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3 Islamic Militants Killed by Security Forces in Dagestan, Officials Say

By Allison Quinn

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Three automatic rifles, two grenades, two electronic detonators, radios and ammunition were confiscated from the militants' vehicle.

Three suspected Islamic militants were killed by security forces overnight Wednesday when they launched an attack on a police checkpoint, a news report said.

The incident occurred when a vehicle carrying the three men refused to stop at a police checkpoint, prompting a shootout between security officials and the vehicle's passengers, the TASS news agency reported, citing the National Anti-Terrorist Committee.

"During the course of a night check of automobiles in the village of Khebda in the Shamilsky district, law enforcement officers attempted to stop a vehicle. But in response to a legal request to stop the car, those in the vehicle opened fire on the officers using automatic weapons and then attempted to flee," the committee's statement said.

In the ensuing shootout, the men were killed by security officers. Three automatic rifles, two grenades, two electronic detonators, radios and ammunition were confiscated from the men's vehicle, the committee was quoted as saying.

The men were later found to have been on a federal wanted list for earlier crimes and were involved in a wide range of terrorist activities, including attempts on the lives of law enforcement employees, the killing of civilians and religious figures, robbery, and extortion of large sums of money from local businessmen, the committee said.

The three men were also said to be responsible for the murder of two well-known critics of radical Islam, Sirazhutdin Khuriksky and Shamil Badaviyev, who had condemned the violence of militants in Dagestan.

Khuriksky, also known by the surname Israfilov, was a Sufi cleric known for speaking out against extremist interpretations of Islam. He was gunned down by two unknown men in October 2011.

Badaviyev was a fierce opponent of the Salafi movement, a hardline form of Islam practiced by many militants in the North Caucasus. He was killed in late September.

In addition to law enforcement officials, Islamic militants in Dagestan have increasingly begun to target Sufi clerics for their more moderate views.

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