

Militant Leader Killed in Dagestan Ahead of Olympics

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Special forces standing guard.

The National Anti-Terrorism Committee on Tuesday announced that security forces had killed the leader of an insurgent group in Dagestan during one of three simultaneous operations carried out in the turbulent republic.

The alleged insurgent was identified as Eldar Magatov, who went by the nickname Saifullakh, and he was killed in the village of Zubutli-Miyatli in the district of Kizilyurt, the committee said in a statement on its website.

The raids, which also took place in the districts of Kizlyarsk and Khazavyurt, come amid reports of a police search for a potential female suicide bomber in the nearby Olympic city of Sochi, despite a heightened security regime in the area. Two other women were also reported as possible suicide bombers in the North Caucasus, though it was unclear if they had any connection to Tuesday's raids.

"After opening fire, the militant was killed. He has preliminarily been identified as Eldar

Magatov, born in 1984, the head of an insurgent group in Babayurt. Until 2006, he was operating on the territory of Chechnya in Batayev's group," the committee said, apparently referring to convicted militant Islam Batayev.

Magatov had been in Dagestan, a predominantly Muslim province in Russia's North Caucasus that has been battling an Islamic insurgency since January 2011, the committee said. He was responsible for extorting money from various entrepreneurs — a practice that is common among members of the insurgency — as well as for organizing bombings and attempts on the lives of police officers, it said.

Residents said security services had restricted entry and departure from the village of Zubutli-Miyatli, news service Caucasian Knot reported, while the committee's statement said several residents had been evacuated as a precaution. Two women and two children were also freed from the house Magatov was hiding in before fire was exchanged.

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