

CRS Report for Congress

Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments

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Jim Nichol
Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division



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Summary

In recent years, there have not been major terrorist attacks in Russia's North Caucasus — a border area between the Black and Caspian Seas that includes the formerly breakaway Chechnya and other ethnic-based regions — on the scale of the June 2004 raid on security offices in the town of Nazran (in Ingushetia), where nearly 100 security personnel and civilians were killed, or the September 2004 attack at the Beslan grade school (in North Ossetia), where 300 or more civilians were killed. This record, in part, might be attributed to government tactics. For instance, the Russian Interior (police) Ministry reported that its troops had conducted over 850 sweep operations (“zachistki”) in 2007 in the North Caucasus, in which they surround a village and search every house, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnappings for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians.

Although it appears that major terrorist attacks have abated, there reportedly have been increasingly frequent small-scale attacks against government targets. Additionally, many ethnic Russian and other non-native civilians have been murdered or have disappeared, which has spurred the migration of most of the non-native population from the North Caucasus. Russian authorities argue that foreign terrorist groups continue to operate in the North Caucasus and to receive outside financial and material assistance.

The Bush Administration generally has supported the Russian government's efforts to combat terrorism in the North Caucasus. However, the Administration and Congress also have continued to raise concerns about the wide scope of human rights abuses committed by the Russian government in the North Caucasus. The Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008 (P.L. 110-161) included \$8 million for humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society, and relief and recovery assistance for Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia. The Act also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

The Administration's budget request for FY2009 calls for \$3.5 million for conflict mitigation and reconciliation activities in the North Caucasus to help stem the spread of violence and instability. The request also calls for unspecified amounts of assistance for the North Caucasus to promote economic opportunities, youth employment, health, sanitation, and community development, and to discourage the spread of extremist ideologies.

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Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments

Introduction

In recent years, there have not been major terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus¹ on the scale of the June 2004 raid on security offices in the town of Nazran (in Ingushetia), where nearly 100 security personnel and civilians were killed, or the September 2004 attack at the Beslan grade school (in North Ossetia), where 300 or more civilians were killed. This record, in part, could be attributed to government tactics. For instance, the Russian Interior (police) Ministry reported that its troops had conducted over 850 sweep operations (“zachistki”) in 2007 in the North Caucasus, in which they surround a village and search every house, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnappings for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians.²

However, in recent months there reportedly have been increasingly frequent smaller-scale attacks against government targets. For example, on June 12-15, 2008, terrorist attacks took place in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan. In a village in Chechnya, 20-60 guerrillas attacked homes belonging to government officials and policemen, took hostages, and reportedly killed or wounded over a dozen people. In Ingushetia, an explosion leveled a store in Nazran and killed four people. Although the cause of the explosion was unclear, others deemed to be terrorist-related had occurred in the republic in previous days. In Dagestan, a weapons cache was discovered, alleged terrorists were killed during a police operation, and a bomb was defused. Additionally, many ethnic Russian and other non-native civilians have been murdered or have disappeared, which has spurred the migration of most of the non-native population from the North Caucasus.

The Commander of the Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, Major General Nikolay Sivak, announced that seventeen Russian troops had been killed in counter-terrorist operations during the first half of 2008.³ According to the Interior Ministry Forces Commander, General Nikolay Rogozhkin, “there are no more than

¹ Russia's North Caucasus includes the “republics” of Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, and the Krasnodar and Stavropol “territories.”

² U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007*, March 11, 2008, chapter on Russia; *ITAR-TASS*, November 28, 2007.

³ *Interfax*, May 20, 2008.

400-600 militants left and they keep migrating from one republic to another,” and they receive funding from the West.⁴

Commenting on the violence, Russian analyst Sergey Markedonov suggested that Islamic extremism appeared responsible for these and many other incidents in Chechnya, that grievances against the local leadership by various groups could have been behind incidents in Ingushetia, and that inter-ethnic disputes as well as Islamic extremism might be factors in incidents in Dagestan.⁵ In late June 2008, Colonel-General Gennadiy Troshev, adviser to the Russian president and former commander of the Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, stated that “all large organized armed groups in Chechnya have been eliminated, defeated or dispersed. The remaining small disconnected armed groups [have moved to] Dagestan and Ingushetia.” Nonetheless, he warned that “it is too soon to say that the situation in [Chechnya] as well as in the entire North Caucasus has completely normalized.”⁶

Recent Developments in the North Caucasus

Chechnya. Some observers have argued that Russia’s efforts to suppress the separatist movement in its Chechnya region have been the most violent in Europe in recent years in terms of ongoing military and civilian casualties.⁷ In late 1999, Russia’s then-Premier Putin ordered military, police, and security forces to enter the breakaway Chechnya region. By early 2000, these forces occupied most of the region. High levels of fighting continued for several more years, and resulted in thousands of Russian and Chechen casualties and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. In 2005, then-Chechen rebel leader Abdul-Khalim Saydullayev decreed the formation of a Caucasus Front against Russia among Islamic believers in the North Caucasus, in an attempt to widen Chechnya’s conflict with Russia.

The high levels of conflict in Chechnya appeared to ebb markedly after mid-decade with the killing, capture, or surrender of leading Chechen insurgents. However, Russian security forces and pro-Moscow Chechen forces still contend with residual insurgency. Remaining rebels have split into two basic groups, one led by Doka Umarov, who emphasizes jihad, and the other a more disparate group represented by Akhmed Zakayev, who stresses independence for Chechnya more than jihad. Reportedly, Zakayev has little or no influence over paramilitary operations. Umarov allegedly attempted to replace Zakayev as Chechnya’s European emissary with the father of the terrorist who led hostage-taking at a Moscow theater in 2002. In late 2007, Umarov proclaimed the goal of an “Emirate of the Caucasus.”

⁴ *Interfax*, May 8, 2008.

⁵ Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), June 17, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-379001.

⁶ *CEDR*, June 25, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950138.

⁷ For background information, see CRS Report RL32272, *Bringing Peace to Chechnya? Assessments and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

Russia's pacification policy has involved setting up a pro-Moscow regional government and transferring more and more local security duties to this government. An important factor in Russia's seeming success in Chechnya has been reliance on pro-Moscow Chechen clans affiliated with regional president Ramzan Kadyrov. Police and paramilitary forces under his authority allegedly have committed flagrant abuses of human rights, including by holding the relatives of insurgents as hostages under threat of death until the insurgents surrendered.

Russia's efforts to rebuild the largely devastated region have been impressive but reportedly are undermined by rampant corruption. Some types of crimes against civilians reportedly have decreased, such as kidnaping and disappearances, according to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental organization (NGO). Many displaced Chechens still fear returning to the region, and a sizeable number have emigrated from Russia.

The ongoing violence appears to belie the assertion of then-Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov in early 2007 that "we have managed to achieve a success in Chechnya [and] the problem is solved" of eliminating what he termed internationally backed terrorists.⁸ In May 2008, Major General Nikolay Sivak admitted that a new generation of Chechen youth were becoming rebels and were receiving help from the population, so that Russia's national security continued to be threatened.⁹ According to some reports, up to 25,000 Russian military troops and about 24,000 police troops remain in Chechnya, bolstering Chechen security forces. Other troops and security forces are deployed to the region as necessary for special operations. Faced with several terrorist attacks during June 2008, Chechen president Kadyrov called on June 18 for launching a new large-scale offensive to "put an end to these crimes."¹⁰

Ingushetia. According to some observers, Ingushetia in recent years has threatened to become the "new Chechnya" of disorder and violence in the region, a "mini-failed state."¹¹ The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, divided in the late Soviet period into separate Chechen and Ingush Republics, has proven unable to demarcate a common border. This has contributed to tensions between Chechens and Ingushes. Another historical event, Stalin's deportation of the Ingush during World War II and their return in the 1950s to find that some of their lands had been ceded to the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic, has contributed to Ingush-Ossetian clashes. According to testimony by Russian human rights advocate Gregory Shvedov, there are up to 200 terrorists based in Ingushetia.¹² Small-scale rebel attacks intensified in 2007-2008, prompting Russia to deploy more and more

⁸ CEDR, February 12, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950029.

⁹ CEDR, May 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-548001.

¹⁰ "Kadyrov Calls for a Joint Military Operation Against the Rebels," *North Caucasus Weekly*, June 26, 2008.

¹¹ "Commentators See Ingushetia as a 'Failed State' Where an Uprising Could Occur," *Chechnya Weekly*, Vol. 8, Issue 34 (September 6, 2007); "Ingushetia Takes Chechnya's Place as the North Caucasus Hot Spot," *Chechnya Weekly*, September 6, 2007.

¹² Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

security, military, and police forces to the republic. Since 2007, there allegedly have been more killings, attacks, and abductions in Ingushetia — perpetrated by government and rebel forces, criminals, and others — than in any other republic in the North Caucasus.¹³

Russian analyst Sergey Markedonov argues that there is one “loyal opposition” movement in Ingushetia that opposes the current leadership of Murat Zyazikov, but supports Russian rule in the republic. Another group, the Islamic extremists, wants to evict “kafirs” (infidels) and “murtads” (apostate Muslims) and create a North Caucasus emirate.¹⁴ This “loyal opposition” organized several rallies in 2007 and early 2008 to protest local government corruption and extrajudicial killings and other alleged abuses by security forces. A rally in January 2008 in Nazran reportedly involved rock-throwing by the protesters and was forcibly broken up by security forces. The authorities announced that Nazran was a counter-terrorist operation zone, which enabled Russian troops to dispense with some civil rights during the rally. Several reporters and human rights advocates were among those arrested.¹⁵ Human Rights Watch (HRW) has warned in a recent report that “Russia’s brutal counterinsurgency policies [in Ingushetia] are antagonizing local residents [and] are likely to further destabilize the situation in Ingushetia and beyond in the North Caucasus.” A government-supported “human rights advocate” in Moscow denounced the HRW report as maligning the efforts of the police to bring law and order to Ingushetia.¹⁶

Dagestan. The majority of the citizenry in Dagestan, a multi-ethnic republic, reportedly support membership in the Russian Federation rather than separatism. In August 1999, however, some Islamic fundamentalists — with the support of Chechen rebels — declared the creation of an Islamic republic in western Dagestan. Russian and Dagestani security forces quickly defeated this insurgency. There has been some growth in Islamic extremism in recent years, and terrorist attacks have occurred in northern and central areas bordering Chechnya. In late 2007, thousands of security personnel were deployed for a “zachistka” against the village of Gimry in central Dagestan, which continued for several months and resulted in the arrest of dozens of villagers on charges of terrorism. During 2008, attacks on government offices have spread to southern Dagestan. Some of these attacks allegedly were triggered by a

¹³ Andrei Smirnov, “Kremlin Adopts New Counter-Insurgency Methods in Ingushetia,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 27, 2007. U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in 2007*, March 11, 2008. According to testimony by Magomed Mutsolgov, the Director of the Ingush Mashr Human Rights Organization, kidnappings in Ingushetia have decreased over the past year or so from previously high levels, but murders by the police have increased. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

¹⁴ CEDR, June 17, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-379001.

¹⁵ “Ingushetia Crisis Deepens: Observers Say Violence in Ingushetia’s Main Town Shows Republic Is Spiraling out of Control, *Caucasus Reporting Service*, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, February 6, 2008.

¹⁶ HRW. *Russia: Stop ‘Dirty War’ Tactics in Ingushetia, Killings, Torture, Disappearances in Chechnya-Style Counterinsurgency*, June 25, 2008; *Interfax*, June 25, 2008.

local government crackdown on practicing Muslims.¹⁷ The International Crisis Group NGO has claimed that the extremist Islamist group Sharia Jamaat is responsible for a large share of the rising violence that has resulted in the killing of hundreds of local officials in Dagestan. The recruitment efforts of Sharia Jamaat benefit from the allegedly arbitrary and corrupt actions of local police and security forces. In 2007, Sharia Jamaat endorsed Chechen rebel leader Umarov's goal of establishing a North Caucasian Emirate.¹⁸

Other Areas of the North Caucasus. The influence of Islamic fundamentalism that embraces jihad reportedly has spread throughout the North Caucasus, leading to the formation of terrorist groups in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia.¹⁹ According to testimony by Shvedov, 700 to 900 rebels are active in various areas of the North Caucasus, even though there are parts of Northern Caucasus where there are almost no rebels. He warns that "the most important point [is not] the number of active rebels nowadays. It's an issue of the number of supporters among the civilian population." Shvedov states that the civilian population has become widely radicalized and is able to quickly mobilize to join the rebels in attacks.²⁰

In October 2005, Chechen guerrillas were joined by dozens of members of the Yarmuk Islamic extremist group and others in attacks on government offices in Kabardino-Balkaria's capital of Nalchik and other areas. The president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, criticized local law enforcement officials for "not taking timely preventive measures with regard to representatives of religious organizations on the one hand, and [for treating] ordinary believers in an unjustifiably harsh manner on the other."²¹ By mid-2008, however, he voiced concern that "Wahhabism" (a label attached by many officials to Islamic extremism and disfavored Islamic religious practices) was increasing among the youth and might contribute to a rise in terrorism.²²

Gregory Shvedov has claimed that Islamic extremists in North Ossetia have been targeting gambling clubs and in Karachay-Cherkessia they mostly have been targeting government-appointed religious leaders.²³ According to a March 2008

¹⁷ "North Caucasus: Instability In Dagestan Spreads To South," *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 15, 2008.

¹⁸ *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, International Crisis Group, June 3, 2008.

¹⁹ Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The Truth about the 'Kataib al-Khoul' Ossetian Jamaat," *Chechnya Weekly*, September 20, 2007.

²⁰ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

²¹ "Kabardino-Balkaria: Leader Blames Law Enforcement Agencies for Harsh Treatment of Devout Muslims," *Caucasus Reporting Service*, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, April 13, 2006.

²² *CEDR*, June 18, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950445.

²³ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot* (continued...)

report on the work of the Karachay-Cherkessia antiterrorist commission, “criminal activity by a number of terrorist groups” had been prevented in 2007, and weapons caches had been neutralized.²⁴ In June 2008, the Federal Security Service and local police stormed an apartment in the town of Kislovodsk and apprehended two terrorists, and another was killed.²⁵

Contributions to Instability

Many observers argue that economic distress is a factor in the rise of violence in the North Caucasus. In the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic, the main industry, the Tyrnyauz Mining Complex, is closed, as are many defense-related factories, and the agricultural sector is in decline. Infrastructure such as roads and airports also is in disrepair, and social services are inadequate.²⁶ Dagestan has the most unemployment and poverty in Russia, and major income inequality has fueled violence against corrupt and wealthy officials.²⁷ Ingushetia’s economy suffered greatly during the Chechnya conflict, mainly from the influx of displaced persons which in effect doubled the population during intense periods of fighting in 1995 and 2000. According to Shvedov, the educational system in much of the North Caucasus is getting worse and unemployment is increasing. Shvedov warns that the lack of career prospects has contributed to growing support for “Wahhabi agendas” among the population.

Ethnic tensions are another factor contributing to violence in the North Caucasus. Besides those between Ossetians and the Ingush (mentioned above), in Kabardino-Balkaria there are tensions between the Kabardins and Balkars, although these are mitigated somewhat by their efforts to assert their rights vis-a-vis ethnic Russians (who make up 25% of the population, according to the 2002 census). In Karachay-Cherkessia, there are tensions between the Karachay and Nogai populations on one hand, and the Cherkess and Abazin populations on the other. In early 2006, the Putin administration abolished the Dagestani State Council, which represented the 14 largest ethnic groups, and whose chairman (an ethnic Dargin) served as the chief executive of the republic. The State Council had helped to mollify ethnic tensions. Putin then appointed an ethnic Avar as the president of the republic. Nonetheless, ethnic tensions have not led to large-scale violence in Dagestan.

In late May 2008, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin argued that the main problems in Chechnya and the North Caucasus were poverty and unemployment, since the region had rejected the “foreign” influences of extreme Wahhabism. He stated that

²³ (...continued)

Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus, June 19, 2008.

²⁴ *CEDR*, April 2, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950392.

²⁵ *ITAR-TASS*, June 13, 2008.

²⁶ “Kabardino-Balkaria Seeks To Break Out Of Economic Stagnation,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 01, 2008.

²⁷ *Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, p. 12.

the Russian government had launched a Program of Development for Southern Russia to invest in infrastructure and social programs. While he argued that Chechnya was becoming more peaceful, he admitted that there was instability in Dagestan and Ingushetia. He attributed most of the problems in these latter two regions to a mixture of clan grievances and economic distress.²⁸ Conversely, Russian analyst Andrei Smirnov has argued that in Dagestan, Islamic extremism, separatism, and anti-Russianism are the major causes of violence, rather than poverty and unemployment.²⁹

Russian analyst Aleksey Malashenko suggests that the North Caucasus region is undergoing “re-traditionalization,” which will result in the consolidation of Sufi³⁰ and other traditional forms of Islam as part of the political and social fabric of the region. While Moscow and its local agents focus on combating visible elements of “Wahabbism,”³¹ the region is becoming broadly Islamic and less integrated politically and socially with the rest of Russia, Malashenko warns. He also suggests that to the extent that political and Islamic leaders are able to retain their control in the North Caucasus and ignore economic problems, Islamic extremist violence will continue.³²

²⁸ *Le Monde*, May 31, 2008. According to Putin’s Blueprint for the Socioeconomic Development of the Russian Federation to 2020, “the organization of precautions against terrorism and the effective counteraction of threats of terrorism is a special problem in the Southern Economic Region [includes the North Caucasus]. This will be done primarily with the aid of special programs to prevent broad-scale socioeconomic destabilization by creating jobs, involving the active population in economic activity, and establishing the necessary conditions for the steady growth of these territories and the encouragement of the migration of the surplus population to regions experiencing a labor shortage. The realization of the potential of the economic region will secure growth indicators of 124 percent in 2010, 160-170 percent in 2015, and 210-250 percent in 2020 in relation to the 2007 gross regional product.” *CEDR*, May 6, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-313002.

²⁹ Andrei Smirnov, “Understanding the Motivations behind the Dagestani Rebels,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 20, 2007.

³⁰ According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, July 8, 2008, Sufism is a “mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of man and God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.” Central concepts of Sufism were developed in the 8th-12th centuries C.E. Three denominations (or Tariqahs) of Sufism — the Naqshbandiya, Qadiriya, and Shazaliya — are prominent in the North Caucasus.

³¹ Wahabbism is a term used by some observers to identify a form of Sunni Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and Qatar that calls for a return to fundamental or pure principles of Islam. The term is often used interchangeably with Salafism. As used in a derogatory sense by some in Russia, it can refer to any non-approved practice of Islamic faith. Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006.

³² Aleksey Malashenko, “Islam and the State in Russia,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008. See also Vakhit Akayev, “Conflicts Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Islamic Trends: Reasons, Dynamics, and Ways to Overcome Them (Based on North Caucasian Documents),” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2008. Unlike Malashenko, Akayev (continued...)

Reportedly, authorities have enlisted the assistance of Sufi Imams in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya to identify “Wahabbi” Muslims, who are then arrested, killed, or disappear. Young Muslims may be targeted as “Wahabbis” if they end their prayers at the mosque too soon (Sufis pray longer), attend the mosque frequently, or attend early services at the mosque. In Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adygea, where there are few Sufis and Islam does not have such deep roots as elsewhere in the North Caucasus, Muslims allegedly may be targeted as “Wahabbis” merely for attending the mosque or praying in public.³³

Implications for Russia

Putin claimed in a speech to the State Council in February 2008 that foreign elements had been responsible for the guerrilla attack on Dagestan in late 1999 that heralded the beginning of the second Chechnya conflict. According to Putin, the conflict “was a case of the undisguised incitement of separatists by outside forces wishing to weaken Russia, and perhaps even to cause its collapse.”³⁴ While he remained vague, a “documentary” aired on a Russian state-owned television channel in April 2008 alleged that France, Germany, Turkey, and the United States instigated and supported Chechen separatism.³⁵ Putin also has in recent years blamed “international criminal networks of arms and drug traffickers,” for supporting Chechen terrorists, and has been careful to assert that “terrorism must not be identified with any religion or cultural tradition,” in order to sidestep criticism from the Islamic world for his actions in the North Caucasus.³⁶

Ethnic prejudice by Russians against North Caucasian migrants reportedly has increased and has contributed to a rise in hate crimes. In the southern and eastern parts of the Stavropol region, several riots targeting these migrants have been reported. In late June 2008, the Congress of Peoples of the Caucasus sponsored a rally in Moscow to combat what they claimed were racist views of Caucasians propagated in the Russian press.³⁷

In June 2008, Tatarstan Republic head Mintimer Shaymiyev publicly called for the reinstatement of direct elections for regional/republic heads, which Putin had changed to appointments in 2004. While Shaymiyev’s motives were unclear, some observers argued in support of Shaymiyev that the lack of elections (including in the

³² (...continued)

does not view the counter-Wahabbism alliance of Russia’s central authorities with the traditionalists as eventually unraveling.

³³ Andrei Smirnov, “The Kremlin Intensifies Reprisals against Muslims in the North Caucasus,” *Chechnya Weekly*, October 4, 2007.

³⁴ *CEDR*, February 8, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950541.

³⁵ “Documentary Alleges West Sought Chechen Secession,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, April 23, 2008.

³⁶ Jacques Lévesque, “Russia and the Muslim World: The Chechnya Factor and Beyond,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008.

³⁷ *BBC Monitoring*, June 23, 2008.

North Caucasus republics) contributed to the alienation of the population and to anti-regime violence.³⁸

International Response

The United States and several other countries and international organizations have maintained that while Russia has the right to protect its citizenry from terrorist attacks, it should not use “disproportionate” methods that violate the human rights of innocent bystanders. They have objected to Russia’s 2006 counter-terrorism law, which permits police and other security forces to declare a “counter-terrorism operations regime” in a locality and to detain suspects for up to 30 days, search homes, ban public assemblies, and restrict media activities without any pre-approval by the courts or legislative oversight. As a result of this and other permissive laws and government actions, HRW has argued that Russia’s security forces “believe they may act with impunity when carrying out any operation related to counterterrorism.”³⁹

The European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe (COE) has ruled in dozens of cases brought by Chechens that the Russian government used indiscriminate force that resulted in civilian casualties and failed to properly investigate and prosecute Russian personnel involved. Hundreds of cases remain to be adjudicated. According to Russian human rights advocate and jurist Karinna Moskalenko, the Russian government has paid damages awarded by the Court to the plaintiffs, but has not taken the verdicts into account by reforming the justice system.⁴⁰

In June 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly of the COE appointed Dick Marty a rapporteur on the North Caucasus to prepare a special report on the worsening human rights situation in the region. He and other PACE members are scheduled to visit Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan in September 2008. In 2009, the PACE committee on member obligations plans to finalize a report on Russia’s compliance.

Implications for U.S. Interests

The Bush Administration has appeared in recent years to stress the threat of terrorism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, although there continues to be criticism of Russian government human rights abuses in the region.⁴¹ In keeping

³⁸ CEDR, June 17, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-4001; June 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-379003.

³⁹ HRW. *‘As If They Fell From the Sky’: Counterinsurgency, Rights Violations, and Rampant Impunity in Ingushetia*, June 2008, p. 5. The counter-terrorism operations regime appears often to be used by the security forces to justify human rights abuses. “Memorial Says Will Complain to Prosecutors, Court about Activists’ Detention in Chechnya,” *Interfax*, June 19, 2008.

⁴⁰ Karinna Moskalenko, “Civil and Human Rights and the Judicial System in Today’s Russia: A Legal Practitioner’s View,” Carnegie Endowment, September 28, 2007.

⁴¹ The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *President Commemorates Veterans* (continued...)

with a stress on the terrorist threat in the North Caucasus, the State Department in April 2008 reported that “the majority of terrorist attacks [in Russia during 2007] continued to occur in the North Caucasus, where the pacification of much of Chechnya has correlated with an increase in terrorism in Dagestan and Ingushetia.... There was evidence of a foreign terrorist presence in the North Caucasus with international financial and ideological ties.”⁴² Similarly, in June 2008 at the 16th session of the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism, the two sides mentioned that they “coordinated requests for evidence through the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in a terrorism-related case involving material support of terrorist activities, including financial support for such activity in Chechnya.”⁴³ While appearing to stress the threat of terrorism in the North Caucasus, the U.S. Administration also devoted nearly one-fifth of the content of the latest human rights report on Russia to the wide scope of government abuses in the North Caucasus region.⁴⁴

The Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008 (P.L.110-161) includes \$8 million for humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society, and relief and recovery assistance for Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia (see **Table 1**). The Act also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international NGOs providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

The Administration’s budget request for FY2009 calls for \$3.5 million for conflict mitigation and reconciliation activities in the North Caucasus, “so as to help stem the spread of violence and instability.” The request also calls for unspecified amounts of assistance for the North Caucasus to promote economic opportunities,

⁴¹ (...continued)

Day, Discusses War on Terror, November 11, 2005. President Bush stated that some “militants are found in regional groups, often associated with al Qaeda — paramilitary insurgencies and separatist movements in places like Somalia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and Algeria.”

⁴² U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, April 2008. The Report stated that it was “often difficult to characterize whether [violence in Ingushetia and Dagestan was] the result of terrorism, political violence, or criminal activities” (p. 87).

⁴³ U.S. Department of State. *The United States-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism: Joint Press Statement and Fact Sheet*, June 20, 2008.

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007*, March 11, 2008. The most recent report by the State Department on its efforts to advance human rights stated that “senior U.S. officials expressed concern to government leaders about the conduct of Russian security services and the government of the Chechen Republic, which was linked to abductions and disappearances of civilians. In meetings with federal and local officials during a visit to the North Caucasus in December [2006], the ambassador conveyed US concerns and expressed US willingness to assist in ways that promote respect for the rule of law.” U.S. Department of State. *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006*, April 5, 2007.

youth employment, health, sanitation, and community development, and to discourage “the spread of extremist ideologies.”⁴⁵

According to some international NGOs and the State Department, all foreign NGOs face constraints by the authorities on their access and operations in Chechnya. While almost all NGOs operating in Chechnya have offices there with local staff, most continue to retain their main or at least branch offices outside the region. However, if the security situation continues to improve in Chechnya and deteriorate in Ingushetia and elsewhere in the North Caucasus, NGOs may consider moving more operations to Chechnya. Access to Chechnya by international staff is strictly controlled by the regional branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), according to reports, and NGOs must provide detailed monthly information on activities and travel to the FSB and other authorities. At times, the local authorities have limited or refused access, although reportedly the FSB has been more cooperative in recent months. Local authorities in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan closely oversee the finances and programs of foreign NGOs. In addition, the Russian Migration Service and other federal offices require financial and program information.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2009*, February 29, 2008.

**Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Russia's North Caucasus Region,
FY2007 and FY2008**
(U.S. dollars)

Program Area	Activity	Implementer	FY2007	FY2008
Conflict Mitigation & Reconciliation	Socio-Economic Recovery	IRC	929,211	2,200,000
	Poverty Reduction	World Vision	565,000	200,000
	Improved Community Infrastructure	CFNO	100,000	500,000
	Youth Exchange & Development	IREX	1,050,000	1,300,000
	TBD & Prog. Support		— -	748,000
Rule of Law & Human Rights	Judicial Reform	Chemonics	30,000	
	Human Rights	Faith, Hope, Love	100,000	
	Human Rights	Perspektiva	15,000	
	Tolerance Regional Councils	Bay Area Council	75,000	
Good Governance	Local Governance	IUE	250,000	400,000
	Public Finance & Budgeting	CFP	235,000	230,000
	Policy Advocacy	CIPE	— -	30,000
Political Competition	Election Monitoring	Golos	20,000	— -
Civic Participation	Sustainable Community Development	FSD	400,000	400,000
	Community Connections	World Learning	50,000	400,000
	Civil Society Development In Southern Russia	SRRC	350,000	400,000
	Civic Education	JAR	15,000	
	Key Stone Program in the Region	Key Stone	340,000	
	Civil Society Support Program	IREX	70,000	
	Program Support			122,000
Health	TB Control	IFRC	300,000	300,000
Social Services	Psycho-Social Support for Children in the NC	UNICEF	200,000	
	Program Support			15,000
Economic Opportunity	Microfinance Support	RMC	332,000	500,000
	Rural Credit Coops and Agric. Business Development	ACDI/VOCA	1,167,000	1,100,000
	Economic Opportunity/Program Support		60,000	
Total			6,653,211	8,845,000

Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia.

Key:

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
CFNO	Children's Fund of North Ossetia
CFP	Center for Fiscal Policy
CIPE	Center for International Private Enterprise
FSD	Foundation for Sustainable Development
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IRC	International Red Cross
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
IUE	Institute for Urban Economics
JAR	Junior Achievement Russia
RMC	Russian Microfinance Center
SRRC	Southern Regional Resource Center