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FSB Chief Lauds Joint Terror Prevention Work in Sochi

By Mark Lammey

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Police standing guard outside one of the Olympic venues in Sochi.

Cooperation between the security services of Russia and a number of foreign countries helped to prevent terror attacks being carried out in Sochi during the Winter Olympics, the head of Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, announced Wednesday.

Speaking at a meeting of international law enforcement organizations in Sochi, FSB head Alexander Bortnikov said that the combined efforts of Russia, the U.S., Austria, France, Germany and Georgia were key to containing the threat posed by an unidentified "group of individuals" who were planning an attack, Interfax reported.

Bortnikov's mention of Georgia comes as a surprise, given that the country has had no diplomatic ties with Russia since 2008.

The Games opened in February amid heightened security concerns prompted by December's

twin bombings that killed more than 40 people in Volgograd, located about 700 kilometers away from Sochi.

Fears for visitors' safety were exacerbated after a video was posted in January on the website of the radical group Vilayat Dagestan showing two men threatening to commit terrorist acts in Sochi during the Olympics. They said the attacks were ordered by Doku Umarov, leader of the Caucasus Emirate terrorist group, who had also threatened to wreak havoc on the Games. Bortnikov on Tuesday confirmed that Umarov had been killed in a special forces operation earlier this year.

Unconfirmed reports that a potential suicide bomber had traveled to the host city from Dagestan added to the tension ahead of the Sochi Olympics, but no attacks materialized.

Operatives from intelligence agencies in 32 countries worked closely together during the Games' preparations and staging, Bortnikov said, adding that the collective experience would be applied to future international sporting and social events.

In a written address to the security meeting's participants, President Vladimir Putin praised the work of the security services in ensuring the safe staging of the Games, but also called for an expansion in cooperation and the use of modern methods for preventing, detecting and suppressing acts of terrorism.

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