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Russians Critical of Security Service's Role in Terror Attacks — Poll

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Photos of the victims on the walls of the former School Number One in Beslan.

Most Russians believe law enforcement agencies could have done more to prevent or mitigate the effects of tragic terror attacks that hit the country in 1999, 2002 and 2004, the independent Levada Center pollster revealed Monday.

Respondents were asked to assess the government's actions regarding the following terrorist attacks: the 1999 bombings of apartment buildings in Russian cities that claimed 293 lives, the 2002 Moscow theater hostage crisis that claimed at least 170 lives and the 2004 Beslan school siege that resulted in at least 385 deaths.

Only 35 percent of respondents said that these events were "a complete surprise" for the Russian security services, while 33 percent said that they knew that these attacks were being prepared but could not prevent them.

A further 11 percent said security officials knew about, but made no effort to prevent, the terrorist acts. Moreover, 4 percent of Russians believe that the law enforcement agencies

helped terrorists organize the terror attacks.

Twenty-two percent said that the federal government is mostly responsible for the outcome of the Beslan school siege, 15 percent blamed the local government and the 10 leaders of the rescue operation.

Sixty-five percent of Russians said they are not sure who was behind the 1999 bombings of apartment buildings. It is widely speculated that the Russian security services were responsible for the attacks.

The poll was conducted Aug. 21-24 among 1,600 respondents both urban and rural, with the margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent.

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