

Insurgent Payoff Report 'Provocation'

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Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, head of the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia, denounced as a "planned provocation" a report that the chairman of his administration paid monthly kickbacks of \$1 million to appease infamous insurgent leader Doku Umarov.

"There is no doubt that this report is linked to the upcoming September 2013 election of the republic's president," Yevkurov told reporters on Tuesday in Ingushetia's capital, Magas.

His comments came after a ruling party lawmaker who represents the neighboring republic of Chechnya requested that prosecutors check the kickback allegation, made by a professed member of Umarov's gang and aired on state-run Channel One television.

Tension between the two republics escalated in January when Chechnya's Kremlin-backed leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, signed a law declaring that parts of Ingushetia were under Chechen jurisdiction. The regional border has not been officially delineated since Ingushetia separated from Chechnya in 1992.

Ingush administration chairman Musa Chilyev "gave \$1 million a month to the insurgents so they would not assault him," self-proclaimed militant Ibragim Torzhkhoyev told Channel One in an interview in Moscow.

He also claimed that he had observed how the Domodedovo Airport bombing was prepared and that he had lived together with Magomed Yevloyev, who blew himself up in the airport's international arrivals hall on Jan. 24, 2011.

The interview, which took place while Torzhkhoyev was on a federal wanted list, included footage of insurgents' activities in the North Caucasus, featuring Torzhkhoyev among their ranks. Channel One, one of the country's most-watched stations, claimed that following the interview he would surrender to the police.

The Ingush administration released a statement saying Chilyev had also appealed to the Prosecutor General's Office and the Federal Security Service to investigate. Kadyrov's spokesman, Alvi Karimov, told The Moscow Times that the whole situation was "absurd."

Ingushetia's finance minister, Magomed Aushev, said in a statement carried by the Golos Ingushetii (Voice of Ingushetia) news site that it was "a provocation against the Ingush people ... to deprive Ingushetia of its sovereignty and make it join Chechnya."

Gregory Shvedov, editor-in-chief of the [Kavkazsky Uzel](#) (Caucasian Knot) news agency, said the fact that it was a Chechen deputy who had sent the request to prosecutors and that it was made public by state-run media indicated an intention to weaken Yevkurov's administration ahead of the election.

"But we cannot only blame Kadyrov for this," he added. "I believe it is up to the federal government to resolve these kind of tensions."

On March 24, the State Duma passed a bill that would grant regional authorities the right to cancel direct gubernatorial elections. Many lawmakers and pro-Kremlin pundits cited interethnic strife and instability in the Caucasus as the reason.

Nevertheless, Yevkurov on Tuesday emphasized that he favored direct elections. "I am a fighter, and I am for elections," he said, adding that his administration was ready to face either option: a direct election or approval by the republic's parliament.

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