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Kadyrov Claims Red-Bearded Chechen Militant al-Shishani Dead

By The Moscow Times

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Omar al-Shishani

The infamous red-bearded Islamic State militant popularly known as Omar al-Shishani has been killed in Chechnya, the republic's strong-man leader Ramzan Kadyrov said Thursday.

Al-Shishani, born Tarkhan Batirashvili, is among the most recognizable members of the Islamic State's leadership. The ethnic Chechen is from Georgia's Pankisi Valley, which was once considered a stronghold for militants.

"Tarkhan Batirashvili, the enemy of Islam who called himself Omar al-Shishani, has been killed. [The same fate belies] anyone who even thinks about threatening Russia and the Chechen people," Kadyrov wrote on Instagram alongside a photograph of the supposedly dead militant. Kadyrov is known to favor Instagram as a means of communicating important information to the masses.

In a videotaped address to Russian President Vladimir Putin posted on the Internet in September, Islamic State members threatened to wage war on the North Caucasus, a predominantly Muslim region that for years battled an insurgency led by Islamic fundamentalists.

"We will, with the consent of Allah, free Chechnya and all of the Caucasus! The Islamic State is here and will stay here, and it will spread with the grace of Allah," militants said in the video.

Kadyrov dismissed the threat at the time, saying it was nothing more than a “childish threat.”

Враг Ислама Тархан Батаришвили, называвший себя Омаром аш Шишани, убит. Так будет с каждым, кому придет в голову угрожать России и чеченскому народу. Так будет с каждым, кто

будет проливать кровь мусульман. Аллаху Акбар!

Фото опубликовано Аллах Велик!!! (@kadyrov_95) on ноя 11, 2014 at 4:16 PST

This is not the first time Kadyrov has been the first source of official information on the death of an Islamic terrorist, but it is a subject he has been wrong about in the past.

In January, ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Kadyrov announced that Doku Umarov, widely considered Russia's enemy No. 1 in its battle with the Islamic insurgency in the North Caucasus, had been killed.

But that declaration came after many more just like it, with Kadyrov repeatedly proclaiming Umarov dead only to have him pop up again in threatening video addresses.

Russia's Federal Security Service confirmed Umarov's death only in April, two months after the Olympics.

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