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Islamic State Declares Foothold in Russia's North Caucasus

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Up to 2,000 Russians are fighting for the Islamic State abroad.

The Islamic State terrorist group announced the creation of a new "governorate" Tuesday that it says will span several regions of Russia's North Caucasus, a U.S. think tank said in a report.

The report by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War cited Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a spokesman for the fundamentalist group, as naming Abu Mohammad al-Qadari the leader of the newly created entity and congratulating "the soldiers of the Islamic State" in the Caucasus.

The announcement came two days after an audio statement was circulated on Twitter in which Islamic State supporters from the Russian regions of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachayevo-Cherkessia — which all have large Muslim populations — pledged allegiance to the group.

These areas are also claimed by the al-Qaida-affiliated Caucasus Emirate group, which was

first declared in 2007 and whose aim is to establish a state there based on sharia law. In recent months several militant commanders from the Caucasus Emirate have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State.

The Caucasus Emirate has claimed responsibility for a number of terrorist attacks in Russian cities, including the 2011 bombing of Domodedovo Airport that killed 37 people.

Up to 2,000 Russians are fighting for the Islamic State abroad, Yevgeny Lukyanov, deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council, told Interfax on Wednesday.

"The [future] return to Russia of militants who are nationals of our country will also be a problem," he said. "And they are already returning."

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