the language and the Vaynakh culture. The concept of a nation for the sheikh, the idea of preserving ethnicity was a higher confessional task and *“contrasted with the modern leaders of Wahhabism who are prepared to fight for the sake of Islam to the last Chechen. Kunta-Kadzhi did not wish to sacrifice the Chechen nation for the sake of rescuing formal signs of faith”*<sup>15</sup>. He concluded with the view that *“the time had come when representatives of the democratic society of Russia, of the traditional Islam of the North Caucasus must unite forces with the aim of counteracting Wahhabism, the maintenance of peace, national agreement and stability in the North Caucasus region, and the Russian state if it strives to preserve its presence in the Caucasus must offer them support and as a minimum have a collection of means which enables the restriction of action of those forces which work for the fall of Russia”*.

## **Similarities between Impact of Muridism and Appearance of Wahhabism**

### ***Impact of Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya in 19th Century***

There is much in Moshe Gammer's book *“Muslim Resistance to the Tsar”*<sup>16</sup> concerning Imam Shamil and the Russian conquest of Chechnya and Dagestan in the 19th Century which still remains true today. History never quite repeats itself, but it is possible to draw inexact parallels between some of the circumstances which prevailed in the North Caucasus around 1810/1820 with the arrival of the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya movement and the present appearance of Wahhabism in Chechnya and Dagestan.

As Gammer writes; *“The area in which the [Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya] movement began to flourish, the Dagestan of the late 1810s and early 1820s was in turmoil. Russian rule undermined the traditional way of life and the political, economic and social structure not only of the country under their control, but of many communities*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. “Sheikh Kunta-Khadzhi Kishinskiy formed the essence of it in the heat of the Caucasian War. He considered the continuation of the war with Russia as death for the mountainmen. The sheikh called on the Chechens to stop combat operations and search for a compromise, but to save themselves. *“Brothers, stop fighting. They are provoking us into war, in order to destroy us... If they force going to church - go. It is only walls. Only your spirits are Muslim. I never believe that any Turks will help us... Therefore you are able to live with Russians, but if they force you to forget your language, your customs - rise and die as one”*, so spoke Kunta-Khadzhi in 1864, and it rings with no less urgency today”.

<sup>16</sup> Moshe Gammer *“Muslim Resistance to the Tsar - Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Dagestan”* Frank Cass & Co, London, 1994.

which had not yet come under Russian domination. The economy of the still independent, or 'unpacified' communities was strongly affected by the Russian economic warfare. Boycotts against specific communities and the prevention of others from using fields and winter pasture in the lowlands disrupted traditional patterns of commerce and food production upon which the mountaineers were dependent, since they were not self-sufficient<sup>17</sup>.

Furthermore, the Russian anti-Islamic policy threatened the people with the deprivation of their identity through the loss of history, literary heritage and Arabic scholarship. Local rulers found to their cost that even if they were "initially well disposed toward Russia, Russian sovereignty was much more restrictive than the traditional patterns of dominance in the region. Rulers who openly opposed the Russians were ousted, but even those who agreed to Russian terms lost most of their power and their territories were eventually annexed"<sup>18</sup>. Disillusionment amongst local rulers became the excuse for exacting heavy financial payments from their subjects and the use of brutal force against them. Russian appointment of local rulers appeared to their subjects to be "increasingly illegitimate and unjust. The mere fact that they were appointed by the Russians in disregard of local customs and traditions sufficed to deprive them of any legitimacy. Furthermore, their behaviour, being contrary to both the adat and the sharia, was therefore sheer zulm and further discredited their rule"<sup>19</sup>.

Thus a situation had developed where the people "felt abandoned by their leaders just when they needed them most - when their physical and spiritual world was crumbling. It was at this precise moment that the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya movement arrived with what seemed to be the right answers"<sup>20</sup>.

**Box 4 - Views of Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya<sup>21</sup>**

1. The *Umma* had gone astray. It was their duty to restore it to the right path, to imitate the ideal period of the Prophet and his companions. Naqshbandi adherents, therefore were instructed to lead their life according to the *sunna* of the Prophet, to fulfil exactly the commandments of the *sharia* and to avoid *bid'a*.

2. Only when the *sharia* was established and the Muslims returned to the right path would they become virtuous and strong again, able to wage a *jihad* and liberate themselves.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p40.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p41.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p42.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p42.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p42. Page 439: *Umma* (Arabic - nation) - in Islam the Muslims constitute one nation and all the unbelievers another. *Sunna* (Arabic) - customary practice, norm, tradition. *Sharia* (Arabic) - Muslim religious law. *Bid'a* (Arabic) - bad innovation. Since in principle any innovation has no precedent in the Prophet's *sunna*, all innovations are regarded as *bid'a*, at least by the fundamentalists. *Jihad* (Arabic - effort) - Holy war against non-Muslims of *dar al-harb*. Muslim legal literature (*fiqh*) distinguishes between an offensive *jihad* (to conquer parts of *dar al-harb* which is the obligation and responsibility of the ruler only) and a defensive *jihad* when part of *dar al-Islam* is attacked and conquered by unbelievers. In this case participation in the *jihad* is an obligation of all able Muslims in the attacked area.

3. Otherwise, there was an implicit threat: the duty of the people to obey their rulers was valid only as long as their orders did not contradict the *sharia*.

However, the Russians persecuted the Naqshbaniyya-Khalidiyya movement as they harassed other branches of Muridism. The Russian stance stemmed from their traditional negative attitude towards Islam, in fact towards any religious movement, other than the state-controlled Orthodox Church. Russians repeatedly tried to convert the Muslim mountain peoples of the North Caucasus to Orthodox Christianity and to restrict Muslim religious practice, even going so far as to prohibit the *Haj* to Mecca and Medina. Nothing has really changed in the Russian mind since the 19th Century, when “*Russian xenophobia coupled with the usual Russian suspicion and intolerance of any movement or activity independent of the authorities, resulted in ‘Muridism’<sup>22</sup> being defined from the very beginning as a ‘fanatic’ movement - fanatic meaning anti-Russian. Equally, the call to implement the sharia became synonymous with a call for jihad in the Russian eyes...*”<sup>23</sup> The point is doubly made, if one replaces ‘19th’ by ‘20th’ and ‘Muridism’ by ‘Wahhabism’.

### ***Appearance of Wahhabism in 20th Century in North Caucasus***

Briefly, Wahhabism appeared as a formal religious school in the 18th Century in Saudi Arabia. The movement took its name from its leader and exponent Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, who was an advocate of Islam returning to the form that existed at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, where “*The essence of his teaching consists of a strict monotheism: Allah is the single creator and only he deserves adoration. Wahhabism is close to the official ideology of Saudi Arabia*”<sup>24</sup>.

The first *Wahhabity* appeared in the North Caucasus and in Central Asia at about the same time as the beginning of *perestroyka* in the mid-1980s, when after the removal of the “Iron Curtain” preachers from Arab countries arrived to propagate their message throughout the territories of the Muslim regions of the USSR and young Muslim men from these regions obtained the opportunity to undertake religious study abroad in educational establishments of foreign Islamic countries. However, as in Central Asia, local *Wahhabity* were categorically opposed to being called *Wahhabity*.

In essence Wahhabism includes those people who speak critically of the official spiritual leadership. As Igor’ Rotar’ wrote, “*to be absolutely accurate one could typify the so-called North Caucasus Wahhabis as Salafity (a general name for Muslim religious activists who in different periods of history summoned people to orientate themselves to the way of life and faith of early Muslim society) or actual fundamentalists*”<sup>25</sup>. Rotar’ also quoted Aleksey Malashenko<sup>26</sup>, a leading Russian

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p439: *Murid* (Arabic - one desires, strives for). A disciple of a *sufi shaykh*. The Russians used the term indiscriminately to apply to all the mountaineers who fought under the banner of the *imams* and their movement - ‘Muridism’.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p44.

<sup>24</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 11 (1582), 27 January 1998, p2 “*Chast’ Musul’man gotova k gazawatu*” by Igor’ Rotar’.

<sup>25</sup> *Sodruzhestvo NG*, No 8 (20), 22 September 1999, p9 “*Islamskiy radikalizm na prostorakh SNG*” by Igor’ Rotar’.

Islamic specialist: “[Malashenko] *defines fundamentalism as a phenomenon, the essence of which contains a striving to recreate the fundamental foundations of its own civilisation, cleansed of its alien innovations and borrowings, to bring back the ‘true’ form*”<sup>27</sup>.

From a socio-religious point of view one can well see that the Sufi movements in the North Caucasus, as a result of Tsarist persecution and Communist ‘disapproval’ of formal Islamic worship in the mosque, restrictions on travel to the Islamic centres of scholarship and learning in the Middle East and a subsequent reduction in mutual contact, came very much to pursue their own course, choosing remote places for worship such as a revered saint’s shrine or final resting place, away from public sight. Inevitably, because of circumstances hostile to Islam, it is possible to understand the development of a climate of ‘*alien innovations and borrowings*’ as a result of the lack of outside contact and the simple struggle to survive.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Circumstances in Dagestan favouring Fundamentalist Islam***

However, since 1991 there has been a great Islamic renaissance in Russia. Great changes have taken place, particularly in Dagestan: “*On 1st January 1999 in Dagestan around 1,670 mosques, 25 religious schools (Madrassa), 9 Muslim higher training establishments and three Islamic parties are in operation and functioning. In the mosques 650 schools are working. 3,500 Imams and Muedzins serve in religious organisations. Today from the information available, 1,230 young men are undergoing training in 10 Muslim countries, annually tens of thousands of Dagestanis complete the pilgrimage to Mecca*”<sup>29</sup>.

Some estimate 5,000 Dagestanis and others are studying at centres in the Middle East. These young men return to their villages well versed in Islamic studies, having had the opportunity of perfecting their knowledge at great centres of mainstream Islamic learning and Arabic scholarship. They are probably better versed than their ‘elders and betters’ at home. It should not be surprising if a large proportion of these young men had become followers of a more radical form of Islam. Another factor of course, common to a large number of families, is that youth tends to believe it knows all the answers, better than parents and those older than themselves. This in itself can lead to dispute and estrangement.

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<sup>26</sup> Aleksey Vsevolodovich Malashenko - Doctor of Historical Science, senior scientific member of the Moscow Carnegie Centre.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Vanora Bennett provides an interesting insight into some aspects of the Chechen diaspora in Amman and their view on the Islam practised by their Chechen cousins in the North Caucasus. Vanora Bennett, “*Crying Wolf - The Return of War to Chechnya*”, Picador, 1998, p454: “Mohamed Bino was a witty, urbane Chechen who worked in the prime minister’s office... The Binos laughed a little at the language of their Chechen cousins, full of Russian words, and at their religious practices: ‘They’re deeply religious, honest, good people; but after seventy years without proper education some of their prayers have got a bit muddled. They say meaningless things in what they think is Arabic. They dance those old dances. None of us mind their mumbo-jumbo, though; we appreciate it’s a sign of their good faith preserved in difficult conditions... You know what we Chechens say about our faith?’ said Mohamed Bino ‘We say; Mohammed was an Arab - but Allah is Chechen’. The Binos were reverent about their past”.

<sup>29</sup> NG - *Regiony*, No 8 (33), 27 April 1999 “*Dagestan: s Rossiyey ili bez neye*” by Guriya Murklinskaya.

So in a general sense there are two potential sources of friction. First, the differences in the approach to Islamic worship. One approach, Sufism otherwise known as Muridism with its two main brotherhoods, the Naqshabandiyya and the Qadiriya, being shaped by somewhat hostile circumstances over a period of 200 years or more, with a baggage of innovations and borrowings necessary for its survival as a result of its forced isolation from the outside world. Alternatively, a Radical Islam that seeks to return to the basic foundations established by the Prophet: an Islam which is uncontaminated by deviation for whatever reason. Second, the differences between youth and the old men; differences between those who have never travelled from the Caucasus and those who have had the benefit of long periods of study in foreign lands together with the difference in age. Another factor in this greater contact with the outside world must also be radio, television and more recently the Internet<sup>30</sup> bringing ever widening parameters of contact. This again probably affects the young more than the old men sitting on the log in the centre of the village.

Dagestani youth at home in his mountain village or returning from abroad is acutely aware of the socio-economic political situation in Dagestan, as is his counterpart who has not left the mountains or Dagestan. Many are victims of the fact that *“some 60% of the population live on the poverty line; 30% are without work and the average wage is 2.7 times below that elsewhere in the Russian Federation. The population of the republic amounts to 2.15 mln people”*<sup>31</sup>.

*“In Dagestan for example there are some 200 families of different nationalities, but mainly those belonging to Avars and Darghins. They number approximately 7,000 people plus some 200,000 other people who live within their sphere of influence. This 20% of the population controls 85% of the natural riches of Dagestan. The remaining 80% live below the poverty line, 3-4 times poorer than the statistic for an average Russian. Amongst the young, unemployment is around 85%”*<sup>32</sup>.

Many of the young people leave the rigours of a mountain life and subsistence farming, drifting to the perceived ‘joys’ of urban life. Life in mountainous Dagestan is hard and in many respects unrewarding compared to other avenues in the towns which appear to offer greater opportunities<sup>33</sup>. *“To live in Makhachkala is not the same as it is in the mountains. The climate [in the mountains] is the same as in Murmansk: in August snow can fall, besides no potatoes grow there”*<sup>34</sup>. Ramazan Abdulatipov, himself from Mountainous Dagestan, gave a description of some the problems concerning livestock farming in the mountain districts:

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<sup>30</sup> Aleksandr Ignatenko writing in *NG - Religii Dayzhest* in April 1999 provided a wide-ranging survey identifying web sites on the Internet belonging to various extremist Islamic organisations. *NG - Religii Dayzhest*, No 3 (3), 7 April 1999 *“Ekstremizm v Komp'yuternoy setf”*.

<sup>31</sup> *Kommersant Vlast'*, No 30 (282), 11 August 1998 *“Pobedonosnoye otstupleniye”* by Anatoliy Petrov.

<sup>32</sup> *Segodnya*, 7 September 1999.

<sup>33</sup> See Blandy *“Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1”*, p33-34.

<sup>34</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka: Intervyu nedeli - *Vremya MN*, 26, p4, 26 August 1999, *“Dagestanskiy konflikt mozhet rasprostranitsya po Ivsemu Kavkazu”*, Natal'ya Gorodetskaya interviewing Ramazan Abdulatipov, who as a minister of the Russian Government has been occupied with inter-ethnic problems in the Federal power organs.



*“They have also begun to destroy the kolkhozy [collective farms] and sovkhozy [state farms]. In Dagestan often a state farm is situated in the mountains, but pastures and arable land are found in the valley, some 300-400 km beyond the pass. They used to drive thousands of herds into the mountains in summer, to the alpine meadows, and in winter to pastures in the valley. Now they have destroyed the equipment. They have destroyed the cattle. Earlier there was a fight for every mountain pasture, neighbouring Dagestani, Azerbaijani and Georgian villages fought to the death. Now the alpine pastures stand empty: who is going to drive 100 sheep there over 400 km? Only in collective farming is it possible to restore livestock farming to a level approximately equal to that of the recent past”<sup>35</sup>.*

Whilst the climate may be more clement in Makhachkala, there is a great disparity in the acquisition and enjoyment of wealth, for *“one of the main reasons which compels the traditionally moderate Dagestani Muslim to turn and embrace Wahhabism is certitude in the corruptibility of the ‘Makhachkalinskiy’ summit”<sup>36</sup>*. Its corruptibility is perhaps confirmed by the sight of the *“palaces of the local ‘money-bags’, in the area of private detached residences known as ‘Santa Barbara’”<sup>37</sup>*. Even if this does not recruit more people to actually join the Wahhabis, it tends to make a *“considerable part of the population of the republic support [them]”<sup>38</sup>*.

### ***Circumstances in Chechnya favouring Fundamentalist Islam***

One of the arguments of those who state that the opposition in Chechnya had acquired a much greater inter-confessional character is the affirmation that a considerable number of Muslims from the far abroad were and are fighting on the Chechen side. Aleksey Malashenko<sup>39</sup> states that according to the mass media in 1994 only eight instructors from Afghanistan, 12 people from Pakistan and four Bosnians came to Groznyy. Furthermore, at a meeting in 1996 in the Somali capital Mogadishu of Islamic organisations from Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Iran, representatives worked on the training and dispatch of 700 mercenaries to Chechnya. There is no official information about the number of Mujahideen from abroad. A few people taken prisoner by the Federal forces have testified, not too convincingly, about the appearance of massive Islamic solidarity. *“Afghans, Pakistanis and Arabs are not mentioned quite so often as Ukrainian nationalists, Russian deserters or the semi-mythical female-snipers (the white tights) from the Baltic countries”*. In subsequent years the number of instructors and especially fighters has grown. The arrival of young people is most noticeable from Jordan, approximately 150,000 descendants of Chechen emigrants who went there in the 19th Century. The civilians who participated in these combat operations were Jordanian-Chechens and not Arabs.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, *Zhurnal Itogi*, 14 September 1999 *“Chukhaya zemlya - Potemki”* by Aleksandr Ryklin.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> All information in this paragraph is from Aleksey Malashenko *“Islamskoye vozrozhdeniye v sovremennoy Rossii”* Moscow Carnegie Centre, 1998, p182.

After the conclusion of the first Russo-Chechen conflict in August 1996, Islam became one of main factors of state structure in Chechnya. Some of the reasons are contained in Box 5 below.

**Box 5 - Reasons for Chechen State being Based on Islam**<sup>40</sup>

1. First and foremost Islam [should] have enabled internal consolidation. Talk, of course was not about Islamic Brotherhoods - Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriya, but more about the Islam which appeals to or invokes the idea of an Islamic state, returning to “fundamental values”, to Sharia norms.
2. Islamisation is a factor of self-identification in relation to Russia. Chechnya as an Islamic state cannot be part of a Russian structure.
3. The introduction of Sharia would assist in the re-establishment, although only partially, of law and order.
4. Islam remains for the government of Chechnya one of the best means of achieving its objectives in internal and external politics.

It is perhaps not so surprising that in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, in its bid to create a new state, independent of Moscow, there were those who became orientated towards Fundamentalist Islam and the wider issue of the establishment of a united Muslim North Caucasus, belonging to a Muslim nation: “*the Fundamentalist tendency (more accurately, quasi-fundamentalist, in as much that in Chechnya there were neither literate theologians nor even clever interpreters of revival) was visible in the renaissance of Chechen Islam*”<sup>41</sup>. This dream of a unified Muslim North Caucasus had a widespread resonance amongst the more extremist politicians and ideologues in both Chechnya and Dagestan. Most noticeable in these in 1997 circles were people such as Nadirshakh Khachilayev, Movladi Udugov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

The lack of success of the Maskhadov government in Chechnya in making progress with the Federal authorities in Moscow over the status of Chechnya added additional impetus to the campaigns of extremist elements in Chechnya<sup>42</sup>. The Sufi brotherhoods, on the other hand, whilst having minor differences between themselves, had become thoroughly alarmed by Fundamentalist Islam, perceiving in the idea of a universal Islam spreading throughout the North Caucasus, a danger for their own ethno-confessional traditions and a concrete threat to their favourable positions in village communities and consequently the possibility of a diminution of their public status throughout the Muslim territories of the North Caucasus.

In Chechnya, as well as in Dagestan, almost echoing the conditions when Muridism took a strong hold at the turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries, Fundamentalist

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p174.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p174.

<sup>42</sup> See Blandy “*Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions - An Interim Comparison and Assessment*”, P29 CSRC, January 2000 p24 to 29 and “*Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1*”, P30 CSRC, March 2000, p17 to 18.

Islam has also found a climate conducive to propagation of its beliefs and interpretations of the truth as a result of the negative economic factors which stem from the first war with Russia, the destruction of Grozny and ruin of the infrastructure of Chechnya. This has resulted in an economic void where only 10% of the population have legitimate employment, with the implication that 90% are occupied in illegal activities and “*where in practice the basis of everything is absolute misery*”<sup>43</sup>.

Ruslan Khasbulatov painted a vivid but depressing picture of life in Chechnya, where the field commanders have money which enables them to support the immediate members of the household and close relatives, but “*the remaining 99% of people are situated on the edge of starvation. Everyone needs medical help, the children do not learn*”<sup>44</sup>. He continued that the Chechens have always differed from the other peoples in the Caucasus due to the fact that even elderly people speak Russian without an accent, and more specifically young people and children even in the most remote auls speak excellent Russian. Concern is directed at the lack of schooling and the effects it could have on future generations. “*At the present time the Russian language is not just leaving Chechnya, it is disappearing catastrophically. A generation is growing up which not only does not know Russian but does not know the Chechen language*”<sup>45</sup>. This of course must strike a rather poignant note with Khasbulatov for he did not forget that after the deportation of the Chechens to Kazakhstan in February 1943: “*I spent my childhood in the extreme north of Kazakhstan, in a small village called Poludino... My first teacher, Vera Vladimirova, walked 5 kilometres every day to come to our house. Why did she do it for a boy from a ‘criminal’ family when she could easily have avoided it? Remembering her, I realise she was giving us a lesson in internationalism and kindness*”<sup>46</sup>. In spite of the circumstances, he received an education which ultimately took him on to Moscow University.

Khasbulatov branched off into another closely connected theme, that of religious education. The Chechen young people “*... learn only two or three prayers and then to handling an automatic weapon. But these things are incompatible, Islam is a humanitarian religion, the principle ‘do not kill’ runs like a thread throughout the Koran. But amateur mullahs in Chechnya interpret the Koran arbitrarily. They speak three phrases in Arabic, and then for half an hour explain them at length in Chechen. This is a falsehood. This cynicism pervades their whole ideology*”<sup>47</sup>.

### ***Fertile Ground for Fundamentalist Islam***

So even in this brief examination of Wahhabism, or more accurately on the tendency towards Radical or Fundamentalist Islam, some substantial deficiencies are beginning to appear in the forms of worship traditionally practised by Sufi

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<sup>43</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka: Intervyu nedeli, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 September 1999, “*Ruslan Khasbulatov: V Dagestane my poluchili neizbezhnoye*”.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka: Intervyu nedeli, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 September 1999, p3.

<sup>46</sup> *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 17 June 1988. For further details, see: C W Blandy “*The Chechen Conflict - Escalation and Expansion*”, P15 CSRC, June 1995, p22.

<sup>47</sup> Op cit Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka: Intervyu nedeli, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 September 1999, p3.

Muslims in the North Caucasus compared to the main stream of Islam, Islamic religious teaching and Arabic scholarship. In turn this provides a better understanding of the reasons for the desire to return to the Arabic, unadulterated by Chechen, Avar, Darghin, Lak, Kumyk or Lezghin languages, because for a Muslim, Arabic is where the truth lies. In a similar way, on a much lower plane, an analyst of Russian affairs will find it desirable, if not essential, to read in the original Russian language in order to carry out an accurate analysis.

Furthermore, the corruptibility of people at the head of the government in Makhachkala, the running down and destruction of livestock farming, the migration of young people to the towns and cities together with a dearth of jobs, money, and prospects provide a rich soil for religious activity and maybe a cover for international terrorism.

However there are certain basic differences between between Chechens and the peoples of Dagestan. Firstly, in comparison with Chechnya, in Dagestan only a very small percentage of the whole population, perhaps no more than “3% are adherents of Wahhabism”<sup>48</sup>. Even of the inhabitants of the so-called Wahhabi villages of the Kadar zone, possibly only some “10-15% are Wahhabis”<sup>49</sup>. Secondly only an insignificant percentage of the population in Dagestan wish Dagestan to leave the Russian Federation. However, Chechnya is a completely different matter. The Chechens have reached a point where they simply cannot remain in the Russian Federation. Indeed throughout their whole history they have never agreed to be included within the structure of Russia. They rebelled all the time. They were deported. Then they returned. The Dagestanis never experienced anything like that. In general the Chechens have never had an understanding of a supreme authority or power. It was otherwise for the Dagestani. They were always a feudally organised society. The Chechens accepted the authority of Dudayev during the war, they accepted the authority of Maskhadov, because he was a superb military planner. And now once again the Chechen saw himself as the master, and no one could tell him whom to shoot, whom not to shoot, whom to kidnap, whom not to kidnap. “*The psychology of the Dagestani is completely different: “he knows that the boss is the boss, and he must respect him, even if he is bad”*”<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, it cannot be said that all Dagestanis love the Chechens.

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<sup>48</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, *Segodnya*, 7 September 1999, “*Granitsa Rossii budet prokhodit po pravomu beregu Dona*”, Ol'ga Pashkova in an interview with Sergey Artyunov.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT ISLAMIC TERRITORY IN BUYNAKSK RAYON

It will be remembered that the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar, formerly the Kolkhoz bearing the title Lenin Komsomol since 1936<sup>51</sup>, declared themselves to be an independent Islamic territory at the beginning of August 1998. According to the inhabitants of these villages only Shari'ah laws would be applicable on their territory and the Dagestani police would not be allowed into the villages. As a result of these events the internal situation in the Dagestan Republic, already strained following the murder of the Mufti of Dagestan, Said Mukhamad Khadzhi Abubakarov, led to an extraordinary meeting on 19 August 1998 of the Dagestan State Council which did not exclude the use of force against the Wahhabis in these villages.

### Long History of Tension

The increasing tension in the villages had its roots in a long train of events which probably started back in 1986<sup>52</sup>, when in Soviet times there was only one mosque, in the village of Kadar. In 1986, the Karamakhinty saw the need for their own mosque. Consequently they began to construct a mosque in Karamakhi, which was preceded by a delegation to obtain planning permission from the authorities in Moscow. Whilst permission from Moscow was forthcoming, however, the Dagestani authorities decided against building the mosque. Nevertheless, the Karamakhinty, obviously people of some tenacity of purpose, bought a strip of ground and within 24 hours had constructed a mosque made out of plywood. So that the authorities could not break up the flimsy structure, they made sure that the mosque was always occupied by people praying continuously round the clock, whilst a stone building was erected round it. The mosque was completed in 1987 and they then selected an Imam.

To maintain a view that the inhabitants of Karamakhi accepted with pleasure, in an ignorant and naive manner, the authority of sharia is to deny the fact that they had little or no alternative, other than the "*corrupt militiamen and bribe takers from the administration*"<sup>53</sup> and the "*pedlars of influence*"<sup>54</sup>. "*In this sense Karamakhi in its own way was a miniature model of the whole of Dagestan - and only Dagestan?*"<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 15 (1722), 19 August 1998, p1 "*Dagestanskiye fundamentalisty - Kak kolkhoz imeni Leninskogo Komsomola stal "ugrozoy bezopastnosti Rossii"* by Maksim Shevchenko.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid* for further incidents.

<sup>53</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, *Zhurnal Novoye Vremya*, 12 September 1999, p1 "*Voynya dlya pobeditelya*" by Vadim Dubnov.

<sup>54</sup> C W Blandy "*Dagestan: The Gathering Storm*", S38 CSRC, June 1998, p12 "The methods of attracting and holding supporters are instructive. Even yesterday's former fierce opponents have long been put to the test in Dagestan. Besides the usual threats and blackmail, the tactics for being nominated to an appointment are promises of benefits and wealth".

<sup>55</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, *Zhurnal Novoye Vremya*, 12 September 1999, p1.

Sergey Arutyunov provided an explanation of the problems between the residents and the Dagestani militia in that:

*“On each kilometre of road there is a post where it is necessary to pay. First of all the drivers of heavy goods vehicles suffer from this. Suffice it to say, the long distance truck drivers make up the majority of the male population of the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi and they have turned to Wahhabism, and in a large degree it is a protest against the tyranny of the militia. The struggle against corruption must be initiated, otherwise the population breaks off relations with any authority and crosses over to Wahhabism”<sup>56</sup>.*

On 20-21 May 1998 in the village of Karamakhi an armed clash occurred between members of the militia and local Wahhabis. The village council drove the militiamen out of the village. As a result of the clash one local inhabitant and one militiaman were killed. From that time Karamakhi *“lived its own autonomous life; from the beginning local Wahhabis established their own sentry on the village outskirts, and in later days along the republic highway leading from Buynaksk to the mountains, where some 20 rayony of the republic are situated. Suffice it to say, these events followed the day after the seizure of the government building in Makhachkala by some associates of the Brothers Khachilayev”<sup>57</sup>.*

Prior to this clash, there had been a number of events which tended to inflame the situation, such as the meeting on 5 July 1998 at which representatives of the Chechen field commander Khattab and Shamil' Basayev head of the 'Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan and Chechnya' attended. This measure *“naturally did not enable the reconciliation of the rebellious district of Dagestan”<sup>58</sup>*. In the next few days in the immediate proximity of Karamakhi in the village of Verkhniyy Dzhengutay (see Map below) militia posts were established at which on three separate occasions they passed the time of day by random shooting. As a result of this there were no casualties; however, the population of Verkhniyy Dzhengutay were extremely irritated by their noisy neighbours. Meanwhile there were unconfirmed reports about the penetration of armed fighters into Karamakhi and other districts of Dagestan from Chechnya. The republic leadership at that time intended to only use its own forces and assets, considering them to be sufficient, and therefore did not ask the Federal structures for assistance. Taking into account the gradual but nonetheless inevitable increase in tension and pressure from the Dagestani authorities including OMON and militia activities, the Karamakhintsy went to Chechnya and asked specialists to come and transform their village into a veritable fortress.

### **Agreement between Authorities and Villagers**

On 2 September 1998 an accommodation was reached between the Dagestani authorities and the villagers of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. Magomedsalikh Gusayev, the Dagestani Minister for Nationalities and External Relations, informed a news conference in Makhachkala that the two villages had promised to renounce

<sup>56</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, *Segodnya*, 7 September 1999.

<sup>57</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 14 (1721), 18 August 1998, p5 *“Ochag separatizma v Dagestane”* by Vadim Il'in.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

*“anti-constitutional activities and to recognise local self-government bodies and other constitutional authorities”*.<sup>59</sup> The Dagestani government promised not to prosecute the residents of the two villages and confirmed their constitutional right to practise Islam. It also gave an undertaking not to use the term ‘Wahhabism’ in official statements.

Also on 2 September the then acting Interior Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Stepashin arrived in Dagestan. Stepashin announced that a special operation had begun in Dagestan to expose certain corrupt officials which included those bandits who were not allowing people to live and work in peace. Later a meeting took place at the Interior Ministry in Makhachkala between Stepashin and the heads of the law enforcement organs concerning the illegal possession and storage of weapons and the right way to ensure a peaceful life in Dagestan. Sergey Stepashin visited the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi and stayed some three hours. Stepashin noted *“half in jest and half in earnest, that the people of Karamakhi were very likeable extremists. In this context, and this time in earnest, he reproached the Dagestani authorities for creating a myth about the irreconcilable fundamentalists... There is peace here now. People are peacefully going about their business. Naturally there must be no actions involving force or special operations, and I say this in my capacity as Minister of Internal Affairs”*<sup>60</sup>. However, the Dagestani Minister for Nationalities Affairs, Magomed-Salikh Gusayev, together with other members of the Dagestani authorities in Makhachkala did their utmost to prove to the team of journalists from Izvestiya that *“the peacefulness of the Wahhabis was just for show and that anything could be expected from them at any moment... We understand quite well that it is practically impossible to straighten out this band of fanatics”*<sup>61</sup>.

Perhaps Sergey Stepashin had actually been over-impressed by the peacefulness of the Wahhabis and Magomed-Salikh Gusayev was quite correct in his analysis. However, whatever way it was, Karamakhi and the other two villages were to prove to be an irritant in the affairs of the local rural communities: *“the activity of the Arab missionaires is creating confrontation between believers, frankly setting them against each other and representatives of other confessions, igniting enmity and religious intolerance, which has always historically been alien to the resident Caucasus peoples”*<sup>62</sup>.

Guriya Murklinskaya made the point that it was impossible not to note that the situation was exacerbated as a result of missionary activity, and that the situation in these villages was extremely serious. Although the fundamentalists were in an absolute minority, they were armed and equipped with the latest words of Islamic diversionary science. They held all the population hostage and violently introduced Sharia laws. It was said that this was the main military base on the territory of Dagestan of the Chechen field commander, the Saudi Arabian, the Emir al Khattab.

Most importantly from the Federal and Dagestani authorities' point of view, it had become apparent by the spring of 1999 that *“this territory was completely and*

<sup>59</sup> BBC SWB SU/3323 B/17 [25], 4 September 1998.

<sup>60</sup> BBC SWB SU/3324 B/12 [28], 5 September 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *NG - Regiony*, No 8 (33), 27 April 1999 *“Dagestan: s Rossiyei ili bez neye”* by Guriya Murklinskaya.

*openly controlled from outside by means of satellite communications with the main headquarters being situated in Chechnya*<sup>63</sup>. A television transmitter had been established close to Chabanmakhi, probably in the vicinity of Khrebet Chaban, at a height of some 750 metres, used to broadcast propaganda on the ideas of Radical Islam, calling people to a Jihad against the Russian *Kafir* and to transmit instructions to fighters. To enlarge the broadcasting zone to the Dagestani border areas to ensure that *“the fundamentalist direction in Islam has obtained a wide spread in Akhty, Botlikh, Kizilyurt and Tsumadin rayony”*<sup>64</sup>, an additional television centre was under construction in the Chechen village of Shatoy, financed by one of the field commanders of an illegal bandit formation from Kizilyurt rayon of Dagestan. *“All summer weapons and ammunition were delivered to these villages which had declared themselves independent Islamic territories”*<sup>65</sup> from the Chechen side. Helping the Karamakhinty to defend themselves from the Dagestani authorities was an ideal way to obtain, in some form of exchange, the use of an additional television transmitter which could provide deeper dissemination of propaganda to the more central parts of Dagestan.

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.



## COURSE OF COMBAT OPERATIONS IN BUYNAKSK RAYON

*“Each war produces its own catchwords. In Afghanistan Dushmen were called ‘Dukhi’, in Chechnya the definition ‘Federaly’ appeared, in Dagestan the harsh word ‘zachistka’ offends the ear”<sup>66</sup>.*

### Switch of Operations from Avaristan

Whilst the Federal counter-terrorist operation against the incursion into Avaristan was beginning to ‘wind down’, the Federal structures and Dagestani authorities next turned their attention to the Wahhabi occupied villages in Buynaksk rayon. From the beginning this operation was perceived as a continuation of the previous one. Undoubtedly, some of the considerations in deciding to assault this independent Islamic enclave were: it provided a forward dissemination centre for propaganda and stirring up unrest; it was located in Central Dagestan; the Kadar zone complex had command over a number of routes and as a wasps’ nest in the rear of Federal forces conducting ‘mopping up’ operations along the Dagestani border, both to the south and the north, it could become a real problem for the authorities. It was an affront to Federal power and the authorities in Makhachkala, needing to be sorted out once and for all. *“The decision of the Kremlin was completely logical, as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin explained. Moscow could not resign itself to the fact that for over a year this region of Dagestan was not subordinating itself to Russian laws. However, the forceful actions of Russia allowed the local ‘Islamic radicals’ to create for themselves an image of being the ‘victims of a Godless government”<sup>67</sup>.* This operation was to include an ‘exclusion zone’ over a comparatively wide area to the south of Buynaksk followed by what proved to be a protracted and slow-moving assault operation on these three villages and associated dominating heights.

The operation was to be complicated further by Chechen bandit formations regrouping in Chechnya and carrying out another armed ‘invasion’ into Dagestan, on this occasion into Novolakskiy rayon lying to the west south west of Khasavyurt. By this action the Chechen and Islamic fighters posed the threat of possible advances on Khasavyurt, Kizliyar and Makhachkala in attempts to relieve the pressure on their Muslim brothers in the Kadar zone complex. Another factor which added further distortion to the conflict was a bombing campaign against a Moscow shopping mall, apartment blocks in Moscow and Volgodonsk and the married quarters of service personnel in the Buynaksk military township.

It is perhaps a matter of more than passing interest to note that the village of Kadar already had a bad reputation. *“When a family killed a sheep or an ox, all its relatives, neighbours and other counsellors had to be asked to supper, or else they risked being labelled a shameful family, the severest censure in Dagestan where*

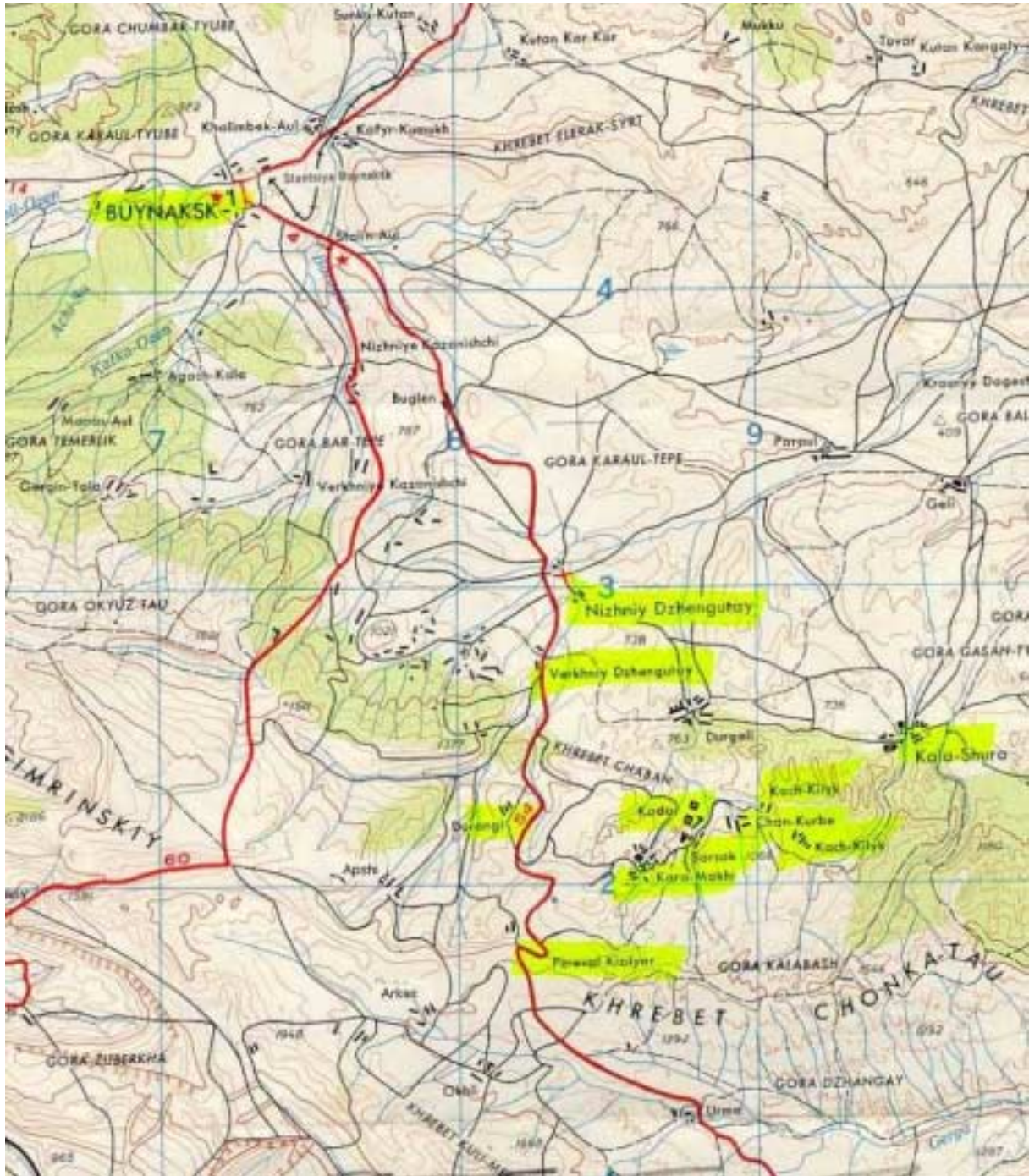
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<sup>66</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 171 (1987), 15 September 1999, 1 “*Voyna v Dagestane prodolzhayetsya*” by Aleksandr Shaburkin.

<sup>67</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 164 (1980), 4 September 1999, p1 “*Boi v Dagestane prodolzhayutsya*” by Milrad Fatullayev.

community opinion or rumour drew the line between nobility and baseness. News of disgrace spread beyond the village and groups of people with bad reputations had to settle together, like Kadar, the Darghin village of thieves”<sup>68</sup>.

**Map 1- Area of Exclusion Zone around Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar**



<sup>68</sup> Robert Chenciner *“Dagestan - Tradition and Survival”*, Curzon Press, 1997, p129.

### ***Insights into Position of Makhachkala***

The coming events in the Kadar zone were foreseen. This allowed not only the fighters to prepare for defence, but it also allowed the authorities to give them a last warning. On the side of 'official' Makhachkala and the Russian power-wielding structures a whole series of important advantages existed, the main one being the understanding and approval of their actions on the suppression of the extremists by the Dagestani population. However, as Il'ya Maksakov wrote, "*the unity of a people is a somewhat tricky matter, for from being an asset it can turn into a problem for the authorities as a result of incompetent actions*"<sup>69</sup>. At least, defined disagreements and areas of argument had already made their appearance. For example, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic Gadzhi Makhachev had already expressed the view that in that sense the *Karamakhinsty* were brothers and not aggressors and it did not stand to reason that a forceful operation was being conducted against them.

In fact the supporters of 'pure' Islam in Buynaksk rayon had not taken part in any aggression against Dagestanis at all, but the 'independent Islamic territory' could not remain unnoticed after an attempt was made in Botlikh rayon to seize a part of Dagestani territory. In fact, the population of the republic simply could not understand the inactivity of the authorities with regard to the 'Islamic dzhamaats'. The murder of several Dagestani militiamen remained on the conscience of the Karamakhi extremists as a result of armed clashes at different times throughout the year. Therefore, the reasoning was that the Dagestani government "*had the full moral right to turn against the supporters of 'pure' Islam and carry out a forceful operation*"<sup>70</sup>.

Facing Makhachkala were two important problems. The first was 'not overshooting the mark' by not permitting the arbitrary approach and methods of the power wielding structures, in particular the military, to upset the relationship with the peaceful population. The later reported statement attributed to General Gennadiy Troshev after he had taken over command of the Federal Group of Forces tended to underline the concerns of the Dagestani government about the military<sup>71</sup>. For, proceeding from the earlier experience of the Chechen war, such terms as 'cleansing', 'combing' and 'filtration point' were associated with murder, illegal arrest and detention of peaceful and law-abiding citizens. The second problem was not to hesitate half way through the necessary action. The majority of Dagestanis expected from the government in Makhachkala the promised realisation of a campaign against religious extremism. The forceful operation was to be a corrective for previous flagrant errors and derelictions of duty. Now, official Makhachkala was in a condition to adopt political-social measures to prevent the re-emergence of similar phenomena.

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<sup>69</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 162 (1978), 2 September 1999, p5.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Soldat Udachi*, 12 [63], 1999 "Voyna v Stranyye Gor", by Boris Dzherelievskiy, p23. Following attempts by the extremists to obtain an exit corridor for a way out to Chechnya from Magomedali Magomedov, Chairman of the State Council, "The General [Troshev] stated that he commanded here and not Magomedov and the bandits would not get a corridor".

## Handover of Operational Command

On 27 August 1999, with the end of the Tsumadinsko-Botlikh operation, news came of the handover of command of the Headquarters of the Combined Group of Forces (OGF) by Colonel General Viktor Kazantsev to representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and his return to Rostov-on-Don. At that time it was assumed that Federal Forces Dagestan would be commanded by the Interior Ministry general who had commanded earlier, Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov or the Chief of Staff of Internal Troops Colonel General Nikolay Maksin.

After the criticisms of the initial handling of the 'invasion' into Avaristan by the Interior Troops command, when "*a forum of high-ranking generals found it hard to define the hierachical relations between themselves*"<sup>72</sup> and the subsequent transfer of operational command to the Ministry of Defence on 17 August, it seems strange that command again reverted to the Interior Ministry prior to the Kadar operation unless, of course, Kadar was regarded as a side show in view of the danger of another incursion along the Checheno-Dagestan border, where border operations would become the first priority. Valeriy Aleksin had this to say on the question:

*"Again, why in the Kadar zone the command of the operation was entrusted to General Ovchinnikov and not to the Commander of North Caucasus Military District (NCMD), Colonel General Viktor Kazantsev was incomprehensible. It was not the permanent 'cleansing' of populated points for which the Ministry of the Interior Internal Troops are trained. It was an actual assault and the Militia cannot solve this task"*<sup>73</sup>.

The Commander in Chief of Internal Troops, Colonel General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, was untrained in commanding troops belonging to different Federal departments. Due to the unsatisfactory cooperation and coordination arrangements of a diverse range of forces and the absence of the necessary support, their effectiveness was not high, as later events were to demonstrate and as a consequence there were unwarranted casualties.

### Sunday 29 August 1999

Federal operations were complicated by the fact that ordinary, peaceful, local inhabitants were still living in the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanakhi and Kadar despite the presence of Wahhabis. A few days earlier in Karamakhi, where the Wahhabity were in some strength, a meeting of local inhabitants had taken place, at which they demanded that the leaders of this sect turn away or expel from the village any other 'like-minded people'<sup>74</sup>, who had come here during the combat operations in Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy rayony. However, in the words of the head of Buynaksk rayon administration Magomed-Rasul Alkhlayev, all inhabitants had been forewarned about preparations for the operation at 2200 hrs on Saturday 28 August, and during the night of 28/29 August their evacuation was put into effect. The prior need to remove inhabitants denied the Federal authorities the opportunity of surprise in the operation to disarm the Wahhabis. Earlier, before the

<sup>72</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 145 (1961), 10 August 1999 p1, 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 166 (1982), 8 September 1999, p3.

<sup>74</sup> *Soldat Udachi*, 12 [63], 1999, p20 "*Voyna v stranyye gor*" by Boris Dzhereliyevskiy. The position in Chabanmakhi was possibly similar to that in Karamakhi, for "The Chabanmakhi Home Guard said that in their village there were no more than 30 Wahhabi families. The newly arrived fighters made up the remaining part of bandit formations".

start of the operation, there had been unsuccessful attempts at negotiating with the Wahhabis by the Dagestani procurator Imam Yaruyev, with the demand that they surrender their weapons. When it became known that the peaceful inhabitants had been evacuated, subunits of Internal Troops and Dagestani militia on 29 August 1999 at 0600 hrs set about the task of combing and 'cleansing' Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi of fighters. The main objective of the operation was said to be the removal of weapons.

### Monday 30 August 1999

The area of forthcoming operations had been blocked off by MVD troops special forces subunits and those of the Dagestani militia. Ministry of Interior Troops and the Dagestani Militia had been set tasks by the Operational Command. Unfavourable weather conditions on Sunday 29 August had precluded the use of fixed wing aircraft, Su-24s and Su-25s, but despite fog and rain, helicopter missile strikes and artillery fire missions were inflicted on the Chaban mountain feature<sup>75</sup>. It is interesting to note that winter alone does not own fog, rain and low cloud in the North Caucasus. Summer also possesses its share.

#### **Box 6 - Federal Assault on Kadar Zone Complex - Tasks**

To inflict air and artillery strikes on positions occupied by fighters:

1. Volch'i Vorota Pass to the SSW of the Kadar zone complex;
2. The mountains Chaban, Gorkan, Chakib and Bakli; and adjoining heights where the fighters had defensive positions.
3. The populated points of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, Kadar and Durani to be completely blocked.

Of undoubted interest are remarks made by Colonel General Mikhail Karatuyev, Commander Rocket Troops and Artillery, during an interview some time later. Some of his points are applicable to the seemingly long drawn out operation to disarm the Wahhabi extremists. In answer to the question, "*What sort of artillery do the Internal Troops MVD have and how can its existence be justified?*" General Karatuyev explained some of the limitations of artillery belonging to the Internal Troops.

*"Internal Troops of the MVD do not have heavy calibre [artillery], but artillery at battalion level is possible. It ensures the outcome of specific auxiliary military tasks. Let me give an example: an Internal Troops' blokpost is required to carry out the destruction of bandit formations at a range of 3000-5000 metres, and not only within its immediate vicinity with small arms. It is also necessary to illuminate the terrain with illuminating shells in order to effectively carry out observation and fire missions at night. If the Internal Troops did not have their own artillery we would have to subordinate our artillery to them or carry out their fire tasks ourselves, which is not expedient."*<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 1, 1998, p35 "*Raketniyye voyska i artilleriya v lokalnykh voynakh i vooruzhennykh konfliktakh*" by Lt-Gen M I Karatuyev, Commander in Chief Rocket Forces and Artillery. In the first Russo-Chechen conflict "for example from December 1994 to March 1995, in 'engagement of the enemy' when aviation in practice could not be used because of heavy cloud and fog, artillery carried out up to 90% of all the tasks". It should also be remembered that in relation to aviation, artillery has an all-weather capability of delivering effective fire support if deployed, concentrated and handled properly.

<sup>76</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 45 (168), 19-25 November 1999 "*'Bog Voyny' menayet taktiku*" by Sergey Sokut.

Map 2 - Kadar Zone Complex Diagrammatic Amplification<sup>77</sup>

General Karatuyev also had some remarks concerning observation and control.

*“Due to imperfections in observation and control means, releasable artillery capabilities are no more than 50%. To carry out observation and surveillance, we are only able to determine the coordinates of targets within the limitations of optical vision. The second problem is connected to automated systems of control (ASU). In our weaponry we have outdated ASU assets. They are being improved, but due to insufficient funds they cannot be issued to troops in the immediate future in the required numbers. ASU in the artillery only exists in the tactical sphere from artillery battalion to the senior battery officer (author's note: tasks equivalent to gun position officer). The link from the senior battery officer to the guns was incomplete. In essence ASU links exist from artillery battalion to regiment, artillery or rocket brigade, artillery division, army corps or army.”*

<sup>77</sup> Kommersant Daily, 7 September 1999, adapted.

Even with using the “Krasnopol” highly-accurate guided round, limitations still remain, for whilst *“The shell has shown itself to be a highly effective means which permits accurate strikes on enemy targets, its characteristics as a whole support the probability of destruction of a target with one round as 0.8 (80%). The problem consists in the fact that in reality we can only use this highly accurate shell within the limits of optical vision of the target. The tasks of “Krasnopol” can be carried out with conventional ammunition, only in the place of one round we have to fire some tens of rounds”*.

Commenting on the shortcomings of Federal artillery during the first Russo-Chechen conflict of recent times, General Karatuyev had noted in January 1998:

*“Observation was organised on the basis of using only visual optical means, the capabilities of which were restricted by the range of direct vision (on average 2–3 km but in towns and certain other places 200–300m)... The coordinates of battle order elements in the majority of cases were determined with low accuracy, meteorological and ballistic data were to all intents and purposes absent. The period of time to work out the observed data, making the decision and preparing to shoot, as a rule, considerably exceeded the time that the target was at the observed location. All this sharply reduced the effectiveness of fire, the fire mission lost the factor of surprise and did not allow the full realisation of artillery fire capabilities”<sup>78</sup>.*

### **Tuesday 31 August 1999**

After the night time lull combat operations were renewed once again. Fighting *“in the Kadar zone of Dagestan, Ministry of Interior Troops’ subunits met active resistance from the fighters, the numbers of which according to Interfax exceeded 500 men”<sup>79</sup>*. However, the terrorists, even with such numbers, evidently did not only count on their own forces and according to various radio transmissions turned to their allies in Chechnya and Dagestan for support<sup>80</sup>. Within a few hours terrorists began to concentrate on Chechen territory close to Novolakskiy rayon of Dagestan. *“Chechen field commanders Ruslan Gelayev and Arbi Barayev and the well-known Dagestani public figure Nadirshah Khachilayev appeared to be leading this operation”<sup>81</sup>*.

Meanwhile the terrorists who were expecting support in the Kadar zone took to reinforcing their positions on Mt Chaban and conducted mortar fire missions on the villages of Apshi and Arkas. There were reports from the day before that fighters had occupied the village of Durangi, on the western side of the road opposite Kadar, and that they were patrolling the approaches to the villages of Karamakhi, Kadar and Durangi. Due to the difficult terrain surrounding the positions of the fighters, attempts were made to destroy them by aviation and artillery using salvo-firing

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<sup>78</sup> *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 1, 1998, p36.

<sup>79</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 161 (1977), 1 September 1999, p1 *“Operatsiya prodolzhayetsya”* by Fedor Olegov.

<sup>80</sup> There were reports that the main mass of Wahhabis had appeared in Karamakhi in the final stages of the Federal operation conducted by Ministry of Defence troops, Interior Ministry troops, Dagestani Militia and Home Guard against the Chechen ‘invaders’ in Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy rayony.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* Doubts surfaced later with regard to Khachilayev being included in this concentration of *bandformirovaniya* in Chechnya at this time, on account of his falling out with Shamil’ Basayev. See Blandy *“Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1”*, p38.

weapons such as 'Grad' and 'Uragan'. Extremists' casualties amounted to some 80 men with a further 80 being held on suspicion of being bandits. To establish of a full cordon and blockade of the fighters in line with the requirement to disarm them, Ministry of Defence units carried out some degree of regrouping. Evidence of this began on 30 August with the rotation of Ministry of Defence subunits which had previously participated in the destruction of *bandformirovaniya* in the Botlikh rayon of Dagestan; in particular, troops of the airborne battalion which had stormed the village of Tando were transferred back to their permanent base location at Novorossiysk. They were replaced by ordinary ground forces units.

On 31 August a matter of great significance took place in Makhachkala. It was reported that the State Council had "*with the greatest difficulty hid its dissatisfaction with the sluggishness of the new Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Group of Federal Forces Colonel General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov*"<sup>82</sup>. An assistant of the Dagestani Minister for Internal Affairs Sultan Ali Gantilov at the meeting stated that "*the preparation of the operation was carried out too openly, the necessary measures in ensuring security and secrecy were not taken, the fighters were able to be well-prepared for meeting the troops*"<sup>83</sup>. It could not be excluded that "*the State Council would not once again turn to the Federal government with the request that command of the Combined Grouping of Federal Forces should be given to the Ministry of Defence*"<sup>84</sup>.

### Wednesday 1 September 1999

Fighters continued to hold their positions, including the three villages of Kharamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar. There was no change in the estimated strength of the fighters' group of some 500 men. The *spetsoperatsiya* ('special operation') had now lasted some 72 hours, but the temporary press-centre of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence in Dagestan emphasised that the accent of this operation was a 'regime of prophylactic' measures and was not in the form of a military operation.

#### **Box 7 - Statement from Temporary Press-Centre in Makhachkala**<sup>85</sup>

MOD units and subunits were not participating in the special operation to disarm religious extremists and fighters in the Kadar zone. This was confirmed by a representative of the Temporary Press-Centre of the Russian Ministry of Defence in Dagestan Colonel Viktor Gubriy. The special operation in Buynaksk was being carried out solely by MVD troops, but according to Colonel Gubriy "*they had met with strong resistance and fire and had lost three killed and 31 servicemen wounded*". Meanwhile air strikes and artillery fire missions were being inflicted by MVD troops on fire positions on the dominating heights "*but not on populated points*", Colonel Gubriy emphasised. In this operation Ministry of Defence troops were only being used in the cordon surrounding the area. To increase the weight of fire on targets 'Grad' and 'Uragan' were also being used.

Milrad Fatullayev was a little scathing: "*In this unconvincing arguments are adduced. Army subunits are operating in the area, carrying out the external cordon*"

<sup>82</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnaya Biblioteka, "*Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii - Boyeviyе deystviya 1 September 1999*".

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> "*Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii - Boyeviyе deystviya 31 August 1999*".



*surrounding the bandit groups, but it is the artillery and aviation carrying out the disarmament in which the Dagestan Directorate against Organised Crime is primarily engaged, having great experience with the Karamakhi Dzhamaat*<sup>86</sup>.

Psychologically, the Islamic Dzhamaat was prepared for the fact that sooner or later their opposition to the authorities and to the followers of traditional Islam in the North Caucasus could develop into armed conflict. Therefore several statements by the military that the fighters would soon be demoralised appeared as bravado, or what has come to be seen as an arrogant and unwarranted overconfidence. It should be remembered that the *“fighters’ positions took more than a year to prepare with echeloned fire positions protected by reinforced concrete structures and linked together by hidden communication trenches intersecting the terrain; in woods and hollows caches of food and weapons were prepared beforehand*<sup>87</sup>, and *“the extremists had turned every house in Karamakhi into an impregnable fortress, and this was especially the case in Chabanmakhi”*<sup>88</sup>.

However, after four days of operations in the area the assault subunits by now were well orientated, and had taken control of the Volch'i Vorota pass which opened up a good field of view for observation, and permitted control of the road to mountainous Dagestan to the south and west.

Simultaneously the operational-search measures on the unmasking and arrest of adherents of 'pure' Islam answerable for crimes had begun. Leaders of the Gubden (Karabudakhkent rayon) Wahhabi community Khasbulat Khasbulatov and Magomedkhabib Magomedov were arrested for taking part in the battles in Botlikh rayon. Emir Khattab by all accounts was a frequent visitor to Karamakhi. In the dispersal after the raid on 136 Separate MR Bde in Buynaksk on 22/23 December 1997 although launched from Chechnya, Kharamakhi was to provide a useful 'bolt-hole' for him. Family bonds linking leaders of local society with certain Chechen field commanders were well-known. Khattab's wife was a *'Karamakhinka'*<sup>89</sup>.

It will be remembered that Nadirshakh Khachilayev was reported to have fallen out with Shamil' Basayev and Emir Khattab during the 'invasion' of Avaristan<sup>90</sup>. Subsequently, Khachilayev was not accused by the authorities so much for the fact that he headed the defence of Karamakhi, but that before this he had collected on the border with Dagestan a grouping of about 800 fighters ready to invade the republic. However, *“Khachilayev was in actual fact in Kharamakhi, but by accident found himself there on the threshold of the forceful operation”*<sup>91</sup>. After the action of the fighters in Botlikh rayon condemning him, and the rift in the relationship between him, Shamil' Basayev and Khattab, he could not under any circumstances

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<sup>86</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 162 (1978), 2 September 1999, p1 *“Dagestanskaya lovushka”* by Milrad Fatullayev.

<sup>87</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 162 (1978), 2 September 1999, p1 *“Dagestanskaya lovushka”* by Milrad Fatullayev.

<sup>88</sup> *“Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviye deystviya 1 September 1999”*.

<sup>89</sup> A woman from Karamakhi. In fact Khattab's wife belongs to the Darghin people, one of the 14 titular nationalities of Dagestan.

<sup>90</sup> See Blandy *“Dagestan: The Storm - Part 1 - The ‘Invasion’ of Avaristan”* p38.

<sup>91</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 162 (1978), 2 September 1999, p5.

remain in Chechnya. But for him in Dagestan there was always the danger of arrest, therefore he sought refuge in Karamakhi. At that time the conflict of the Brothers Khachilayev with the authorities had not been settled. According to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the youngest brother, Dzhabrai Khachilayev, a convinced Wahhabi, had been arrested.

Around 1 September tension began to rise not only in Buyanaksk rayon on account of the refusal of the illegal formations concentrated in the Kadar zone to disarm and surrender. Reports were also coming in concerning the large numbers of fighters concentrating on the Checheno-Dagestan administrative border, estimated to be in the region 2,000 formed into three main groupings. Federal Forces continued to devote special attention to the control of the Kharami Pass in the south west of Dagestan and also the border reinforcement.

**Box 8 - Bandit Groupings on Checheno-Dagestan Border<sup>92</sup>**

**1st Group:** the so-called "Muslim Caucasus Army" - mercenaries from Abkhazia and the Transcaucasus.

**2nd Group:** "The Dagestan Insurgent Army of Islam" - subordinated to the Brothers Kachilayev.

**3rd Group:** "The Peacemaking Forces of the Madzhlis of Ichkeria and Dagestan" - subordinated to Basayev.

**Forces** are concentrated in the area of the village of Gakko on the Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy axes.

**Novolakskiy axis** - Chechen field commanders Arbi Barayev and Ruslan Gelayev have initiated the concentration of their associates in the Chechen border areas adjacent to Novolakskiy rayon. It is not excluded that the next objective will be on the Novolakskiy axis.

**Iskhan Nature Reserve** - Itum-Kalinskiy rayon of Chechnya - Mercenary groups from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Libya numbering some 300 fighters are located in this area.

**Tajik Group** - possibility exists of a group from Tajikistan, arriving via Azerbaijan.

**Thursday 2 September 1999**

Colonel General Ovchinnikov, the Commander in Chief of anti-terrorist operation, stated that the operation by force in Buynaksk rayon of Dagestan would be "completed by the evening of 2 September, at the very latest by the evening of 3 September 1999"<sup>93</sup>. He also noted that whilst at the present time in the Kadar zone the fighters were surrounded and blocked in, fierce resistance to Federal Forces was continuing. In his opinion the fighters numbered around 500 men. However, the 'resistance' forces were continually 'migrating' so that an accurate figure was impossible to estimate. General Ovchinnikov announced that he was expecting an attempted breakout by the fighters some time on the night of 2/3 September.

It seemed that the disarmament operation in the Kadar zone was approaching the final phase. "Earlier in the day at 1100 hrs MVD RF subunits and Dagestani Militia spetsnaz went into Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi".<sup>94</sup> In fact special quick reaction

<sup>92</sup> *Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviyе deystviya 2 September 1999*".

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

detachments (SOBRs) “*belonging to the Dagestani Ministry of the Interior were later reported as having taken Kadar and Karamakhi, where the headquarters of the extremists was located, before this they [the two villages] had changed hands twice*”<sup>95</sup>.

However, judging by the contradictory statements and communiqués, the capture of Karamakhi was not complete. Militia, supported by Home Guard detachments and volunteers from the local inhabitants, were subjected to sniper fire in the course of mine clearance operations from mobile groups of fighters on the outskirts of the village. MVD subunits carried out preparatory measures before attacking the third village in the Kadar complex, Chabanmakhi, which was still held by the extremists. In the second half of the day the liberation of the village was announced officially. According to the military, around 100 fighters in well fortified positions still defended their location. Approximately 50 of them held the cone shaped hills lying close to the villages, hindering the advance of the militia by fire from rifles with silencers. At twilight fighters would approach troop positions, firing at the heights occupied by them and would repeat the attack at daybreak.

Unsuccessful attempts were made by the extremists to break out of the cordon of encirclement. The desperate resistance of the fighters, amongst whom were a few who had nothing to lose, was testified to by the fact that the defenders did not raise a white flag and that the operation would be concluded only with their full and complete destruction. Kadar zone differed from Botlikh rayon in that it was situated in the centre of Dagestan which did not allow the fighters to flee early to Chechnya. Locked in by a dense ring, the fighters were heard transmitting calls for help to Chechnya, and, evidently with the aim of deflecting attention from the Kadar zone, approximately 20 fighters made an attempt to break through from Chechnya through the Yagudag Pass to the village of Kegi in Tsumadinskiy rayon. After a two hour battle with the Home Guard they retreated. There was one somewhat humorous twist. The father in law of Khattab was caught trying to escape from the Kadar battle zone, “*wrapped up in a carpet*”<sup>96</sup> in the back of a lorry. One small point of interest: there was no official statement as to the whereabouts of the remaining fighters out of an initial estimated total of 500 men. It was believed that they had been wounded and were in Chabanmakhi. During the year which had elapsed since the proclamation of an “Independent Islamic Territory”, they had had time to organise underground communication passages.

In the prelude to the decisive phase of the operation in the Kadar zone, throughout Dagestan “ideological-information systems” and preventive measures to deal with the supporters of the radical stream in Islam were being introduced. In looking ahead, after completion of the operation in order to reimpose constitutional order it was considered that it would be necessary to establish strengthened militia posts, a point-patrol service and to deploy a MVD special operations battalion.

### **Friday 3 September 1999**

By the morning of 3 September, even after five days, the situation in the Kadar zone had become complicated through a whole series of circumstances. First and foremost the enemy was offering fierce resistance to the advance guard of subunits

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<sup>95</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 163 (1979), 3 September 1999, p1 “*Operatsiya v Dagestanye vstupila v reshayushchuyu stadiyu*” by Milrad Fatullayev.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

going to the outskirts of the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. Combing out Chabanmakhi was hindered by the high danger of mines and the continued existence of the fighters' well organised defence.

*“Bomb our houses, only destroy all the bandits as one”*<sup>97</sup>. The peaceful population of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi villages had asked the command of MVD troops and the Dagestani Militia to liberate them from the bandit formations. Zaynutdin Askhabov, the deputy head of the administration of Buynaksk rayon, said that *“refugees from Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and other villages close by have categorically refused to return to their homes until such time that all the bandits have been destroyed”*.<sup>98</sup>

Over the whole day fierce battles raged in the Kadar zone. The *bandformirovaniya* continued to hold the village of Chabanmakhi and the neighbouring height of Mt Chaban. The Kadar terrorists were familiar with the surrounding terrain, easily orientating themselves by night and in bad weather. An asset to them at this time was the weather, with fog, low cloud and the beginning of seasonal heavy rains, which could lead to the erosion of unmetalled roads and landslides in the mountains. It was partly these circumstances which delayed the Federal forces occupying part of the village of Kharamakhi and the move forward to the approaches of Chabanmakhi. Assault subunits belonging to the Dagestani militia and SOBRs supported by Ministry of Defence units from the air and artillery had to feel their way forward. It was difficult to ascertain where the fighters were located, as they were not only not seen but seldom heard. By far “the greatest losses were inflicted by aimed, accurate sniper fire from strips of woodland and houses which had been turned into veritable strengthened fortresses”<sup>99</sup>.

Casualty figures for Federal Forces since the beginning of the counter-terrorist operation at the beginning of August to 3 September 1999 are shown below.

**Box 9 - Federal Forces Casualty Figures 2 August to 3 September 1999**<sup>100</sup>

**MOD and MVD Troops (Overall):** 87 killed; 350 wounded; 7 missing in action

**MVD (Kadar) Operation):** 17 killed; 107 wounded.

Since the start of the Kadar operation, the fighters had lost 150 men, according to information from the military. In only five days of the operation in the Kadar zone, according to another source, Federal forces suffered the following casualties: *“military servicemen and militia, 13 dead and 91 wounded, with around 26 wounded in medical establishments in Buynaksk”*<sup>101</sup>. A third report gives the *“figure of 21 Dagestani militiamen ... killed, which must be regarded as a significant loss, if*

<sup>97</sup> *“Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviye deystviya 3 September 1999”.*

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 163 (1979), 3 September 1999, p5.

<sup>100</sup> *“Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviye deystviya 3 September 1999”.*

<sup>101</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 163 (1979), 3 September 1999, p5.

*consideration is given to the fact that over 20 days of battles in Botlikhskiy rayon [only] 70 servicemen and militia were killed*<sup>102</sup>. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that for propaganda purposes, the military understated the number of casualties on their side.

The MVD Troops' estimate of the number of bandits still offering fierce resistance in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi had fallen to 150 men. Even reading the press releases from Makhachkala one cannot but come to the conclusion that no-one in the MVD Troops operation to disarm the illegal bandit formations had firm information on which to base their calculations concerning enemy numbers, and even the earlier statement on 2 September of Colonel General Ovchinnikov bore little resemblance to reality.

Even in this operation which followed hard on the heels of the Botlikh operation, there was evidence of complacency and perhaps even arrogance at the level of senior commanders, one result of which must have been a poorly planned and feebly executed reconnaissance of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar, to the extent that *"fierce resistance and professionally prepared defensive positions of the fighters were not expected here. After the 'not so easy' victory in Botlikhskiy rayon, it was considered to be a less complicated sector at Karamakhi, particularly when the Kadartsy were less militant than the fighters belonging to Khattab and Basayev"*<sup>103</sup>. However, Major General Vladimir Shamanov, the new Commander of 58th Army, some six days later at his first press conference in his new appointment in Vladikavkaz, had this to say: *"I am only able to say as a military man that the Internal Troops were not able to solve a series of tasks. This relates not to professional blunders, but in my view to defects in coordinating joint efforts"*<sup>104</sup>.

In the course of a working visit by the Interior Minister Colonel General Vladimir Rushaylo to Dagestan, plans were outlined for the final stages of the operation to disarm the bandit formations.

#### **Saturday 4 September 1999**

On 4 September the tone of the operations and announcements from Makhachkala underwent a change following a meeting late in the evening of 3 September attended by Magomedali Magomedov, Chairman of the Dagestan National Council, the Russian Minister for Internal Affairs Vladimir Rushaylo, Anatoliy Kvashnin, Chief of the General Staff and Viktor Kazantsev, Commander-in-Chief North Caucasus Military District. It was agreed that control over the continuing special operation in Buynaksk rayon would come under the Ministry of Defence with the Deputy Commander of North Caucasus Military District, Lieutenant General Gennadiy Troshev, being nominated as Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Grouping of Federal Forces (OGF).

The message sent to the illegal bandit formations concerning the terms for a cessation of hostilities was blunt, reflecting the change in command of the OGF: "Complete surrender of weapons. Capitulation (no less). Alternatively -

<sup>102</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 164 (1980), 4 September 1999, p1.

<sup>103</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 164 (1980), 4 September 1999, p1 "*Boi v Dagestane prodolzhayutsya*" by Milrad Fatullayev.

<sup>104</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 167 (1987), 9 September 1999, p2 "*Komanduyushchiy 58 Armii Vladimir Shamanov: "Na territoriyu Chechni voyska vvodit'sya ne budet"* by Vladimir Gutnov.

destruction”<sup>105</sup>. This demand for unconditional surrender by the Federal command led to a meeting with representatives of the bandit formations. The temporary combined press centre of the OGF announced at 1200 hrs that after the first stage of the discussions the extremists had registered the fact that they wanted time to think. As one would expect in the zone of the special counter-terrorist operation movement of civilians and vehicles was restricted.

**Box 10 - Restrictions on Movement of Vehicles and People in Buynaksk Rayon**<sup>106</sup>

General Gennadiy Troshev has declared a zone of combat operations bounded by the following populated points: **Nizhneye Kazanishche - Buglen - Kutan Gylyar - Parul - Giyali - Kakamakhi - Urma - Kuletsma - Okhli - Akhend - Apshi - Arkas - Verkhneye Kazanishche**, with restrictions on movement by people and vehicles. Any intended movement must be agreed with representatives of the Federal Forces on the spot.

During the night of 4/5 September an explosion occurred in one of the accommodation blocks in Buynaksk military township No 7.

**Sunday 5 September 1999**

Artillery and aviation of Federal Forces carried out heavy preparatory fire on positions of fighters in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. Additional artillery resources, both tube and rocket artillery, belonging to the Ministry of Defence were brought into the area and carried out an intense bombardment of the fighters' positions in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi, in turn supplemented by aerial support of bombers and fighter-bombers. Following completion of the artillery preparation, “*spetsnaz subunits began their task on the ground*”<sup>107</sup>. Whilst the Command of the Federal Forces had refused a corridor for their exit to Chechnya, the fighters in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi boxed in by the Federal cordon made desperate attempts to break out.

Having suffered a defeat in Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy rayony of Dagestan the bandit formations under the command of Shamil' Basayev with the support Chechen field commanders invaded the territory of Novolakskiy rayon with a strength of some 2,000 fighters at 0430 hrs and occupied the villages of Shushiya, Gamiyakh and Akhar and captured part of the rayon centre of Novolakskoye. At a sitting of the Dagestan State Council sharp criticism was levelled at the Federal Forces for their ‘*listless actions*’<sup>108</sup> against the Wahhabi extremists. Those attending the session expressed: “*bewilderment and indignation with the fact that subjecting the fighters who had suddenly arrived in Dagestani villages to artillery strikes and bombing missions, Federal Forces had not taken and were not taking similar firm measures against the bases of Chechen fighters on the territory of Chechnya itself which had given the Dagestani Wahhabis the opportunity to obtain strong reinforcement from Chechen fighters*”<sup>109</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> “*Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviyе deystviya 4 September 1999*”.

<sup>106</sup> “*Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviyе deystviya 4 September 1999*”.

<sup>107</sup> “*Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviyе deystviya 5 September 1999*”.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

### Monday 6 September 1999

In the areas around the populated points of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi, Federal Forces would shortly be crossing over into a military operation. This was the opinion expressed in the OGF temporary press-centre in Dagestan, for: *“Literally over the next two-three days combing operations against bandits, destruction and lifting of mines and other additional measures in the military phase of the operation will be carried out”*<sup>110</sup>. The situation around the populated points of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi remained complicated, the fighters maintained their hold over these villages. However, subunits were tightening the ring around their positions, maintaining intensive artillery and aerial punishment.

### Tuesday 7 September 1999

In the Khasavyurt direction the fighters continued to offer fierce resistance against the Federal Forces. In the Kadar zone complex the fighters rejected the ultimatum concerning the surrender of weapons and continued to offer strong resistance to Federal Forces. From the morning of 7 September artillery and aviation strikes were rained down on them. Fire was distributed on positions and exposed strong points in the village of Karamakhi and on the Chaban mountain feature. Information from reconnaissance continued to put the enemy strength at 500 men in the Kadar zone.

Major General Vladimir Shamanov, commander of 58 Army in Vladikavkaz remarked that *“the Kasavyurt axis was the fighters’ main one and new army subunits would be deployed there”*<sup>111</sup>. At the same time, General Shamanov was totally against the distribution of arms to the peaceful Dagestani population. He could not quite accept that these weapons in the hands of volunteers would be used more for the protection of the local population than for any storming action.

### Wednesday 8 September 1999

It was about this time that the counter-terrorist operations to dislodge and expel Chechen and Islamic extremist groupings from Novolakskiy rayon began to assume greater significance than the operations around the Kadar zone. The main announcement from a press-conference in Moscow was that a second invasion of Dagestan was about to take place on three axes. Gadzhi Gamzayev, the plenipotentiary representative of Dagestan, noted that information from local inhabitants was to the effect that somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 fighters were concentrated on the Checheno-Dagestan administrative border ready to advance on Kizliyar, Babayurt and Khasavyurt axes. Gamzayev especially emphasised that the republic leadership were aware of the fighters’ plans, which were *“having captured Kizliyar to move out towards the shore of the Caspian Sea”*<sup>112</sup>.

It would appear that the special operations to remove the fighters from Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi did not effectively get under way until 8 September. Some insights into the terrain and the actions by Federal special forces are given below.

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<sup>110</sup> “Voyna v Dagestane. Khronika sobytii – Boyeviye deystviya 6 September 1999”.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

**Box 11 – Special Forces in a ‘Hot Region’ – Kadar Zone<sup>113</sup>**

The “rotating fan”<sup>114</sup> dived into the clear space between the village and the mountains onto a potato field made sodden by the rain; the ground churned up somewhat by tracks and wheels of armoured vehicles called to mind whipped cream. Immediately behind the helicopter pad the chaos of a tented city began. “Kashzmok” (headquarters command vehicles), antennae, tents, freight carrying trucks, tractors and BTRs. The damp air reeked with smoke from the field kitchens and the smell of artillery cordite and along the ground flattened by hundreds of feet, hundreds of cables crossed. A little further away on the very crest of the mountain, a camouflage net had been draped over a spacious trench. It was right here that the main command post (CP) of the Federal Forces’ grouping had been established.

From the CP a captivating view of beauty opened out onto the auls of Kadar and Karamakhi, beginning directly at the foot of the mountain, and on the neighbouring mountain ridges. Chabanmakhi and Vanashimakhi were practically hidden behind the intersecting rocky crests. Columns of smoke rose from there and the sounds of deafening explosions. Firing rattled away particularly in the vicinity of Karamakhi. Silence only in the streets of Kadar captured at the beginning of the operation. Even houses in Kadar were targets, glass blown out from explosions close by. And Karamakhi – a picturesque heap of ruins, several houses were ablaze.

**The Storming of the Black Fortress – Karamakhi<sup>115</sup>**

The brigade commander (Kombrig) Colonel Vladimir Kersk is considered to be a stern commander here. He knows his job thoroughly. He is strict with his subordinates. Slovenliness and cowardice are not tolerated. He is always up front. In the populated points of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi his subordinates fell in the scorching heat. Just within a week they stormed the fighters' fortifications five times, striving to consolidate themselves on the outskirts of the village. During the period of the battles in Kadar zone 22 Special Operations Brigade Internal Troops MVD Russia lost more people than during the whole of the Chechen War. In one battalion all the officers became casualties. Casualties were not replaced, and tasks were carried out by a smaller number of people.

We are situated in an observation post. The fighters are 250 metres away. Alongside is a tank with the interesting number ‘13’ firing point blank at the enemy fortifications, to talk is difficult. The gun layer Vasya Romanov has a unique skill. With one shot he knocked down the fighters' flag from the Sharia police building. Romanov is able to land a shot through any opening from a great distance. A sniper from God. In the distance in the smoke the home of Khattab is seen split into two halves. What celebrated work by the layer!

**Karamakhi**

8 September. 1700 hrs. From the mountain visibility is good as the storm groups move forward to the northwestern outskirts of the village of Karamakhi (in translation from the Darghin – the ‘Black Village’). It is here that the main strength of the fighters is concentrated. Soldiers switch from house to house conducting fire.

22 Brigade is covering the operations of 20 Detachment Spetsnaz and the Dagestani OMON. Battle blazes. Chatter on kombrig's radio does not stop for one second. From the conversations it is clear – the ‘Dukhi’ from slit trenches surround our flanks. There are casualties. Soldiers and officers will remember this battle for the rest of their lives.

<sup>113</sup> *Bratishka*, No 11 (23), November 1999, p8 “*Kadarskaya Zona*” by Aleksandr Boroday and Igor Strelkov.

<sup>114</sup> Often in Arabic helicopters are described as “*Bunka*” meaning big fan, or more picturesquely “*Abu Jerard*” meaning ‘Father of the Locusts’.

<sup>115</sup> *Bratishka*, No 11 (23), November 1999, p13, “*Shturm Chernoy Kreposti*” by Yuriy Kotenok.



### **Kadar Zone - Specialities**<sup>116</sup>

Combat operations in Kadar zone have their own specialities. First and foremost relations between the local inhabitants and the military hit you in the eye. On the road by Vol'chi Vorota vehicles with local number plates constantly stop, Dagestanis give soldiers warm clothes, cigarettes, vegetables and fruit. The inhabitants themselves in the surrounding villages were straining to get into action, ready to protect their families with weapons in their hands and sort out the bandits. The locals support us. Dagestan is part of Russia.

### **The "Anti-Sniper" Rifle**

"Ruslan [Deyev] commander of the detachment from Belgorod had already been fighting in the Caucasus for 53 days. Yesterday in the battle his friend was killed. The bullet passed through his body and his armoured vest. The fighter used a rifle, which is called 'antisniper'. Calibre 12.7 mm. Battle range 3 km. The bullet even penetrates brick masonry and the armour of BTRs. I only saw that the Dagestani MVD spetsnaz had such a weapon. There were no such weapons in 22 Brigade. All the officers maintained that the fighters were armed with much better weapons. One in two had a PK machine gun"<sup>117</sup>.

"[The rifle's] range is 2 km. The energy of the 46gm bullet is enough to hit armoured targets and soldiers wearing bulletproof vests. The self-loading rifle has been designed and is being manufactured at the Degtyarev Plant in the Vladimir region"<sup>118</sup>.

### **Thursday 9 September 1999**

In the Kadar zone, even after 12 days of Federal action the extremists still continued to defend themselves. The capture of Chabanmakhi was no longer talked about. The military acknowledged that it was not possible to clear Karamakhi of *boyeviki* until the permanent strong points made out of reinforced concrete (DOT) and earth and timber strong points (DZOT)<sup>119</sup> were destroyed by direct heavy artillery fire or aviation using the heaviest bombs. Nevertheless, "*in Moscow and Makhachkala politicians and generals continued to state loudly that the Kadar enclave will be 'cleansed' by 10 September*"<sup>120</sup>. Makhachkala announced that the war in Dagestan must be concluded by the end of September.

Six times a special brigade of the MVD Dagestan entered Karamakhi, consolidated itself on the outskirts of the village, but then received orders to withdraw after the completion of rocket-bomb strikes and firing from SP howitzers, as the *boyeviki* opened the hatches of DOTs and carried out sniper fire using rifles fitted with silencers. A snippet of conversation from the militia is also revealing: "*We considered that in this hell nothing could survive during the bombing*"<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> *Novyye Izvestiya*, May 2000, p5.

<sup>119</sup> Russian "Dolgovremennaya ognevaya tochka", and "Derevo-zemlyanaya ognevaya tochka", respectively.

<sup>120</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 168 (1984), 10 September 1999, p1 "*Boyeviki gotovyakhsya k dlitel'noy oborone*" by Il'ya Maksakov and Milrad Fatullayev.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

**Box 12 - 17 Detachment Spetsnaz VV MVD<sup>122</sup>**

The CP assisted with its artillery fire. “Utes” (the commander’s call sign) demanded helicopters for casualty evacuation. The battle quietened down after 40 minutes, but the Federal artillery guns continued for a few more hours. Our troops in Chabanmakhi were required to occupy the height by day. As it was explained later, on that very night a detachment of Wahhaby numbering some 60-70 men succeeded in breaking through the Federal Troops’ positions and got away through the uncordoned Chaban mountain in the thick ‘greenery’ on its reverse slope.

17 Detachment Spetsnaz VV MVD on 9 September stormed and captured part of Chabanmakhi, having hurled themselves into the very highest part of the village somewhat short of the heart of the enemy defence, the central mosque. But at night the Wahhaby launched a desperate counter-attack, evidently intending to cover the departure of the main group to the mountains or even calculating in the event of success to break through below. Amongst the trenches and demolished structures, in the thick undergrowth and bushes which covered the steep slopes the battle raged. The enemy were firing at almost point blank range. But the Modzhkhed rabid attack was crowned only with partial success. Troops of 17 Detachment were thrown off the crest, however, but not very far from the crest. Casualties among the spetsnaz in this engagement consisted of 6 killed and around 20 wounded. The recce platoon suffered most from the enemy attack. The attackers’ casualties were 3-4 times greater. No less than 20 bodies of dead fighters were counted.

Once again the reason for the inability to undertake a storming assault of the bandit position was that the bandits had mined the approaches to the village, for after every withdrawal of the assault subunits, the *boyeviki* by night would extend the mined area and lay additional mine traps on the likely approaches. However, compared to the first days of the operation in the Kadar zone, the *boyeviki* had started to lessen their activities and did not use the radio so much. Everyone talked about a silent defence by the fighters which was directed towards a long term holding of the enclave, where economy of effort and conservation of ammunition and food were the main priorities for the defenders.

Box 13 below contains some insights into the work of a 152mm 2S3 SP howitzer<sup>123</sup> battery in the Kadar operation in the direct fire role; the young captain commanding the battery boasted that “*Everyone here calls me the architect*”<sup>124</sup>.

**Box 13 - 152mm 2S3 SP Howitzer Battery during Kadar Operation<sup>125</sup>**

“Seeing that they had not understood him, indicating the edge of a house in Karamakhi village, situated at a range of 1,500m from the artillery position, the Captain explained ‘*Here there are these two streets - I have straightened them out - two shells per house - here everything has worked*’.

The observer noted two bearded men entering a house, the Captain gave the order to open fire. From the artillery position on the height, it was clearly visible how the shell had gone through the roof, but after a few minutes again the ‘Dukhi’ threw themselves out of the valley and ran across into another house. [Captain] Andrey did not contain himself, began

<sup>122</sup> *Bratishka*, No 11 (23), November 1999, p8 “*Kadarskaya Zona*” by Aleksandr Boroday and Igor Strelkov.

<sup>123</sup> Known as “Acacia”.

<sup>124</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 170 (1986), 14 September 1999, p1 “*Nespeshnaya taktika federalov*” by Aleksandr Shaburkin.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

to jump up into the ASU - a shot - nothing remained of the house. The Captain smiled "*All the Wahhabis have had their beards shaved off*".

However, the artillery fire of the *Federaly* was not always so effective. More often they fired in vain because the bandits were sitting it out in their underground shelters. When the military entered the village they came under surprise, short range concentrated cross fire which emanated from the very location that guns and howitzers had been engaging with fire missions.

Another interesting aspect of the operation was that the 'Chiefs' were in a rush to report to the Command about the seizure of populated points<sup>126</sup>, but troops after an unsuccessful assault also needed time to rest and recuperate. So according to the situation report summaries alone, Karamakhi was taken three times. On each occasion this "*cost the lives of 10 soldiers or militiamen*"<sup>127</sup>. Even with the *spetsnaz* there were occasions when "*not everyone knew the specifics of their work*". There was a tale about one visiting general who tried to force the *spetsnaz* into a frontal assault. "*The leaders love to issue instructions and orders, forgetting about the most essential problems that face the people in trying to carry out the order*".

In 205 Motor Rifle Brigade, none of the officers grumbled. They were under orders. Many of those who were in the Kadar gorge had been to Chechnya in the last conflict, after which they were promised an apartment. But still their families had lived, or rather existed, cooped up in hostels or in discarded apartments. The mention of 'thousands of dollars for the Dagestan war' produced a nervous laugh from the officers. Several of those going away had only left their families 40 roubles. The wives of the officers of the brigade from Budennovsk created a general fund from which money was allotted to the most needy families. The troops were not 'pampered' with food in the area of combat operations, in fact probably the reverse was true. In the main their food consisted of dried rations with 'boring' stewed meat and rice kasha. "*The 'rear area men' evidently had forgotten about the fact that in mountain operations servicemen should receive an additional 'little thickening', a supplement to their daily ration, cheese and smoked sausage*"<sup>128</sup>. During the Great Patriotic War<sup>129</sup>, the troops' food ration on paper was more varied and perhaps of greater nutritional value, for "*The mountain ration must ensure the full restoration of expended energy. Foodstuffs must be the most nourishing and portable, taking the difficulties of delivery in the mountains into account. The calorific value of the ration must be no less than 4,500-5,000 calories per day*"<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>126</sup> This might well have been a contributory factor in Colonel General Ovchinnikov's optimism on 2 September 1999.

<sup>127</sup> Material in this and following paragraph from Shaburkin, *ibid*.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> Komdiv V G Klement'yev "*Boyeviye deystviya gornykh voysk*" Gosudarstvennoye Voennoye Izdatelstvo, Moskva, 1949. "The work was written by the author in the main on the basis of actual military experience accumulated in the command of units and formations of the RKKA [the Worker-Peasant Red Army] in the mountains of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus and on the basis of many years research work in mountains".

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*.

**Box 14 - Main Items in Daily Ration for Mountain Operations in 1949**<sup>131</sup>

**Main items:** bread 96% wheat 1,000gm (substitute ships biscuits 700gm); meat 350gm (substitute 435gm horse meat only for cooking); other items included buckwheat cereal - 40gm, peas shelled - 20gm, millet - 30gm, rice - 40gm, oatmeal porridge - 10gm, macaroni - 20gm, potato soup from dried potato - 35gm, Borshch from dried vegetables - 20gm and ordinary vegetable soup from dried vegetables - 10 gm, plus other foodstuffs such as onions (dried), tomatoes, sugar, black tea etc.

**Snack part of Ration:** smoked sausage 100 gm, Dutch cheese 100 gm, tinned vegetables 400 gm, tinned fish 200 gm, tinned meat 200 gm etc.

One of the Federal Forces aircraft losses, a Su-25, occurred close to Chabanmakhi and Karamakhi on 9 September 1999. When the pilot lost control of the aircraft he guided the aircraft away from populated points and positions of Federal Forces and only after he had achieved this did he activate his ejector seat. This proved to be a success story for the air-rescue group, for 10 minutes after landing on the ground the pilot was recovered by helicopter and flown back to one of North Caucasus Military District's military airfields.

At the time “*two possible explanations were given for the loss of the aircraft*”<sup>132</sup>. The first was engine failure. But the Su-25 in principle is a reliable machine and proven in combat conditions for more than 20 years. The second is the possible destruction of the Su-25 by *boyeviki* using the air defence complex ‘Igla’, if the aircraft was flying on the periphery of the combat area and did not fire off its anti-missile heat decoys. On the outskirts of Dagestani villages armed operational groups of terrorists were alleged to operate specifically to repulse armoured and aircraft attacks.

**Friday 10 September 1999**

In the Kadar zone in the latest attempt break through the cordon of Militia and Home Guard six *boyeviki* were shot dead. *Boyeviki* had already made some four attempts to break through the cordon. Close to the battle zone, by the control point at the village of Dorgeli, Karabudakhkentskiy rayon, Gadzhi-Magomed was arrested. He was a brother of Brigadier-General Dzharulla, leader of the “Islamskiy Dzhamaat” and one of the Karamakhi leaders.

**Sunday 12 September 1999**

Howitzers and tanks from the dominating heights had ploughed up Karamakhi and from the air Su-25 fighter-bombers and Mi-24 helicopters had worked over the fighters’ positions. But as military wisdom runs “*Whilst the infantryman has not walked on the territory of the enemy, they do not speak about victory*”<sup>133</sup>. Nevertheless the hoisting of the Russian flag at 1130 hrs on Sunday 12 September still did not signify that the situation was under the complete control of the authorities. In the villages battles continued with the remnants of the

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 169 (1985), 11 September 1999, p2 “*Gibel’ shturmovika Su-25 v Dagestane*” by Valeriy Aleksin.

<sup>133</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 171 (1987), 15 September 1999, p1 “*Voyna v Dagestane prodolzhayetsya*” by Aleksandr Shaburkin.

*bandformirovaniya*, firing did not die away even for one minute. Internal Troops' servicemen, OMON assault troops and Dagestani militiamen continued to work to destroy the remaining centres of resistance.

### The Closing Stages of the Kadar Operation

There were occasions when everyday problems in the war took second place. There was noticeable excitement at the news that the militia had dragged a Wahhabi prisoner to their position. His beaten-up face "*spoke eloquently that the members of the MVD had already expressed their relationship to him*"<sup>134</sup>. As one of the militiamen explained, the bandit had passed target indication details to his fellow fighters; probably because of his message the *Federaly* lost several men in one day.

The nastiness of this war was described by Zhenya, a *spetsnazovets*, commander of a *spetsgroup* whose task was to mine the rear of the fighters' positions by night and also on the return to their base location, to recover dead bodies of servicemen and bring them back to their position. There was the indescribable experience when "*you set off, and you look for a while at the bodies of three 'desantniki' without their heads...*"<sup>135</sup>. The other tasks this group was trained to carry out besides laying and clearing mines were reconnaissance, acting as forward air controllers guiding aircraft to targets and carrying out the adjustment of artillery fire.

After the conclusion of active combat operations it remained for the militia to fish out and catch people who had participated in battles and the accomplices of the bandits and transfer the matter to the procurator where their guilt would be established. Members of the law enforcement organs started to have an increasing workload as the number captured extremists grew. According to unconfirmed information on about 12 September they numbered over 100. In August the procurators' employees did not get to meet captured bandits: they were executed on the spot. Then the spite of the few local inhabitants abated and they began to understand that the more extremists captured as prisoners, the quicker combat operations would be concluded. Those held on suspicion of participating in combat operations were carefully and thoroughly questioned. If there was no indirect evidence that the person had taken up arms or possessed a weapon, then he was released. Direct evidence - taken prisoner on the battlefield, evidence of being an accomplice of the bandits - became the basis for the instigation of criminal proceedings. The specification was wide: from banditism and terrorism to pillage and illegal possession of a weapon.

As members of the MVD and FSB emphasised, each person was investigated individually. But according to the law enforcement organs, amongst those being held were not a few misguided people, who because of the lack of work and the struggle for existence had come under the influence of Wahhabi propaganda and recruiters, and were forced to fight on the side of the bandits. Typical examples of young men caught up in the conflict were a 28 year old Kumyk named Islam and a 17 year old Lezghin called Marat. Both had been wounded and were found by the militia in a ruined house sitting on the floor. Their stories are contained in Box 15 below.

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<sup>134</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 170 (1986), 14 September 1999, p1.

<sup>135</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 170 (1986), 14 September 1999, p1.

**Box 15 - Interview by FSB Operative of Young 'Recruits' to Wahhabism**<sup>136</sup>

**Islam** said that he came from Buynaksk to study the Koran. *"They all say that"*. The operative became excited. *"I am speaking the truth..."* the captive tried to raise an objection. A blow to the head terminated the discussion. He maintained that he was not a Wahhabi. He had come to Chabanmakhi sometime around the 20th of August. During the first days of combat operations he attempted to leave the village. During an air raid a missile exploded on the road that he and a friend had wished to take. A splinter damaged his leg. In the wood the bearded ones hid him and took him to one of the houses. He asked them to let him go. They threw him out into the street. Once again the fighters found him and took him to Karamakhi where in one of the houses the wounded were billeted. The Wahhabi fed him, they called him names. It was there that he met Marat.

**Marat** finished school No 14 in Makhachkala. He entered the first year at Kizliyar university. An acquaintance whom Marat trusted invited him to Chabanmakhi to study the Koran. Normally there are no Wahhabis there, his friend promised. Marat arrived in the village four days before the beginning of the war. It was interesting that much of the activity in the Islamic school was carried out in the Russian language. The pupils did not know Arabic, and the teacher was not able to explain himself in their native language. He went to see Dzharul, one of the 'important ones' and told him that they were peaceful people and that they had come to study not to fight. The Wahhabi replied, "Don't disgrace us", and moved back into the house, where 10 people were sheltering. On that very day the house was hit by a shell and Marat was wounded.

One other aspect, of course, was the search for weapons, ammunition dumps and stores. The militia found considerable caches of weapons and ammunition, enough to continue the war for more than a year. For instance in Karamakhi they were to find that all the weapons with which the extremists were equipped were of Russian manufacture. After the earlier Botlikh operation in August 1999, hand grenades manufactured that same year were found. Naturally all these facts would become a lead on which research and investigation by the law enforcement agencies would be based. The Deputy Head Military Procurator, Lieutenant General Yuri Yakovlev, visited the area on about 13 September. The Military Procurator's office, together with their colleagues from the FSB and the MVD, intended to investigate the extremists' ability to obtain the latest Russian-made weapons. In the first place, there was the need to check on possible channels from military units and army depots. One brigade in particular, 136 Separate Motor Rifle Brigade from Buynaksk, had already earned a reputation before February 1999 for the illegal sale of *"mines, automatic guns and grenade cup dischargers. Some of these weapons later returned to Dagestan, and our law enforcement agencies confiscated some of them on the black market of Khasavyurt"*<sup>137</sup>. The possibility could not be entirely ruled out that there was misappropriation directly from the armament factories. A case in point was the 'Anti-Sniper rifle' described above.

<sup>136</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 171 (1987), 15 September 1999, p1.

<sup>137</sup> *Kommersant - Daily*, 27 February 1999, p1.

## MILITARY LESSONS FROM DAGESTAN

### Background

As the earlier events in Avaristan showed all too clearly, several mistakes of the Chechen War 1994-1996 had been repeated by Federal Forces<sup>138</sup>. The Kadar operation was no exception in this regard either. Criticisms were expressed by the Dagestan State Council concerning the conduct and performance of Federal Forces on 31 August, not helped a few days later by the misplaced confidence of General Ovchinnikov, followed by further criticism of the management of the Federal operation on 3 and 4 September and on 5 September outright condemnation of Federal action or lack of it over the new incursion by Chechen fighters into Novolakskiy rayon.

In some respects the Russian military were faced with the consequences of the mistakes and inactivity of the political leadership which led to the fact that “*events in Dagestan have shown all too clearly that such an approach has brought the army to a state when it is unable to conduct a local war*”<sup>139</sup>. The ‘approach’ refers to the dismissal of General Igor Rodionov as Defence Minister and the unpopularity with the political leadership of those who like him supported a wider perspective for the reform of the state’s military machine and the military security of Russia, namely, the reorganisation of the Armed Forces as a whole.

The position in Dagestan was that the enemy on a front of approximately 500 km could activate a force of up to 10,000 active ‘bayonets’, resting on the support of tens of thousands of people in Chechnya and to lesser degree on a ‘fifth column’ in Dagestan itself. To protect the border, according to military norms, a combined arms army of up to 50,000 men would be required, in turn reinforced by units occupied in protecting the army’s rear elements. In reality in Dagestan two brigades were deployed, one from the Ministry of Defence and the other from Internal Troops, Ministry of Internal Affairs which were reinforced with a few subunits. The total strength did not exceed 10,000 men. No other tactic apart from operating as a fire brigade was possible. They would not have been able to counter the *boyeviki* “*even if they had had Napoleon himself at the head*”<sup>140</sup>.

“*Reinforcement of the grouping was possible, but this was far from being a simple matter*”<sup>141</sup>. The Russian ground forces after 10 years of ‘Army reform’ had by six divisions of ‘permanent readiness’ (three in the ground forces and three in the airborne forces) and five brigades (four ground forces and one assault). All together the permanent readiness formations, many of which were in the process of being formed, could provide two full-blooded armies. Apparently, it was not possible to

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<sup>138</sup> Blandy “*Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions - An Interim Comparison and Assessment*”, p32-35, describes some of the shortcomings of Federal Forces in the earlier operation in Tsumadinskiy and Botlikhskiy rayony to expel ‘the invaders’ from Dagestan.

<sup>139</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 166 (1982), 8 September 1999, p1 “*Poka vysshaya gosudarstvennaya vlast’ budet plestis’ v khvoste sobytiy, bedy ne minovat*” by Sergey Sokut.

<sup>140</sup> Segey Sokut in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 166 (1982), 8 September 1999, p1.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

deploy one of them in Dagestan as many of the permanent readiness formations were already deployed in Yugoslavia and Tajikistan. *“And the deployment of a grouping on such a scale was a very expensive process, on which months not days would be required”*<sup>142</sup>. But, with the benefit of hindsight it is obvious that there had been preparations, for in the event, the Federal forces managed to scrape together some 93,000 servicemen of variable quality from the MOD, MVD and the Federal Border Service and move into Chechnya in October 1999, less than a month later.

## Command and Control

It will be remembered that operational command of Federal Forces had to be handed over to the Ministry of Defence from the Command of Internal Troops MVD on 17 August 1999. Command of the subsequent Kadar operation reverted back to Internal Troops on 27 August. It was once again transferred from MVD to MOD on 4 September under General Troshev. Abrupt changes in command produce their own antipathies, particularly when relations between the MOD and MVD Troops were already fractious. Command changes can also have a deleterious effect on troop morale. Soldiers like to know who their commander is and to have confidence in his abilities. Constant ‘chop and change’ must invariably evoke comparison and uncertainty.

Even though various command post and staff exercises had been held by Federal Forces under the command of MVD over the previous 12 months or so, it is quite clear that changes in the command structure in the middle of an operation are not conducive to the smooth ‘management’ of that operation.

In the ‘Round Table’ discussions in the journal ‘Military Thought’ concerning the operations of the Combined Group of Forces (OGV) in Dagestan and Chechnya, it was recommended that:

*“The system of command, created in peacetime, must reliably ensure the solution of tasks in the course of an armed conflict without any changes to it. The control of a combined grouping of troops (forces) must be carried out by that army commander whose troops at a given stage of the conflict have the main task”.*<sup>143</sup>

The confusion in those early days in August 1999 during the Botlikh operation when *“a forum of high-ranking generals found it hard to define the hierarchical relations between themselves”*<sup>144</sup> underlines this point.

It may well be that the requirement to establish a system of command which maintains an unaltered structure in the transition from peace to war and during conflict leads on to a much wider logical perspective. Account needs to be taken of the powers under the new state of emergency legislation which has been given preliminary approval by the State Duma. If and when a state of emergency is

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May-June 2000, p8 *“Kontrterroristicheskaya operatsiya na Severnom Kavkaze: Osnovnyye uroki i vyvody”* – Colonel-General Yu D Bukreyev, Chief of the Main Directorate of Ground Forces, Colonel-General M I Karatuyev, Chief of Rocket Troops and Artillery and Colonel General L S Zolotov, Chief of the Combined Arms Academy. This from Bukreyev.

<sup>144</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 145 (1961), 10 August 1999, p1, 4.



declared, the Governors-General of the seven Federal districts would operate directly under the Security Council of the Russian Federation, headed by the President, Vladimir Putin. Distinct from the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD) the North Caucasus Federal District, renamed the Southern Federal District<sup>145</sup>, embraces Astrakhan, which possesses an important port, the Volga delta and entry-point to southern Russia, Volgograd oblast' and Kalmykiya. It has Viktor Kazantsev as Governor-General, formerly the overall Commander-in-Chief of the OGV in Dagestan and Chechnya, and could set the scene for a much wider concept of central government control and military command. With a wide span of subordinated bodies and organs it could perhaps possess a comprehensive enough scope to avoid the necessity for a changing chain of command.

Quite obviously the Southern Federal District has a key role to play in any emergency situation, situated in a volatile area and open to disruptive elements from the south and the east across the Caspian and Kazakhstan. An enlarged federal district, with a wide diapason of subordinated structures headed by a former General directly responsible to the President, makes it easier to integrate and combine the activities of all the power-wielding structures within Southern Russia, such as the Ministry of Defence, the Internal Troops MVD, other MVD organs, Security and Intelligence Service organs, Federal Border Service units, Customs and Excise organs, etc. Furthermore in theory it facilitates the inculcation of a single joint approach, if and when a state of emergency should be declared, such as a further counter-terrorist operation. Suffice it to say that it is yet another indicator of Vladimir Putin's firm resolve to govern Russia, and in this context, to concentrate power at the Centre and to rein in the regions.

### ***Coordination of Power Structures***

It was not so much the question of formal subordination of the different participating elements, but the development of an understanding by commanders, headquarters or staffs concerning their position, participation and action in the operation and the delineation of their own personal responsibilities for carrying out a set task. In particular, the involvement of troops from different power structures in a common task *"assumes a unique and more complicated form of cooperation demanding special tact in mutual relations, the ability to find a common language and to determine mutual interests"*<sup>146</sup>.

The Commander in Chief of Internal Troops, Colonel General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, was untrained in commanding troops belonging to different Federal departments, as noted by Major General Shamanov in his somewhat double-edged remark: *"I am only able to say as a military man that the Internal Troops were not able to solve a series of tasks. This relates not to professional blunders, but, in my view to defects in coordinating joint efforts"*<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> Natsional'naya Elektronnyaya Biblioteka: *Temy dnya*, 23 June 2000, "SeveroKavkazkiy okrug utochnili".

<sup>146</sup> Bukneyev, *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May-June 2000, p6. "A detailed study and agreement are required; methods of a joint decision of tasks; time and sequence of carrying out the planned tasks; areas, bounds, objectives (targets); conditions, methods and time of the joint use of means of destruction, and the restrictions on their use in populated points; questions concerning the organisation of command and control and communications, comprehensive security, warning, recognition etc".

<sup>147</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 September 1999.

In fact due to unsatisfactory coordination of the diverse range of forces and the absence of the necessary support, their effectiveness was not high, with the result that soldiers received unwarranted casualties. This in turn emphasises the requirement for combined training, knowledge and understanding, even for a greater battlefield awareness<sup>148</sup>.

### ***Coordination with Local Government Organs***

Both the Botlikh and Kadar operations were to demonstrate that one of the most important factors in the coordination of a counter-terrorist operation is the necessity of agreement with local government organs over a whole series of questions<sup>149</sup>. In the assault on the villages in Buynaksk rayon it became necessary to evacuate the local population before the assault could start, thus giving away the element of surprise. However, a fine balance has to be struck between security, the need to keep forthcoming operations under the wrap of secrecy against the requirement to include local organs which might be useful. In the North Caucasus relationships between peoples are close through family or extended family connections. Within these close communities people are aware of other people's business as a matter of course.

### **Misuse of Interior Troops**

Both the Botlikh and Kadar zone operations showed that the use of formations and units of Interior Troops due to "*the specifics of their combat duties were not sufficiently effective in the execution of the first stage of a counter-terrorist operation (the destruction of illegal armed formations)*"<sup>150</sup>. During the Botlikh operation it became clear that it required airborne assault subunits to tackle commanding heights such as Donkey's Ear, Ht 1622.5 or the seizure of the Kharami Pass. Even airborne assault subunits in the seizure and occupation of dominating heights in Botlikh rayon suffered considerable casualties, in particular during the battles for Ht 1622.5 with one killed, 22 wounded and six missing in battle. There was confusion as to the type of operation being envisaged in the assault on the Kadar zone complex. Ministry of Defence troops formed the cordon around Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar. Artillery and aviation bombarded and carried out strikes, whilst Interior Troops were used along with the Militia in the first stage of the operation, namely attempting to destroy the bandit formations, when their specific task should have been the "*lead role*

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<sup>148</sup> See Blandy "*Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions - An Interim Comparison and Assessment*" p34: "Additional factors which seemed to confirm the view that nothing had changed in the Federal military approach were three other events, the first of which concerned the fact that three Russian MVD Generals were wounded on 11 August as a result of being under fire in an Mi-8 helicopter belonging to Internal Troops... Likewise two other helicopters which landed at the Botlikh landing strip were also destroyed by fire from terrorist positions. Both these events demonstrated a complete lack of awareness and military training on the part of the Internal Troops' commanders and pilots".

<sup>149</sup> Bukreyev, *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May-June 2000, p8 "Provision of assistance, exchange of information about actions of illegal armed formations, warning, support of communication, protection of objects vital for the local population, support of the regime of a state of emergency, the establishment of a *Komendantur* (establishment of a curfew, permit regime, restriction and regulation in the movement of motor transport, organisation of patrolling in populated points, escorting convoys, delivery of humanitarian aid, interdiction of disturbances)".

<sup>150</sup> Bukreyev, *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May-June 2000, p8.

*in disarming remnants of fighter groups, “zachistka” (‘sanitising’), in the support of law and order measures in areas liberated from terrorists”<sup>151</sup>.*

## Conduct of Reconnaissance

Even though this operation followed hard on the heels of the Botlikh operation, there was evidence of complacency and perhaps even arrogance at the level of senior commanders, one result of which must have been a poorly planned and feebly executed reconnaissance of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar to the extent that *“Fierce resistance and professionally prepared defensive positions were not expected here.”* There would also appear to have been an incorrect assessment of the fighters' will to resist.

From a historical perspective very little would appear to have changed since the Long Caucasian War of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with regard to reconnaissance, acquisition of information and interpretation of the situation on the part of the Russian military. Perhaps it is an indication of something much deeper in the Russian psyche:

*“The Russians’ surprise was the result of an intelligence failure on their part. As in so many cases throughout history, this was essentially a failure of analysis. The facts were known to the Russians – the numbers of Shamil’s forces, their structure, the fact that Shamil’ was building an artillery corps and was even trying to cast his own guns – but their established view of Shamil’ and the mountaineers prevented them from deducing the right conclusions. Thus the Russians’ failure was not merely strategic or tactical, it was conceptual. They were completely unprepared for the kind of war Shamil’ was fighting”<sup>152</sup>.*

Even with Ministry of Defence units and subunits their combat effectiveness in reconnaissance was low. Equipment did not meet the demands and complexities of the tasks. Moreover, comments from the Round Table are almost unbelievable, for:

*“Combined arms commanders and staffs, especially at the first stage, did not appreciate the significance of reconnaissance. Their targets and tasks were determined in stereotype fashion, the volume of reconnaissance information was produced irregularly. The weakest factor in the control of reconnaissance was the organisation of communications... Several combined arms commanders sometimes used reconnaissance personnel outside their speciality”<sup>153</sup>.*

There can be little doubt that had the reconnaissance of the villages been conducted more effectively, the operation would not have taken such an inordinate amount of time to complete, from 27 August to 16 September 1999. A case in point being the military acknowledgement, as late in the operation as 9 September, that Karamakhi could not be cleared of *boyeviki* until the defensive works had been destroyed.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Emphasis C W Blandy.

<sup>152</sup> Moshe Gammer “Muslim Resistance to The Tsar – Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Dagestan”, Frank Cass & Co, London, 1994, Chapter 14 “Avaristan”, p147.

<sup>153</sup> L S Zolotov, *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May-June 2000, p18.

## Importance of Snipers

The undoubted superiority of the *boyeviki* appeared in their use of sniper fire, in particular, when used with silencers. From the Federal Forces (Ministry of Defence) point of view:

*“At the time we undervalued the training of snipers and attempted to fill up the deficiencies in the course of combat operations. In the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD) much work was put into training 1,500 snipers, but they did not have an effective influence on the course of combat operations”*<sup>154</sup>.

The reasons are quite simple – *“commanders did not have the tactical skill to use them in battle. We lost the sniper battle due to a technical shortcoming. So, if the fighters had a sniper rifle of foreign manufacture in their armoury it allowed them to fire from a distance of up to 2,000m, Federal forces armed with Russian produced sniper rifles were only able to fire over a range of 600m”*<sup>155</sup>. There are possibly a series of other reasons: lack of suitable human material, absence of time to produce well-honed weapon skills, and to inculcate the cunning, patience and discipline required by a sniper.

This may have some relevance for intervention operations in other parts of the world, where the ‘opponents’ have invested in sniper weapons and snipers, benefiting from training by other illegal organisations.

## Artillery Fire Support

It is still a matter of speculation whether artillery was used effectively at Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi and Kadar. Perhaps the truth lies in the fact that *“artillery fire of the federaly was not always so effective”* as the efforts of the young captain and the damage by tank fire to Kattab’s house described above. The operation against these three villages lasted approximately 3 weeks. Throughout the operation there would appear to have been considerable bombardment by both tube artillery, rocket artillery and aviation to the extent that *“We considered that in this hell nothing could survive during the bombing”*.

Colonel-General Karatuyev, Chief of Rocket Troops and Artillery, listed some of the general reasons for deficiencies in the use of artillery, most of which probably applied in the operation against the three villages, namely:

*“The lack of modern means of reconnaissance and automated control of troops and weapons; the outdated approaches of several combined arms commanders in determining the role and place of fire support (OPP)<sup>156</sup> did not allow the annihilation of illegal armed formations to be implemented over all the territory of the armed conflict to the detriment of long range fire means. In those very circumstances, when [fire support] is successful, combat tasks are resolved practically without casualties”*<sup>157</sup>.

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<sup>154</sup> Zolotov, *ibid*, p17.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>156</sup> Ognevoye porazheniye protivnika, 'fire suppression of the enemy'.

<sup>157</sup> *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 3, May–June 2000, p10.

There were other factors indicating low standards of performance which would have applied to the Karamakhi operation because, again, they were the product of an insidious, long-term ingrained malaise, notably:

*“The officers (those passing-out in 1998-1999) do not have sufficient experience and practice in combat work, training and education of personnel. Once again this confirms the inadequate practical direction of student instruction. As a result the established order of work on gun positions and observation posts is infringed. The measures for preparation of firing and fire control are carried out in the majority of subunits with the lowest quality. Officers are not trained correctly in the conduct of military documents. Sergeants leaving training units do not operate confidently with the armament”*<sup>158</sup>.

There were also technical reasons which would have affected performance at Karamakhi. The shortage and limited capability of automated control systems, and the lack of links at the lower levels of command were noted by General Karatuyev.<sup>159</sup> There were other deficiencies too. One of the more interesting ones noted by the Round Table was the poor reliability of communications equipment which to some extent precluded the full and extended use of artillery in the indirect fire role. Furthermore:

*“Due to the unsatisfactory state of the means of guaranteeing artillery strikes and fire in several circumstances there is a need to increase ammunition expenditure. As a result the time needed to fulfil a fire mission is increased by some 20-40% and increases the wear and tear on the equipment”*<sup>160</sup>.

Colonel-General Zolotov, Chief of the Combined Arms Academy, stated that *“Many unresolved problems arose with the organisation of cooperation between artillery and motor rifle units (subunits) and especially between artillery and Internal Troops”*<sup>161</sup>. Undoubtedly, this applied to the Karamakhi operation.

Colonel General Karatuyev also noted problems stemming from numerical deficiencies in fighting strength of artillery units. This may have been a problem at Karamakhi, for:

*“Numerical deficiencies in personnel, heavy physical loads in fitting out the battle order, unloading ammunition and carrying out measures in the preparation of firing, lead to the fact that specialists of the Rocket Troops and Artillery in essence were continually in a state of over-exhaustion. As a result the quality of carrying out their duties became lowered, violating the demands of safety, raising the level of traumatism”*<sup>162</sup>.

Karatuyev also thought it necessary to consider increasing the numerical establishment of rocket and artillery units and subunits to wartime establishments, and *“increasing the food ration norm for them”*.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p14.

<sup>159</sup> See page 29.

<sup>160</sup> Karatuyev, *ibid*, p12.

<sup>161</sup> Zolotov, *ibid*, p16.

<sup>162</sup> Karatuyev, *ibid*, p13.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*.

## Cooperation with Aviation

*“In the combat use of aviation important shortcomings were also revealed: it was not successful in achieving the necessary level of cooperation of army aviation with combined arms units and subunits, especially with Internal Troops: the combat potential of front and army aviation was not used to the full. Combat practice showed that it is necessary to create a single system of aviation control in a combined arms battle and it is essential to raise the level of officer training in the combat control of aircraft. The task consists of having permanent air support controllers in combined arms formations, units and subunits”<sup>164</sup>.*

## Differences in Emphasis

Maybe there was genuine concern on the Federal side to preserve troop fighting strength and minimise casualties. Evidence to support this view is the length of time taken to occupy the three villages, leaving it to the cordon, firepower from a distance and time to yield results. As the counter-terrorist operation under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence entered the intervention phase onto Chechen territory, the move across the River Terek and encirclement of Groznyy, this tactic was to become more pronounced. However, the published casualty figures for the Federal Forces still do not provide the whole truth.

The Dagestani government in Makhachkala wanted a speedy end to the conflict and the whole Karamakhi problem wrapped up once and for all. There were several instances where they simply could not understand the sluggish progress of the operation, coupled with very real concerns about the occupation by illegal bandit formations of Novolakskiy rayon. It is to these events that Part 3 will turn its attention.

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<sup>164</sup> Zolotov, *ibid*, p16.

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