



Caucasus Emirate (CE) Update

The following report is based on open source reporting.

A series of Chechen separatist videos depicting the apparent resignation of Doku Umarov, the identified leader of the Caucasus Emirate (CE), and his subsequent change of heart a mere three days later, has raised speculation that the CE is experiencing significant levels of dissension within its leadership ranks. The CE, which is comprised of disparate Islamic terrorist groups operating in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria, is responsible for several high-profile attacks.

The CE is best known for its March 2010 suicide attacks on two Moscow Metro stations. Since this attack, they have launched hundreds of additional attacks against local security forces allied with the Russian government in the North Caucasus region. The group has stated its 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 following the death of its former leader Shamil Basayev, who was killed in Ingushetia in 2006.

Internal Confusion within the CE



Umarov appointed Aslambek Vadalov as his successor following his August 1 resignation video. After Umarov rescinded his resignation just three days later, he declared Vadalov a deputy advisor who would succeed him when he decided to step down at some future date. Shortly after this decision, Vadalov and several other Chechen separatist leaders, including an individual known as Mukhannad, a high-ranking CE leader who commands the Arab volunteer battalion, publicly withdrew their support for Umarov. The defection of Mukhannad is significant since it is believed he acts as the CE's primary conduit for foreign funding and fighters.

According to open-source press reporting, both the Russian government and various CE militants believe that Umarov lacks support from within the CE ranks due to his meager successes as the CE leader. While

CE's attacks on the Moscow Metro and the Nevsky Express bombing were both successful operations that caused significant loss of life, Umarov has not advanced the CE's proclaimed goal of establishing an independent Islamic Emirate within the North Caucasus. In addition, the fighting against the Russians is thought to have taken a heavy toll on the CE in the number of fighters and the conditions they are forced to operate under.

The CE has failed to remove Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-backed President of Chechnya, who maintains a firm grip on the North Caucasus state. Although the CE has recently expanded its operations, its support base within the North Caucasus has not grown beyond its primary fighter network. Although it still remains capable of conducting large-scale, high-lethality attacks, the CE does not pose an existential threat to the Chechen government. The current trends within the region however do point to an ever increasing decentralized threat. While Chechnya has been calmer as of late, Dagestan and Ingushetia remain extremely violent. In addition, we are now seeing a distinct increase in violence in Kabardino-Balkaria, and most recently in Stavropol Krai and North Ossetia. While violence may ebb and flow for

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various reasons within the region, OSAC does not see any reason why the current rates of violence would decrease in the next year.

Winter of Discontent?

As noted above, in the past couple weeks CE has expanded its operations into North Ossetia and Stavropol. These attacks are a continuation of the uncoordinated, one-off separatist attacks that are rampant within the region and are a continuing concern. As the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi draw closer the Russians are going to make ever increasing attempts to strengthen their control of the North Caucasus and suppress the insurgents. If a continuing rift were to develop among the CE and other terrorist groups in the North Caucasus it would be a welcome development for the Russians who have endured significant problems in the region.

Near-term Security Outlook

At this time, the impact to U.S. private sector organizations and American citizens due to CE operations remains minimal. Militant attacks against Russian infrastructure in the North Caucasus have not impacted OSAC constituents to date. This is mostly due to the fact that there is little U.S. investment in the region. In addition, CE operations have primarily targeted security-related interests. However, the potential for wrong place, wrong time violence in Russia proper is still very high. The CE attack on the Moscow Metro in March 2010 and the car bomb in the Federal District capital, Pyatigorsk, in August 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 Russia's North Caucasus to [OSAC's Regional Coordinator for Europe](#).

For additional information on the Caucasus Emirate, [please see previous OSAC reporting on the group](#).