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# As Militants Quarrel, FSB Reports 301 Are Dead

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The Federal Security Service has killed 301 Islamist militants in the North Caucasus this year and arrested 468 others, including the perpetrators of a deadly suicide bombing in Vladikavkaz in September, FSB director Alexander Bortnikov said Tuesday.

Bortnikov's remarks came days after the FSB was left red-faced when its claim to have broken up a suicide bombing ring comprised of militants' widows last summer appeared to fall through. Charges were only filed against two of the 10 suspects — and the charges were minor, unrelated to terrorism, Kommersant reported Friday.

Bortnikov said the number of terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus has decreased by 12 percent year on year, and the drop has reached almost 50 percent in Chechnya and Ingushetia, Interfax reported.

He also said law enforcement officers have killed members of a terrorist squad that staged more than 10 bombings in Ingushetia and the blast at the Vladikavkaz market that killed 19 people last month.

Two members of the squad, which has ties with rebel leader Doku Umarov, were killed, and three, including its leader, Isa Khashagulgov, are in custody, Bortnikov said.

Meanwhile, a split in the militants' ranks has intensified, as the leader of the self-proclaimed insurgent government-in-exile, Akhmed Zakayev, said he supports opponents of Umarov, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

Zakayev, who lives under asylum in London, said he has disbanded the government-in-exile and pledged allegiance to Chechen warlord Khusein Gakayev, who said in August that he would not follow orders from Umarov, once considered the leader of all North Caucasus rebels.

The claim by Zakayev, an old enemy of Umarov, is likely to add legitimacy to Gakayev's group, which has accused Umarov of ignoring Chechen interests, Kommersant said.

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