

Where Airport Bombs and Traffic Jams Meet

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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"I felt terrorized!" the young woman told a Moscow Times journalist.

The young woman had not been at Domodedovo Airport, but instead was driving home when a Volvo owned by the Federal Guard Service — with its familiar EKX number plates, which drivers know as an acronym for "Drive Anyway I Want" — and a presidential administration Mercedes entered the oncoming lane and forced her and all the other drivers into the shoulder.

Were the government vehicles speeding to an urgent meeting to resolve a national crisis? Doubtful, since it was a recent Friday evening rush hour and they were heading away from Moscow's center, toward the elite's residential area.

Other drivers aren't so lucky. Alyona Yarosh, the 23-year-old architecture student lying in the hospital in serious condition after colliding with a Kremlin bureaucrat's car with a flashing

blue light last month, might have just as well been at Domodedovo collecting her luggage. The government is complicit in the carnage in both cases.

A cause of terrorism in Russia is not unlike one of the reasons for traffic jams: the arrogance of the state.

The federal government itself is indirectly supporting terrorism by giving officials the right to run common citizens off the road, and by allowing them to steal from the budget left, right and center, thus reducing essential services to the people and leaving them fundamentally impoverished.

As Gandhi pointed out, poverty and the resentment it breeds are nourishment for political violence.

The flaw of an oligarchy is that those in power don't feel the pain of the masses.

As long as the powerful have their blue lights, traffic problems will not go away.

As long as volatile areas with undereducated and underemployed youth are ignored or addressed only on a piece of paper on a Moscow-based bureaucrat's desk, terrorist ranks will swell.

The recent appointment of respected banker Anton Pak to run the newly established Corporation for the Development of the North Caucasus gives us hope that the state might be beginning to understand.

By efficiently attracting investors and funds for projects in agriculture, infrastructure and construction — and the hope that health care and education will be added to the portfolio — there might be a chance to stem the tide of rising fundamentalism by providing jobs and showing the locals the state is serious about caring for its citizens.

Tangible results of these efforts are needed soon.

The previous attempt to “develop” the North Caucasus by promoting ski resorts is at best an absurdity and at worst another blatant effort to siphon off funds. The resorts, hawked last week to foreign investors at the World Economic Forum in Davos, are to be built in an area that many embassies have classified as a “no-travel” zone.

For now, the terror continues on the roads and in the airports.

As long as the masses alone suffer and fundamental issues are not earnestly addressed, the terrorists will grow stronger.

And this is true not only for Russia.

In the meantime, we'll be hurrying through the airport terminal, extra wary of the elite on the highways, and hoping for significant, life-changing progress in projects to develop the North Caucasus.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow

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