The Moscow Times
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Militants Strike Kadyrov's Home Village

By Alexey Eremenko

August 29, 2010



A woman walking past a car burned during an attack Sunday in Kadyrov's home village of Tsentoroi.
Musa Sadulayev

A daring militant raid on Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's home village on Sunday erupted in a gunbattle that killed at least 14 people, officials said.

Kadyrov was in the village of Tsentoroi, about 20 kilometers east of Grozny, when the gang of about 30 Islamist militants entered at about 4:30 a.m., and he personally led the counteroffensive.

The president, who appeared on national television examining the bodies of killed militants, said the situation was under control.

"We let them into the village so they couldn't escape," Kadyrov told Channel One state television. "We forced them into a place where they could be eliminated."

Kadyrov, who is up for reappointment next year, said 12 militants and two of his guards were

killed and four civilians wounded.

But law enforcement officials told RIA-Novosti that the militants' casualties could not be confirmed, and five civilians and two policemen were killed in the attack.

Kadyrov denied that any civilians had died.

But The Associated Press, citing a local resident, said a militant had detonated explosives in a house, killing a 30-year-old resident as well as himself.

The resident also said the fighting had erupted at a construction site about 150 meters from Kadyrov's residence.

The militants torched several houses and shot at police, who fought back alongside Kadyrov's guards, RIA-Novosti reported.

In other violence in the North Caucasus, four militants were killed in Dagestan early Sunday after a gunfight with police and a nighttime car chase on the streets of Khasavyurt, Interfax reported.

The militants, who drove two cars, were stopped by police for a document check but opened fire and tried to escape, a Federal Security Service spokesman told Interfax.

Among the dead was Nariman Satiyev, 19, a three-time world champion in Muay Thai martial arts, the report said.

On Saturday, Dagestani police killed five militants identified as members of a gang led by Magomedali Vagabov, the suspected organizer of the March suicide bombings in the Moscow metro who was killed Aug. 21, Interfax reported. Among them was Vagabov's Sakha-born chief bomb maker, it said, citing local police.

Police acted on a tip, ambushing the militants in the forest as they were picking up food supplies from a supporter, police said. One police officer was injured in the operation and died in the hospital Sunday.

In the restive Kabardino-Balkaria republic, local militant leader Arsen Khazhbiyev was killed with four of his men Saturday after being surrounded by police in an apartment in the local capital, Nalchik, Interfax reported. Khazhbiyev and his men are suspected of orchestrating a May 1 blast at the Nalchik racetrack that killed one person and injured 43 others.

More than 30 militants have been killed in the North Caucasus in August, FSB director Alexander Bortnikov said Saturday. The count includes Khazhbiyev's gang but not those killed in other violence over the weekend.

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