

Medvedev Admits No Progress in Caucasus

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President Dmitry Medvedev accused police of twisting statistics on attacks in the North Caucasus but admitted that the authorities have failed to curb violence there.

"We must frankly admit that it [the situation] has practically not improved," Medvedev told the Kremlin's envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District, Alexander Khloponin, as well as a slew of officers from the police and the Federal Security Service.

Medvedev named the region Russia's biggest domestic problem last year.

"The killing of civilians, spiritual leaders and law enforcement officers, shootouts and bombs are not going down in number," he said during a meeting Friday in Yessentuki.

Medvedev said the number of premeditated murders dropped countrywide by 13 percent from January through October but rose 5 percent in the North Caucasus Federal District.

He also said 64,000 crimes were reported in the North Caucasus Federal District from January

through October but added that he thought the statistics released by local police were "utter rubbish."

"I am not convinced that it is bad because our statistics are equivocal and we cannot believe them," he said, Itar-Tass reported.

Across the North Caucasus, 259 state agents and 112 civilians were killed from January to November of this year mostly from militant activity, according to terrorism experts at the U.S.-based Monterey Institute for International Studies in California.

The institute says up to 351 Islamist fighters were killed in the same period.

The National Anti-Terror Committee, part of the FSB, said last month that attacks in Chechnya and Ingushetia were down by nearly a half.

(MT, Reuters)

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