The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

FSB Tells New Tale About a Terrorist Plot

By Paul Rimple

May 13, 2012



On Thursday, the Federal Security Service claimed that it had found a huge arms cache in the breakaway territory of Abkhazia. It said Chechen warlord Doku Umarov brought the weapons to Abkhazia with the help of Georgian special services to attack Winter Olympic Games facilities in Sochi. There are a few problems with this allegation.

Linking Georgia to terrorist cells in Abkhazia only calls attention to Sochi's vulnerability to North Caucasus terrorist networks. You would think that Russia would be playing the threat down. It's almost as if this scenario were written in Tbilisi, not Moscow.

The FSB has provided no proof that Umarov, who is the leader of the terrorist group Caucasus Emirate, has any connections to Georgian security forces. Umarov is wanted by the U.S. State Department, which has a $5 million bounty on his head. The United States also has a close, on-the-ground relationship with Georgia. To claim that Georgia maintains ties with a wanted terrorist under Washington's nose is quite a compliment to the Georgian secret services.

Assuming Georgian customs officials allowed a truck full of rocket launchers across the border with Turkey, we would have to conclude that the Russian army, which has a gauntlet of guards in Abkhazia along the Enguri River border with Georgia, must either be inept, corrupt or both.

The Abkhaz want more evidence before they can make the connection to a Sochi plot. They know Umarov would hardly have to import such a menagerie of ammunition and rocket launchers. Abkhazia is littered with caches from when the Abkhaz were anticipating a Georgian invasion at any moment.

The FSB says the weapons were stashed in Gudauta by Rustan Gitsba, the leader of a local radical Islamist group, Abkhaz Jamaat, which nobody in Abkhazia had apparently ever heard of before. His brother Khamzat, imam of the Gudauta mosque, however, made headlines when he was murdered in 2007. Abkhazia was quick to presage the complicity of "foreign players."

Abkhazia's leader, Alexander Ankvab, can't be too pleased. The cache was discovered during the investigation of the latest attempt on his life in February, and he had ruled out Georgia's role in the attack. Announcing that there are Muslim terrorists in Abkhazia who are associated with Georgia's plans to attack Sochi makes Ankvab look weak, Abkhazia look unstable and confirms what Tbilisi has been saying all along, "Russia is its own phantom menace."

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/13/fsb-tells-new-tale-about-a-terrorist-plot-a14714