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Doku Umarov Vows 'Year of Tears'

By Alexandra Odynova

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An undated still image from a video showing rebel Doku Umarov, center.

Notorious insurgent supremo Doku Umarov promised Russia a "year of blood and tears," saying he has at his disposal 50 to 60 suicide bombers ready to strike, but stopping short of claiming responsibility for last month's Domodedovo Airport blast.

Meanwhile, Moscow faced a new wave of false bomb scares, prompting calls to step up punishment for prank calls about upcoming terrorist attacks.

Umarov's statement was made in a video released late Friday by rebel mouthpiece Kavkazcenter.com, which said it received the undated 12-minute video by e-mail earlier the same day.

Speaking in an emotionless voice, Umarov, flanked by two figures in military camouflage, said the video was recorded during his visit to a brigade of suicide bombers called Riyadus Salikhiin, or Gardens of the Pious in Arabic.

“We will make this the year of blood and tears,” Umarov said in his statement. “I won't say there are hundreds of us, but some five to six dozen can be found, and special operations will be carried out monthly and weekly.”

He identified the man on his left as “mujahed Seifullakh,” assigned to carry out an unspecified counterstrike in response to the federal government's actions in the North Caucasus.

Umarov did not elaborate and made no reference to the suicide bombing at Domodedovo, which killed 36 and injured about 180 last month, but Novaya Gazeta speculated Saturday that Umarov's statement could have been recorded ahead of the airport attack and thus referred to that bombing.

No group has claimed responsibility for the airport attack. Officials, including Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, said the masterminds of the blast were identified, but named no names.

The blast in Domodedovo was allegedly carried out by Magomed Yevloyev, 20, a native of Ingushetia, a law enforcement source told Interfax on Sunday. He also said two ethnic Ingushes, Adam Ganizhev and Islam Yevloyev, were placed on a federal wanted list as alleged accomplices of the suicide bomber.

Novaya Gazeta said “mujahed Seifullakh” in Umarov's video resembled Yevloyev, but the claim is hard to maintain because of the low quality of the footage.

The third man in the video was identified as Amir Khamzat, chief of Riyadus Salikhiin. The group was responsible for Moscow's 2002 Dubrovka hostage crisis, also involving suicide bombers, which left more than 100 civilians dead. It also claimed to have staged the deadly accident at the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric plant in 2009 as part of the “economic war” against Russia. Officials denied allegations that the accident, which killed 75, was a terrorist attack.

Meanwhile, pranksters have contributed to the chaos caused by the Domodedovo blast, as a shopping mall, a metro station and all nine main train stations in Moscow had to be searched over the weekend because of anonymous reports of explosives planted in them.

The downtown Atrium shopping mall and the Kievskaya metro station were checked by bomb squads on Saturday. The metro station scare took place on Sunday, when an anonymous caller claimed that bombs were planted at three stations, without identifying them. Only two of the nine, Leningradsky and Yaroslavsky, were evacuated.

The callers were not identified on Sunday, but police reported earlier detaining at least four people over other such reports that have poured in since the Domodedovo bombing, RIA-Novosti said.

About 20 false reports have been received in Moscow this year, police said. Shopping malls, the metro and train stations have had to be searched almost daily since the January blast, though North Caucasus terrorists never announce their attacks in advance.

Enraged officials on Friday called for stepping up punishment for false reports of terrorism. The offense currently carries a maximum sentence of three years or a fine of 300,000 rubles

($10,200), but a bill pending hearing at the State Duma proposes increasing the sentence to five years. No date for the hearing is set.

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Officials said Friday that three police officers were killed in an attack on a police vehicle transporting a prisoner in the North Caucasus republic of Karachayevo-Cherkessia. The attackers freed the unidentified prisoner and got away, taking the service guns of the slain policemen with them.

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