

Putin Says Security Not Improving Fast Enough in North Caucasus

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 09, 2013

The  Moscow Times

President Vladimir Putin ordered intelligence agencies Monday to step up efforts to secure a volatile region near next year's Winter Olympics, saying the situation was not improving fast enough.

Putin has already signed a decree imposing restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly near the Olympic venue Sochi, an order that campaign groups say violates human rights.

"Despite evident positive shifts, the situation in the North Caucasus is improving too slowly," Putin told his Security Council, a body that advises him on security and defense, five months before the start of the February event.

"Terrorism threats and security concerns have not been finally eradicated," he added, in comments published on the Kremlin's website.

The Kremlin has amassed a huge security infrastructure in the region around the Black Sea resort town to prevent attacks on the games by Islamist militants involved in nearly daily violence in the nearby North Caucasus.

Putin urged the council to "mobilize all law enforcement bodies" to tighten security.

Rooted in two separatist wars in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya since the fall of the Soviet Union, the insurgency has spilled into Dagestan, which is now the focal point of violence.

Putin repeated Russia's long-standing assertion that foreign powers exploited the turmoil to weaken Russia from within.

"We are also facing destructive anti-Russian activity from a number of foreign states, ... which still see the North Caucasus as a foothold to destabilize Russia overall, to cause us economic damage [and to] undermine Russia's global influence and activity," he said.

He also brushed off criticism of Russia's human rights record by rights groups and foreign states.

"Let them first of all look after themselves. ... They have plenty of violations themselves," he said.

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