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Country Report on Terrorism 2014 - Chapter 2 - Russia

Overview: The Russian government continued to make Russia's counterterrorism efforts a priority during 2014. This was especially true in light of the incident-free February 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games, organized in proximity to areas of the North Caucasus where ongoing violence and violent extremist activity had occurred, resulting in heightened concern over potential terrorist activity targeting the Games.

Russia was willing to work with the United States and multilaterally on counterterrorism issues, but challenges remained. While some bilateral counterterrorism joint activities were suspended in the wake of Russia's purported annexation of Crimea, mechanisms for communication and cooperation remained, including in multilateral bodies. The Government of Russia continued to cooperate with the FBI's investigation of the Boston Marathon bombing.

Terrorist attacks related to problems in the North Caucasus continued to occur in Russia. Separatists and violent Islamist extremists calling for a pan-Islamic Caliphate within the North Caucasus constituted the main terrorist threats. Domestic violent Islamist extremists committed two terrorist attacks in Chechnya, in the North Caucasus, in the second half of the year – the first such major attacks in the region in a decade. The emergence and strengthening of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq in 2014 prompted some expressions of official Russian concern about ISIL's potential to influence domestic insurgent groups.

On December 29, Russia's Supreme Court issued a ruling recognizing ISIL as a terrorist organization and banned its domestic activity. With the ruling, participation in ISIL activities became a criminal offense under Russian legislation. In addition, Russia also took measures to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, which included law enforcement and judicial actions that resulted in the conviction of at least four Russian citizens, all of whom were sentenced to prison terms. Additional arrests were made but comprehensive information on foreign fighter cases was not publicly available.

2014 Terrorist Incidents: The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) reported that there were 78 "terrorist crimes" committed in Russia, but it prevented 59 "terrorist crimes" and eight "terrorist attacks" from January to December 2014. In 2014, the majority of terrorist attacks in Russia targeted law enforcement and security services using suicide bombing devices and improvised explosive devices placed in vehicles. Especially in the regions of Dagestan, Chechnya, and Kabardino-Balkaria, the attacks were targeted and, in most cases, resulted in the death or injury of one or two persons.

- On October 5, a suicide bomber killed five police officers and himself, and injured 12 persons in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya in the North Caucasus. This was the first suicide attack in Chechnya in 10 years. The Interior Ministry branch in Chechnya reported a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside the concert hall where Grozny City Day celebrations were due to begin. The attack occurred on Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's birthday. News agencies reported that local police working a metal detector outside the concert venue became suspicious of the behavior of a young man in the crowd and as they approached him, he detonated the explosives. Authorities identified the culprit as 19-year-old Russian citizen Apti Mudarov.
- On December 4, a second attack occurred in Grozny. In the early morning, three cars carrying militants allegedly affiliated with the terrorist group Caucasus Emirate infiltrated the capital and clashed with police after reportedly attacking a police traffic stop. The group then stormed a centrally located nine-story building, which housed local media. The battle between militants and law enforcement lasted for at least 10 hours, according to official reports, and resulted in the deaths of all 11 militants, in addition to 14 police and one civilian. Official reports stated 36 police were injured. On December 5, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov ordered the burning of the homes of families of militants involved in the December 4 attacks and the expulsion of the militants and their families from Chechnya. According to first-hand accounts, as well as commentary from Amnesty International, on December 7-10, a total of seven houses of family members of known insurgents were burned to the ground in an act of collective punishment.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Russia has a comprehensive counterterrorism legal framework that includes the provisions of the Criminal Code and various federal laws to include, "On Countering Terrorism," "On Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing," "On Countering Extremist Activity," "On Security on Transport," and "On Security in the Fuel and Energy Complex."

In 2014, Russia passed several amendments to its counterterrorism legislation that increased the penalties for, and broadened the definition of, terrorist-related crimes. The Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, Administrative Code, and the Federal Law on the Federal Security Service were amended to include:

- Article 60.3, which makes generating or disseminating terrorist propaganda an aggravating circumstance in criminal proceedings;
- Article 64, which prevents judges from sentencing terrorists to terms less than those prescribed elsewhere in legislation, to include excluding the possibility of parole;
- Articles 83 and 78, which remove the statute limitations for terrorism and supporters of terrorist activity; and

- Various amendments that increase the maximum term of imprisonment to 35 years when a count of terrorism is added to other crimes.

In addition, Russia added two new components to Article 205.1 of the Russian Criminal Code on "Aiding and Abetting Terrorist Activity." These additions criminalize across several counterterrorism laws the act of organizing terrorist financing, leading an act of terrorism, and leading an organization that conducts "terrorist crimes."

An amendment to the Administrative Code introduced administrative liability for legal entities that collect funds or provide financial services in the preparation, organization, or commission of an act of terrorism. The penalty ranges from 10 million to 60 million rubles (approximately US $166,000 to US $1 million as of December 31, 2014). In addition, Russia amended the Federal Law "On the Federal Security Service" to authorize designated FSB officers to demand an individual's identification, and conduct searches of persons, clothing, and personal belongings and vehicles.

The Russian government continued to use its "anti-extremism" legislation to prosecute peaceful individuals and organizations, including the political opposition, independent media, and certain religious minorities. Despite having counterterrorism as its ostensible primary purpose, the law criminalizes a broad spectrum of activities, including incitement to "religious discord" and "assistance to extremism," and does not precisely define what is meant by "extremism." The law includes no stipulation that threats of violence or acts of violence must accompany incitement to religious discord, for example.

The threat of prosecution under Russia's "anti-extremism" legislation has an intimidating effect that results in restriction of freedom of speech and religious freedom under the guise of countering terrorism.

The FSB remains the primary agency responsible for counterterrorism activities within Russia. To a lesser extent, the Ministry of Interior (MVD) also has a role in counterterrorism matters.

The FSB International Cooperation Directorate, through a joint relationship with the National Antiterrorism Committee (NAC), has developed the "International Counterterrorism Database" (Russian acronym: MBD), which holds both an unclassified and a restricted section. The MBD is a repository of terrorism events, subjects, organizations, and methods to which international intelligence and law enforcement agencies can contribute. The FSB promotes this as the only international database that adheres to UNSCR 2178.

Russia issues International Civil Aviation Organization/EU (ICAO/EU) compliant passports with enhanced security features, such as holographic images on the hard plastic biographic data page. Russian citizens have the option of receiving a five- or 10-year version. Although ICAO/EU compliant passports were introduced in 2010, the previous style of passport (containing a photograph laminated to a bio-data page) continues to be issued and remains in widespread use. The older document has fewer and less sophisticated security features. Recently, the Russian government moved to further strengthen security features, passing a bill that mandated the inclusion of fingerprint data in Russian citizens' foreign travel passports.

Border guards are responsible for air, land, and sea arrivals, although with over 12,000 miles of land border and over 23,000 miles of coastline, the extent to which they are able to patrol all land and maritime crossings is unclear. Border crossings, particularly on the frontiers between Russia and some former Soviet republics, may not be registered. Border guards have the capability of collecting biometrics at ports of entry, and while they currently do not do so regularly, on December 10 a Presidential Executive Order went into effect requiring biometrics collection for visas issued at Russian embassies in the UK, Denmark, Burma, and Namibia, in addition to requiring passenger fingerprint scanning at Moscow's Vnukovo airport (one of three international airports in Moscow). This initial collection was reportedly a pilot program for an envisioned worldwide rollout, but federal legislation has yet to authorize or fund this program.

Standard operating procedures for the sharing of information within Russia's government exist, but it is unclear how often these procedures are followed. A traveler to Russia must receive a visa from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (via an Embassy or Consulate abroad), be permitted entry by the FSB (through the Border Guard Service), and then be registered with the Federal Migration Service (until 2012 a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but now an autonomous organization).

Law enforcement actions/prosecutions in 2014 reportedly included:

- On April 9, a court in the Rostov Region convicted five members of the criminal organization "Vilayat Galgaiche," with sentences ranging from 14 years to life under Articles No. 205 (Act of Terrorism), No. 209 (Banditry), No. 210 (Creation of a Criminal Group/Organization and Participation Therein), No. 222 (Illegal Acquisition, Transfer, Sale, Storage, Transportation, or Bearing of Firearms, Components, Ammunition, Explosives, and Explosive Devices), No. 223 (Illegal Manufacture of Weapons), and No. 317 (Encroachment on the Life of an Officer of a Law Enforcement Agency).
- On May 17, a court in the Dagestan Republic convicted seven members of the "Yuzhnaya" (Southern) terrorist organization of terrorism and participation in an illegal armed group. The seven men's sentences ranged from two to fifteen years.
- On October 19, during an ensuing investigation and raid, the Ministry of Interior confirmed that law enforcement officers killed Aslan Aliskhanov, a 33-year-old Russian citizen implicated in organizing an attack, as he resisted arrest. Aliskhanov purportedly was a member of an illegal armed group and was on Russia's wanted list for participation in alleged militant activity.

- On December 5, a court in Volgograd convicted four Russian citizens of involvement in the 2013 double suicide bombings in Volgograd, which killed 34 and injured over 40 persons. Alautdin Dadayev and Ibragim Mamedov each were sentenced to 19 years in a maximum security prison on charges of terrorism and participation in an illegal armed group. Two other men, Magomed Batirov and Tagir Batirov, each were sentenced to three years and 10 months for aiding an illegal armed group.
- On December 17, Russian authorities announced that they arrested Khasan Zakayev last August, who authorities believe helped organize the October 2002 terrorist attack/hostage crisis at a Moscow theatre, local media reported. He was charged with “preparation for a terrorist attack,” among other related crimes.
- Also on December 17, the General Prosecutor’s Office approved the indictment of two Russians for allegedly preparing a terrorist attack in Moscow. Yulay Davletbayev and Robert Amerkhanov, both residents of Bashkortostan, were arrested in May 2014 and charged with preparing to commit a terrorist act, among other related crimes.
- On December 23, the Supreme Court in Kabardino-Balkaria (North Caucasus) convicted 57 persons of participating in an armed rebellion on October 13, 2005 in Nalchik, with the goal of creating an Islamic caliphate. As a result of the rebellion, 35 law enforcement and military personnel were killed, along with 15 civilians. One hundred thirty one officials and 92 civilians suffered injuries. All 57 were convicted under the Criminal Code for participation in an “armed rebellion, terrorism, attempt on the life of a law enforcement agency, aggravated murder, and attempted theft of a weapon,” according to media reports. Five of the defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment in a special regime colony. The remaining 52 were sentenced from four years and 10 months to 23 years in prison. Human rights groups alleged there is significant evidence that authorities had tortured at least 12 of the defendants in custody. For further information, we refer you to the State Department’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*: http://drl.j.state.sbu/reports/HRRWord.

Russian media reported that federal and local security organs continued their counterterrorism operations in the North Caucasus. These operations, although occurring throughout the region, were mostly focused in Dagestan, Chechnya, and Kabardino-Balkaria. Operations included roadblocks, raids of public venues such as cafes, and larger-scale military-style operations, especially in rural areas. On March 18, Caucasus Emirate confirmed the death of its top leader Doku Umarov. The FSB later claimed that Umarov was killed in a combat operation, but the precise date was not established. The initial claim of Umarov’s death was made by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov in December 2013.

In 2014, the Russian government sentenced to prison at least four known individuals for fighting with militants against the Syrian government. Those known to have been convicted by the end of 2014 were sentenced to between two and four years in prison:

- Said Mazhayev, two years;
- Shamil Nurmagomedov, four years;
- Murat Nagoyev, four years; and
- Rustam Kerimov, three years, followed by a year of “restricted freedom” on traveling and running for political office.

Despite the tensions in the overall bilateral relationship with the United States, the FSB continued to cooperate on the Boston Marathon bombing case. Russia continued to disseminate threat information and responded to requests for information on counterterrorism matters, although its responses were often not substantive or timely. U.S.-Russian cooperation in the realm of security support during the 2014 Sochi Games, within certain limits, was effective.

While there were no known legal constraints to effective host government law enforcement and border security related to counterterrorism, attempts at judicial reforms have had little success due to a lack of political will and institutionalized corruption within law enforcement entities. Ethnic or clan ties in certain regions can make policing and prosecutions difficult. Important cases are often moved to Moscow or other regions to ensure a judge is not influenced by a clan.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Russia is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and belongs to two FATF-style regional bodies: the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), in which it is a leading member and primary funding source. Through the EAG, Russia provides technical assistance and other resources towards improving legislative and regulatory frameworks and operational capabilities.

Russian banks must report suspicious transactions to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring), a financial intelligence unit and member of the Egmont Group whose head reports directly to the President of Russia. Rosfinmonitoring receives reports from all non-profit organizations. The Central Bank can access these transaction reports after requesting them from Rosfinmonitoring.

In 2014, Russia enacted additional changes to Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) legislation assuring tighter control over possible money-laundering and terrorist financing activity in the non-commercial sector in Russia. The government established a lower reporting threshold (RUB 100,000 – approximately US $1,700 as of December 2014) for Russian NGOs that receive money and in-kind assistance from abroad.

The most current data on investigations and convictions of terrorist financing is from 2013. In that year, the Russian government investigated 10 cases of terrorist financing, and one case resulted in a conviction. In addition, it suspended two transactions and froze US $18,610 from entities on the national terrorist list. The total number of measures taken in 2013 was below the five year average. In the period 2008 – 2013 there were 80 total investigations and 21 convictions. In the same period, the government suspended 32 transactions totaling US $106,172.

The law requires the freezing of assets without delay, but no later than one working day. In 2013, two transactions were suspended and US $18,610 was frozen due to National Terrorist List concerns.

Non-profit organizations have mandatory reporting requirements on transactions of cash and other property from foreign states, international and foreign organizations, foreign citizens and stateless persons, if the value of such transaction is equal or greater than RUB 100,000 (approximately US $1,700 as of December 2014). Russia does not use a risk-based approach towards its regulation of the sector and this and other regulations are also used to tarnish the reputations of organizations with no connection to terrorism or extremism, fixing them with the label of “foreign agent.”

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm.

Regional and International Cooperation: Russia continued to work in regional and multilateral groups to address terrorism. Russia participated in Global Counterterrorism Forum activities, as well as in a meeting of experts from the Anti-Terrorism Centers of the OSCE. The Russian government supported UN Security Council Resolutions 2170 and 2178.