



Putin Vows to Destroy Terrorists After Bombings

Following two suicide bombings in the city of Volgograd on December 29 and 30 that left 34 people dead, Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to battle the terrorists until they were completely destroyed.

Putin's statement, made in a New Year's Eve address from the Siberian city of Khabarovsk, were his first public comments made since the Volgograd bombings.

[VOA News](#) cited a spokesman for Russia's federal investigation agency who said the bomb in Monday's explosion was similar to the one used in Sunday's attack, reinforcing suspicions that the bombings may be linked.

Russia's foreign ministry compared the attacks to similar acts of terrorism in the United States, Iraq, and Nigeria, and called for international solidarity in countering terrorism. This proposal would be regarded with immediate skepticism, however, by those in other countries who are well versed in the Soviet-Russian history of state sponsorship of terrorists, who often serve as mere surrogates of Moscow and Beijing.

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The bombings increase the concerns of those responsible for the security of the Winter Olympics, which will be held from February 6-23 in Sochi, about 400 miles southwest of Volgograd. Islamist militants have threatened to attack civilians during the Winter Games.

VOA reported that Russia has implemented some of the most stringent security measures to be provided at any international sporting event in preparation for the Olympics. These include establishing a limited access security cordon around the entire city of Sochi and requiring spectators to carry accreditation documents that include passport data and contact information.

Britain's [Telegraph](#) reported that during his New Year's Eve address, Putin summed up the crisis: "In the past year we have faced problems and serious challenges including the inhuman terror attacks in Volgograd and unprecedented disasters in the Far East."

Continuing his remarks, Putin said: "Dear friends, we bow our heads in memory of the victims of these terrible attacks. We will strongly and decisively continue the battle against terrorists until their total annihilation."

A [Reuters report](#) noted that Putin has been unable to crush Islamist militants in the Muslim provinces of the North Caucasus. The report noted that on Tuesday police in Volgograd detained dozens of people in sweeps throughout the city. However, there was no indication that any of those detained were connected to the attacks.

Volgograd, city of about a million people, is a transport hub for an area of southern Russia that includes Chechnya and the other predominantly Muslim provinces of the North Caucasus. It is an area where





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militants engage in violence on an almost daily basis.

A report posted by [Sky News](#) back on July 3 quoted from a video posted online by Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov, who urged the use of “maximum force” to prevent President Putin from successfully staging the Winter Games in Sochi.

The report identified Umarov as the leader of the Islamist insurgency in Russia’s North Caucasus region.

The transcript of the video further quotes Umarov:

They [Russia] plan to hold the Olympics on the bones of our ancestors, on the bones of many, many dead Muslims, buried on the territory of our land on the Black Sea.

We as mujahideen are obliged to not permit that, using any methods allowed us by the almighty Allah.

Despite Umarov’s threats, no one has yet claimed responsibility for the Volgograd bombings.

[Reuters](#) cited a statement made by Interior Ministry spokesman Andrei Pilipchuk on Russian state TV that more than 5,000 police and interior troops were mobilized in Volgograd in what is called “Operation Anti-terror Whirlwind.” Also cited was a report from the Itar-Tass news agency stating that police were focusing on migrant workers from the Caucasus and ex-Soviet states, noting that rights activists have criticized Russia’s singling out of these groups, asserting that because of prejudice they are often targeted by police indiscriminately.

The [Telegraph](#) reported that Russia’s federal Investigative Committee released a statement that Monday’s bombing was the work of a man whose remains were being tested in an attempt to establish his identity, presumably through DNA matching.

The [Telegraph](#) also cited reports in the Russian press, which have not been officially confirmed, identifying the man behind Sunday’s railway station blast as one Pavel Pechenkin, an Islamic militant. Pechenkin’s father, Nikolai, has already given a DNA sample to aid identification, the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper reported.

A report posted by [Novinite.com](#) (the Bulgarian-based Sofia News Agency) stated that Pechenkin “was a member of the Buinaksk [a town located 25 miles from Dagestan’s capital, Makhachkala] ring operating in Dagestan and joined the Dagestani militants in spring 2012. He converted to Islam then and changed his name to Ansar Al- Rusi.” The republic of Dagestan is located in the North Caucasus region.

[Putin](#), who has taken on the mission of destroying the terrorists responsible for the Volgograd attacks, has a background in the old Soviet KGB that should make him a formidable foe. He joined the KGB right after graduation from Leningrad State University and underwent a year’s training by the agency. He would later be put in charge of monitoring surveillance of students at his alma mater. Putin “resigned” from the KGB with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1991.

In 1999 Putin became acting president of Russia following the resignation of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin. He was elected to his own term as president in 2000, and reelected in 2004. Prevented from seeking a third term by Russia’s constitution, Putin was succeeded by Dmitry Medvedev, but was appointed as prime minister of Russia a day later. Putin won a third presidential term (which was permissible since it was not continuous with his earlier terms) in 2012.

A [Bloomberg report](#) on December 30, written before Putin made his New Year’s Eve address speaking



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about the bombings, speculated as to why the Russian leader was rather slow in addressing the attacks. The writer, Leonid Bershidsky, theorized: "Putin may be hesitating to speak out because any alarmist statements from him might indeed cast doubt on the security of the Olympics at Sochi, which is much closer than Volgograd to the terrorist hotbeds of the North Caucasus."

Bershidsky concluded his article by noting: "This is business as usual in Russia, where a terrorist underground continues to exist in the North Caucasus, despite the billions of dollars spent to eradicate it."

This last statement assumes that the Russian government has genuinely tried to eradicate the terrorist network both within and outside its borders, rather than trying to cultivate these organizations to serve its own agenda.

Early reports of the Volgograd bombings list as a prime suspect Pavel Pechenkin, who was part of a terrorist group based in Dagestan, the capital of Chechnya. And as we noted, Volgograd is a transport hub for Chechnya and the other predominantly Muslim provinces of the North Caucasus where militants regularly engage in violence.

While the obvious inclination is to assume that Putin's government has an interest in doing everything possible to suppress Chechen terrorism, some investigative journalists who have kept a close eye on the situation have come to other conclusions. Among these is William F. Jasper, who in his article "[Chechen Terrorism: Made in Moscow](#)" writes: "the accumulated evidence very convincingly demonstrates that the sensational terror attacks, rather than being the work of Chechen terrorists, were actually 'false flag' operations of the Russian intelligence services, the FSB and GRU, designed to serve multiple purposes of the Yeltsin-Putin Kremlin rulers."

Among the purposes the Kremlin might have for staging these "false flag" operations, Jasper lists:

- Covering up and diverting attention from the rampant corruption and massive theft of national wealth by Yeltsin, his family, and his cronies, which was becoming impossible to conceal, both from the Russian people as well as foreign governments, journalists and investors;
- Installing an unknown KGB-FSB operative (Vladimir Putin) and providing him with a "cause" that would build his stature and rally public support around him;
- Providing Putin and the Kremlin leaders with an excuse to make war on Chechnya and focus Russian public attention on an external threat; Casting Russia as a victim of terror groups, to encourage the United States and Western Europe to cooperate and converge with Moscow on fighting a common global terror threat.

Time will demonstrate how many of these possible scenarios will play out, but it is important to regard any anti-terrorist operations originating with the Russian government with much suspicion.

Photo of Vladimir Putin: AP Images



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