Moscow Says It Thwarted IS Terror Attacks in Russia

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Russian special services thwarted several attempts by the Islamic State to send groups of terrorists into the country and have captured hundreds of fighters returning to Russia from Iraq and Syria, an intelligence official said Friday.

"Some time ago a group of four seasoned fighters were sent [to Russia] from Syria to conduct a terror attack in one of our cities," Andrei Przhezdomsky, an advisor to the chair of Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee, told journalists, according to the TASS news agency.

The group had been able to legally cross into Russia, rented a house and gathered materials for making explosives, he said, adding: "Operational control over them was achieved from the beginning. They were arrested and await trial."

On another occasion, Przhezdomsky said Russian special services working with other countries had shut down an attempt by 10 people to enter Russia.

He added that law enforcement had caught 832 Russian militants, including 22 recruiters, returning from overseas, and had stopped more than 100 citizens from leaving the country to

fight for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

President Vladimir Putin last year said up to 7,000 people from Russia and former Soviet states were fighting in the Middle East for the Islamic State, a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

Many of them come from the North Caucasus, where a low–level Islamist insurgency has simmered since the 1990s.

Moscow's intervention in the Syrian civil war in September last year may have made Russia more of a target for extremists. Weeks after Russian warplanes began striking targets in Syria, a bomb exploded on board a Russian passenger airliner over Egypt, killing everyone on board. A local affiliate of Islamic State has been blamed for the attack.

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