

Suspected Organizer of Moscow Metro Bombings Killed in Dagestan

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Madomedali Vagabov, right, with an unidentified gunman in an undated photo.

An Islamist militant leader suspected of organizing suicide bombings that killed 40 people in the Moscow metro in March was killed in a shootout with security forces in Dagestan on Saturday, officials said.

Madomedali Vagabov was killed along with four others during a gunfight with special forces in the Dagestani village of Gunib, officials said.

The suspects were killed when the house they were holed up in caught fire, local police spokesman Vyacheslav Gadzhiyev said.

The National Anti-Terrorism Committee said Vagabov was effectively second in command in the separatist insurgency in the North Caucasus. The head, Doku Umarov, claimed responsibility for the metro attacks, carried out by two female suicide bombers.

The Federal Security Service has said one of the suicide bombers, Dagestani schoolteacher

Mariam Sharipova, had been married to Vagabov. But Sharipova's father has said he believed that his daughter was single because she had promised she would never marry without his consent.

State television showed the immediate aftermath of Saturday's clash, a smoldering, half-destroyed stone house in a picturesque valley. Security forces in camouflage paced around the bodies.

Umarov has evaded capture in the forested mountains of the region. He announced this month that he was stepping down as leader, but later backtracked.

In other violence in the North Caucasus, a group of gunmen shot dead a policeman and a civilian in separate attacks in Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala, before opening fire at a cafe, killing one customer and wounding another, Interfax reported, citing police.

Also, Chechen police said Sunday that a militant detonated explosives as officers tried to detain him, killing himself and one policeman and injuring nine other officers.

Police spokesman Magomed Deniyev identified the militant as Khamzat Shemilev and said he was suspected of organizing and carrying out a series of terrorist acts.

Deniyev said police surrounded Shemilov when he left his house Saturday night in the center of Grozny. The militant fired a couple of shots, but when he realized he could not escape he detonated explosives he was carrying.

(AP, MT, Reuters)

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