

37,000 Police to Secure Sochi Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev said Friday that 37,000 police officers had been deployed to protect the 2014 Winter Games in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, repeating official assurances to make the Olympics safe despite the threat of an Islamist insurgency in the region.

Kolokoltsev said on *Rossia 24* state television that a multi-layer security system in Sochi was fully compatible with demands of the International Olympic Committee. He added that it had proven its efficiency in test events there.

While Russia has pledged to make the games "the safest Olympics in history," security experts warn that the Islamist insurgency that has spread across the North Caucasus after two separatist wars in Chechnya poses daunting threats to President Vladimir Putin's pet project.

Earlier this week, a top Chechen rebel warlord called on militants to disrupt the Sochi Games, which he described as "satanic dances on the bones of our ancestors." The statement by Doku Umarov marked a reversal of his last year's order to his fighters to avoid hitting civilian

targets because Russians in Moscow were taking to the streets en masse to protest against Putin.

Dagestan, which lies about 500 kilometers east of Sochi, has become the epicenter of violence, with Islamist rebels targeting police and other officials in near-daily shootings and bombings.

Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the elder of the two ethnic Chechen brothers who are accused of staging the Boston Marathon bombings, spent six months last year in Dagestan. Russian investigators have been trying to determine whether he had contact with local Islamic militants.

Kolokoltsev did not refer to Umarov's statement or talk about the Islamist insurgency in his televised comments, but he vowed that the Sochi Games would be better protected than the Boston Marathon.

"As for the sad experience with the Boston event, I think our efforts and readiness can't be compared to that," he said. "We are getting ready at the maximum level."

The Interior Ministry's branch in southern Russia said one of its officers was killed and another three were wounded Thursday in southern Chechnya when they stepped on land mines left by militants they were pursuing. It said additional forces were sent to the area to continue the search.

On Thursday, Security Council head Nikolai Patrushev said special services of several other nations would closely cooperate with Russian security agencies to protect the Sochi Games.

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