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The Russian authorities have admitted that the situation involving the insurgency in the North Caucasus has no clear positive outlook for the government. The Main Directorate of the Russian Ministry of Interior in the North Caucasus Federal District confirmed this assessment in a report on its counter-insurgency campaign in the region in the first quarter of 2014. According to the report, 36 terrorist crimes were committed during that period, with 10 people killed and 10 wounded in attacks by militants. “In 734 successful special operations, 76 members of the bandit groups were neutralized, including 14 of their leaders; 153 militants and their accomplices were arrested and seven members of the illegal armed groups surrendered voluntarily,” the directorate reported (http://spec-naz.org/news/boevaya_rabota/bolee_70_boevikov_neytralizovano_na_severnom_kavkaze_s_nachala_goda/).

Overall, in the first quarter of 2014, according to the directorate, 19 militant bases and 78 hideouts were destroyed in the North Caucasus. Three flamethrowers, 20 grenade launchers and nearly 500 guns were confiscated, as were hundreds of grenade launcher grenades, nearly 300 regular grenades, over 200 shells and mines, 49 improvised explosive devices (IED), 207 kilograms of explosive materials, over two tons of explosive components and 49,300 cartridges (http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20140415/1004031959.html).

If one compares these numbers to the same period of 2013, it becomes apparent that the results of the work of the Russian security services have not changed significantly over the past year. In the first quarter of 2013, government forces killed 73 militants, including 15 of their leaders, and arrested 88 militants and their accomplices, while 121 terrorist crimes were registered, including 32 shootings and 15 bombings (<http://lenta.ru/news/2014/04/15/antiterror/>).

According to Sergei Chenchik, chief of the Main Directorate of the Russian interior ministry in the North Caucasus Federal District, the situation in the area remains tense and is becoming worse in some republics. Chenchik noted that the armed underground movement has managed to find the financial means to sustain itself in the region’s various republics. “The leaders of the militants still find domestic sources for replenishing their resources,” he said. “They spread their criminal influence to the most profitable businesses, put psychological pressure on businessmen, urging them to pay the so-called ‘zakat’—i.e., they indulge in extortion, practically becoming the same as organized crime” (<http://vm.ru/news/2014/04/16/na-severnom-kavkaze-za-tri-mesyatsa-nejtralizovano-76-banditov-izyato-pochti-500-edinits-strelkovogo-oruzhiya-244498.html>).

Bearing in mind that the Russian government habitually covers up rebel actions, presenting them as ordinary criminal acts, there is no way to obtain true statistics. Even independent news sources that collect such data from the media reports are not reliable, because the sources themselves are unreliable. Rebel statistics are also quite contradictory and hard to verify. The rebel side uses the Muslim calendar and its figures are much different from those provided by the Russian side.

For example, the insurgents provided information that spans the first three months of 2014, or the

Muslim calendar months of Rabi' al-awwal (equivalent to January 3–February 1), Rabi' al-Thani (February 2–March 3) and Jumada al-awwal (March 3–April 1) of the Muslim year 1435. According to the Caucasus Emirate, they carried out 41 armed operations against the law enforcement agencies during this period. The militants claim they killed 62 people who were tied to the government or supported the government's actions against the militants. In addition, the insurgents said that they destroyed 24 vehicles and demolished or damaged six buildings of the law enforcement agencies. They put their own losses at 51 killed.

The insurgents also supplied statistics on crimes committed by the authorities against civilians, claiming that in the first three months of 2014, government forces destroyed 21 houses of Muslims accused of involvement in or assisting the armed resistance in the region. Eleven men and two women were killed by government forces, which claimed these people were insurgents. The insurgents, however, say those killed were not part of the insurgency. According to rebel sources, 539 people, including four women, were arrested on various pretexts in this period, but most of them were subsequently released without charge. This figure probably includes hundreds detained after large-scale police operations targeting mosques (<http://kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2014/04/03/103901.shtml>).

Naturally, both of the conflicting sides are waging a war of figures, which is understandable. However, the discrepancies indicate that Russia is facing serious challenges in the North Caucasus. Over the past 15 years, Russia has been trying to prove that it has been fighting a small group of rebels, but it becomes hard to explain such significant losses year after year.

We have witnessed Russia's unsuccessful battle in this region for years now. Temporarily winning in one of the republics of the North Caucasus, Moscow cannot control all of the republics of the region simultaneously. That is why the hotbed of insurgency tends to move from one republic to another. Some evidence indicates that the jamaats of Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria are regaining the positions they lost. It is also unclear what the new Chechen rebel emir, Khamzat, will do now that he will no longer be burdened with having to protect Doku Umarov.

The summer–fall season of 2014 may become a turning point that will unleash a new wave of North Caucasian militant actions, assisted by the Crimean jihadists currently fighting in Syria under the Caucasus Emirate's flag.
