

Anti-Terror Policy Must Go Deeper

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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There are two basic counter-terrorist strategies. The first one aims to make potential targets for terrorism harder to attack. The second is to go after attackers, destroying them and keeping the rest on the run, not allowing them to amass resources for another attack.

So far, the official response to Monday's bombing at Domodedovo Airport has been almost exclusively about boosting transportation security. This is a simple, albeit expensive, way for the government to imitate an active, responsible reaction — the consequences of which everyone will feel by spending extra time in line to enter an airport or railroad station, unloading and loading bags and going through metal detectors.

Protecting soft targets — such as shopping malls, hotels, bars and restaurants, government offices and business centers — would only deter poorly trained terrorists, while experienced ones would be able to penetrate the more difficult targets. Also, it is impossible to protect all targets. For example, an attempt to screen every passenger in the Moscow metro, which has 9 million users every day, would paralyze the whole system.

Since Monday's attack, we have heard a lot about the extensive list of measures that the Kremlin plans to take to boost security at airports and other transportation centers, but we've heard very little about the government's plans on how to deal with the perpetrators of the attacks.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin vowed retribution Tuesday, and several days or weeks from now we will probably learn that the planners of the Domodedovo bombing were found among several gunmen killed in an "anti-terrorist operation." Video footage of the dead bodies will be proudly shown on the evening news to try to convince everyone how hard the Kremlin is working to "exterminate" terrorist cells.

This scenario is repeated after nearly every terrorist attack. Since suspected terrorists almost always get killed by special forces before they can stand trial, we never know whether they were truly terrorists.

Of course, penetrating terrorist cells requires top-level intelligence skills and a willingness to risk to one's life for relatively low pay. It is much easier and safer for law enforcement officials to chase opposition activists in the country's largest cities and to monitor nationalists and other radical groups. We are left wondering whether law enforcement officials' view their main task as using their offices for personal enrichment after last week's arrest of Alexander Bokov, a police general overseeing an anti-mafia coordination bureau for the Commonwealth of Independent States who is charged in a \$46 million corruption case.

At the same time, it would be wrong to echo Kremlin critics who say the country's security officials are not fighting a war on terrorism at all. The authorities are working in extremely difficult conditions in the North Caucasus, where they and their families are primary targets for terrorists. It is true that innocent people get killed, tortured and humiliated all too often in the course of anti-terrorist operations. This, in turn, pushes survivors and their relatives to support and join terrorist movements. The main problems among those fighting terrorism are a lack of professionalism, a lack of personal responsibility for their actions, and the habit of resorting to simple solutions like brutal violence against potential terrorists.

These systemic problems in fighting terrorism cannot be solved by simply placing more metal detectors in airports.

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