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Stop Sweeping Terror Under The Carpet

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Another suicide bomber blew himself up on Monday. This time, it happened in the arrivals hall of Domodedovo Airport. The only reason why a suicide bomber would blow himself up in the arrival waiting area is if he wasn't able to do the same thing during a flight.

Russia has been subjected to major terrorist attacks on a regular basis for the past 12 years. The first happened in Vladikavkaz on March 19, 1999, when a sack containing explosives blew up in a marketplace, killing 53 people. Investigators identified the man behind the attack as an Ingush, Timur Tsokiyev.

That was followed by an explosion in the central Dagestani town of Buinaksk on Sept. 4, 1999, organized by a group of extremists who supported "pure" Islam.

The there were the September 1999 bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk that were staged by extremists who answered to Achemez Gochiyayev, a former businessman.

Gochiyayev was also responsible for blasts in the Stavropol region that took place in winter

2000 and spring 2001. His follower, Anzor Izhayev, blew himself up in Moscow's Avtozavodskaya metro station in February 2003, and another follower and bodyguard, Nikolai Kipkeyev, accidently blew himself up along with a female suicide bomber he was escorting near the Rizhskaya metro station on Aug. 31, 2004.

That blast followed a twin suicide bombing of two airplanes on Aug. 24 at the orders of Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev, and it immediately preceded the Beslan school siege on Sept. 1.

There have also been a number of failed terrorist attacks. In October 1999, a group of terrorists from Dagestan's Nogai district village of Chervlenye Buruny led by Rasul Karayev was planning to stage an explosion in Pyatigorsk, but one of the men accidentally blew himself up while assembling a bomb on Oct. 6.

Ten days later in Astrakhan, bombers almost managed to blow up a railway bridge but by chance were spotted by a nearby driver. What's more, the terrorists failed to blow up a passenger train as it crossed the bridge because the train was four hours late that day.

Most of the terrorist attacks that happened in 1999 were solved — not thanks to the tremendous skills of the authorities, but because the terrorists behind those attacks were so certain that the Caucasus would soon gain independence that they saw no reason to conceal their identities. For example, one of the organizers behind the blast in Buinaksk left identifying papers in a truck that did not explode, and all of Gochiyayev's associates lived in a Moscow hotel under their own names.

The history of bombings shows that the terrorists are often just as inept as the police.

But after 1999, religious fundamentalists stopped registering in hotels using their own passports, making it far more difficult to trace their identities. The authorities therefore stopped investigating terrorist attacks and tried to pass them off as something else. For example, the 2001 explosion in the Astrakhan market was attributed to more mundane causes.

Whenever it was impossible to deny terrorist involvement, the authorities didn't bother to investigate and tried to forget about the attacks as quickly as possible. That was how the explosion on a commuter train in Yessentuki was forgotten, as well as a terrorist attack in a Samara marketplace and even the simultaneous airplane bombings on Aug. 24, 2004.

No doubt, the current tragedy at Domodedovo will also be swept under the carpet in the same way — several days after leaders express their traditional, obligatory words of condolence, outrage and regret.

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