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Russia's Dagestan to Inspect Local Officials After Attacks on Religious Sites

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The head of Dagestan Sergei Melikov. **glava.e-dag.ru**

The head of the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan on Tuesday ordered all regional officials to undergo thorough vetting following attacks on religious sites in the region over the weekend, which resulted in the deaths of at least 21 people including law enforcement officers.

"I've ordered the inspection and scrutinization of the personal records of all those in leadership positions," regional head Sergei Melikov told Dagestan's legislative assembly.

Melikov's announcement comes after the dismissal of a local district head whose sons were suspected to be among the gunmen who carried out Sunday's attacks in the Dagestan capital of Makhachkala and the historic city of Derbent.

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Melikov said police investigators were looking into whether Magomed Omarov, who headed the rural Sergokalinsky district, knew about the attacks in advance.

“How could a district head run a municipality if he couldn’t provide a good upbringing to his children?” Melikov was quoted as saying by the RBC business news website. “Maybe we have more district heads where sleeper cells operate?”

Russian authorities said five assailants behind Sunday’s attacks were killed in an “anti-terrorist operation.” Unconfirmed reports later linked the suspected gunmen to local elites, pro-Kremlin political parties and state-run companies, raising concerns that “extremists” had infiltrated Dagestan’s ruling class.

“Look at the makeup of the members of the [June 23 attack] group. All were well-off with good prospects,” Melikov told the regional assembly on Tuesday.

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