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Weekly Wrap: FSB, Dharma and Chuck Norris

By Unfair Observer

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On Monday, Moscow region businessman Amiran Georgadze got up, went to see his old buddies in Krasnogorsk City Hall, abused them for half an hour, shot them dead and left. He shot another man along the way and disappeared into thin air — or, possibly, hitched a ride on a truck and skipped town.

This pretty rare shooting case generated enough waves to overshadow even the Russian warplanes merrily chugging away with bombs at what they say is the Islamic State.

There are many strange rumors about the case — mostly concerning corruption. But on a broader level, the interesting thing about it is that in the U.S. — the self-proclaimed capital of gun violence — crazy people with firearms just shoot whoever they can, mostly classmates. Meanwhile in Russia — where such things do happen occasionally — the crazies usually gun down officials.

This must be because Russian officials fight corruption and crime so well that they earn

the burning hatred of the wrongdoers. Yep, sure. Must be it. So, back to Syria.

Chuck Norris and Syria

You know who else wanted to go to Syria? A guy from Omsk in Siberia, by the name of Pavel. The 39-year-old wanted to "do a job there" and make some money — he even trained for it, according to local media, which, sadly, never specified what the job was. The guy did need the money — because in the end they did not let him out of Russia because of 60,000 rubles ($950) worth of unpaid driving fines. His sister eventually footed the bill, though it is unclear if he made it to his destination.

You know, Syria. Hell's own franchise on Earth this season, the place mothers scare unruly children with. Islamists burning and dismembering people for picking their nose, 100 percent chance of bombs falling every day, 5 million refugees, the economy down by two-thirds since 2011.

And this guy goes there to make some money.

Pavel must be so hardcore that Chuck Norris has to be waking up in a cold sweat at the thought of him. You would expect him to charge through any obstacle like Hulk, trampling down border guards while snacking on bailiffs. But the best thing about it is that nobody, not even a man who is ready to get a side job in a war zone, has got anything on Russian officials. He meekly returns home when they're displeased and gets his sister to pay his fines.

There is really no force on Earth more powerful or terrible than a Russian official.

Geography, Classified

Russian officialdom encroached on the world of academia some more this week: Several prominent scientists reported that all academic papers submitted for publication must be checked to ensure they are not leaking state secrets or breakthrough inventions. Initial reports said it was a new job for the KGB's successor — the FSB. Moscow State University mumbled denials, but did not go as far as to say there are no checks.

Maybe it is for the best: It is painful to imagine valiant FSB officers struggling with a paper on multidimensional topology or the intricacies of post-transcriptional nucleotide modification. Given the way spy scandals have been erupting on the flimsiest pretexts in recent years, they'd probably just have all those eggheads locked away for smartassery and the malignant use of loanwords.

But checks are not limited to physics and biology. Even geography is reportedly affected. And I am ready to buy a subscription to an academic journal (a yearly subscription usually costs about the same as a kidney) just to find out what geographic secrets Russian officials are worried will be leaked without their supervision.

Is there something we don't know about the Russian territory? Have the Chinese quietly invaded? Did they find Atlantis on a hill in the Urals? Maybe Siberia does not exist and was made up by KGB propagandists to impress the Americans?

We'll never know, thanks to official vigilance.

Say No to Dharma

But don't worry about the FSB getting bored, they found better things to play with — namely, dharma. Yes, the Buddhist concept of — if I may compress millennia of philosophical thought into a one-liner — doing what is right and what the universe expects you to, or simply the ultimate truth.

Well, it turns out the universe expects the FSB to expel lama Shiwalha Rinpoche, who spent the past 11 years quietly teaching Tuvan Buddhists the intricacies of dharma, as well as counseling them on their everyday problems and praying for students to pass exams. It turns out that in the process, His Eminence threatened Russian national security, and the local FSB had to get rid of him.

No official explanation was given, the reasons for expulsion being classified, as usual. But Shiwalha said in an interview that the FSB men have been keeping tabs on him for a while, and advised him last year to go easy on preaching dharma. Looks like he didn't listen to that advice, so out he goes.

And there you have it, Russian security services fighting dharma by kicking out those who speak about it. And here I will restrain myself from the obvious jokes about the FSB's relations with the ultimate truth, and just leave you thinking what these people will reemerge as after the Wheel of Rebirth takes another spin.

Unfair Observer is the pen name of a Russian journalist that The Moscow Times has invited to observe the most brain-dead weekly developments in Russia.

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