



North Caucasus Insurgency

The following report is based on open source reporting.

August 10, 2010

On August 1, 2010, a video of Chechen militant leader Doku Umarov was posted to a Chechen separatist website, Kavkaz Center. The video appeared to show Umarov relinquishing his power over the Caucasus Emirate (CE), an umbrella organization of regional Islamic-based terrorist groups operating in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and possibly Kabardino-Balkaria. However, just three days later, Umarov appeared in another online video in which he stated that the previous video was a hoax and that he had no intention of stepping down from his current position as head of the CE.

Umarov has denied any involvement in the first video, saying it was fabricated and intended to sow discord within the North Caucasus separatist movement, which remains a loose federation of disparate organizations. The reasoning behind either video remains unclear at this time, but it could possibly demonstrate an internal power struggle within the group, or the involvement of outside actors who wished to discredit Umarov and the CE. Airport

The CE is best known for its March 2010 suicide attacks on two Moscow Metro stations. Since these attacks, it has launched additional attacks against local security forces allied with the Russian government in the North Caucasus region. The group's ultimate goal is the establishment of an independent Islamist Emirate within the Russian North Caucasus. The group has increasingly embraced radical Islamist principles since Umarov assumed control of the group from Shamil Basayev who was killed in Ingushetia in 2006. CE's primary base of operations is within the North Caucasus, but the group will occasionally conduct attacks against targets within Russia proper, such as the Moscow Metro bombings and the Nevsky Express train bombing in November 2009.

Internal Confusion Within the CE

There is widespread confusion surrounding the release of the two Umarov videos since the beginning of August. It remains unclear what prompted the resignation videos – are other members of the CE pressuring Umarov to resign or are outside actors fabricating the videos in an attempt to discredit Umarov and the CE? If the CE is currently experiencing some form of uncertainty within its leadership ranks, it seems likely the group will be unable to plan and successfully launch significant operations prior to the onset of winter.

However, if an outside actor is attempting to discredit Umarov and CE with the publication of these videos, the group may attempt to conduct additional attacks against high value targets in the North Caucasus or Russia to demonstrate its continued capability and lethality. Historically, winter has prohibited North Caucasus militants from carrying out attacks due to the logistical impediments, so any attack would likely occur before winter.

Implications for Private Sector Organizations

In late July, suspected CE militants targeted the Baksan Hydropower Plant in the North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. An estimated six militants set off five bombs with an estimated total of up to 3 kg of TNT, killing two police officers who were asleep in their vehicles outside of the plant. The attack damaged two power units, temporarily forcing the plant offline.

Reports indicate the Russian government is concerned that North Caucasus militant groups could increasingly target energy and infrastructure-related targets, in addition to infrastructure associated with

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the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. While CE militants have previously conducted attacks against infrastructure-related targets in the North Caucasus, Russian security experts believe the attack was a dress rehearsal for follow-on attacks against high value infrastructure targets.

Near-term Security Outlook

The impact to U.S. private sector organizations and American citizens due to CE operations remains minimal at this time. Militant attacks against Russian infrastructure in the North Caucasus North Caucasus have not impacted OSAC constituents. In addition the CE operations have primarily targeted security-related targets. However, the potential for wrong place, wrong time violence in Russia proper is still present. The CE attack on the Moscow Metro in March 2010 demonstrates the group's ability to conduct large-scale, high-lethality attacks against civilian targets in major Russian cities.

At this time OSAC is not aware of any credible or specific threats directed against the U.S. private sector in Russia. U.S. private sector organizations operating in Russia should continue to monitor the OSAC website for additional Warden Messages, Travel Alerts, and relevant OSAC reporting pertaining to U.S. private sector interests in Russia.

For Further Information

Please direct any questions regarding this report or the general security situation in the North Caucasus to OSAC's Regional Coordinator for Europe.

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