

Imarat Kavkaz / Caucasus Emirate

IHS Jane's World Insurgency & Terrorism

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Summary

The Imarat Kavkaz – more commonly known as the Caucasus Emirate – is a unified collective of local militant Islamist groups, known as jamaats, that operate across Russia's North Caucasus region. The organisation was founded in October 2007 by Dokka Umarov, then president of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI), although many of the jamaats had been in existence for several years previously.

Umarov's declaration of the formation of the Caucasus Emirate marked the culmination of the transition of the insurgency in Chechnya from a local separatist movement to a regional Islamist one.

The Caucasus Emirate was founded with the objective of uniting the Islamist militant jamaats across the North Caucasus and overthrowing the Russian-backed governments of the region's republics, replacing them with an independent Islamic emirate governed according to the group's interpretation of sharia (Islamic law).

Under the nominal leadership of the Caucasus Emirate, the respective jamaats across the North Caucasus have exponentially increased the level of region in the violence since 2007, particularly in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria.

Each jamaat's localised insurgency is typically characterised by low-level, guerrilla-style, small-arms or explosive device attacks, primarily targeting security force or government personnel. Furthermore, the jamaats in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan have shown an increasing operational capability in the use of mass-casualty suicide attacks. The Caucasus Emirate has also repeatedly demonstrated its ability to conduct high-profile operations in Russia's heartland, most notably with a series of significant suicide attacks in Moscow in 2010 and 2011.

While increasingly intense security force efforts have seen a long list of senior Caucasus Emirate commanders either killed or arrested since 2007, the organisation's jamaats have demonstrated an operational resilience in their ability to continue operations unabated. However, while the Caucasus Emirate does not possess the capability to effectively threaten the rule of the Russian

government, the organisation nevertheless presents a substantial threat to security and stability, particularly in its principal area of operations.

Aims and Objectives

The Caucasus Emirate adheres to a militant Salafist interpretation of Sunni Islam, which argues that it is an individual duty not just to liberate all Muslim lands from non-Muslim occupation, but to forcibly purify Muslim societies by rejecting what it considers to be religious innovation, thereby returning society to a perceived state of grace embodied by the first three generations of the Prophet Muhammad's followers.

The primary objective of the Caucasus Emirate was outlined by Umarov in October 2007 as the liberation of the wilayahs of the Caucasus from the "kuffar and apostates", referring to the Russian presence in the region and the Russian-backed rulers of the region's republics. As such, the aim of the organisation is the overthrow of the current governments of the North Caucasus republics, and the establishment of an independent and unified Islamic emirate governed under the Salafist interpretation of sharia (Islamic law).

In addition, Umarov outlined in November 2007 that once such a North Caucasus emirate had been created, the group would strive for the liberation of "all historical lands of Muslims", adding: "Our enemy is not Rusnya [Russia] only, but everyone who wages war against Islam and Muslims."

Area of Operation

Despite Dokka Umarov's October 2007 statement outlining the abolition of the existing geographical borders of the North Caucasus region, the wilayahs it claimed comprised the Caucasus Emirate roughly conform to the current republics. As such, at the inception of the group, the Caucasus Emirate purported to consist of the following administrative areas: Wilayah Dagestan; Wilayah Nokhchiycho (Chechnya); Wilayah Ghalghaycho (Ingushetia); Wilayah Iriston (North Ossetia); Wilayah Nogai; and Wilayah Kabarda, Balkar, and Karachay (Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia).

However, as well as following the traditional geographical divides of the region, the wilayahs were also reflective of the current situation and status of the jamaats in each. This is best illustrated with Umarov's merging of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia into Wilayah Kabarda, Balkar, and Karachay (KBK) which reflected the highly weakened state of Karachay Jamaat at the time of the formation of the Caucasus Emirate, necessitating the merging of its territory with that of Yarmuk Jamaat.

This process of geographical reorganisation based on the current operational status of each individual jamaat was further underlined in late April 2009 when Umarov released a statement announcing the abolition of Wilayah Iriston and its merging with Wilayah Ghalghaycho in neighbouring Ingushetia – a move which likely reflected the fact that any Ossetian

jamaat was almost certainly comprised of ethnic Ingush minorities rather than (predominantly Christian) Ossetians. The statement also confirmed that Wilayah Nokhchiycho was divided into two sections, Eastern and Southwestern.

Although the Caucasus Emirate has not named the Republic of Adygeya – contained within Krasnodar Krai – as a wilayah, a jamaat emerged in Adygeya in 2005 and confirmed its loyalty to Umarov and the Caucasus Emirate in October 2009.

While the various jamaats that comprise the Caucasus Emirate are active throughout the North Caucasus region, the degree of fighting in each republic has varied over time. While Chechnya was traditionally the centre of militant Islamist insurgent activity in the region, the emerging insurgencies in Ingushetia and Dagestan increasingly began to intensify and from approximately 2008 onwards have exceeded the level of recorded attacks in Chechnya. In addition, Kabardino-Balkaria has also seen an increasing number of recorded operations, with the number of recorded attacks increasing to 83 in 2010 from six in 2008.

The majority of the Caucasus Emirate's operations have been executed in the jamaats' home republics in the North Caucasus, but the organisation has also emulated Shamil Basayev – responsible for the 2002 Moscow Theatre siege and the 2004 Beslan school siege – in executing attacks beyond its core areas of operation. The first manifestation of such a threat came in November 2009 with the

bombing of the Nevsky Express train service, travelling between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, in Tver Oblast which left at least 26 civilians dead. The attack was claimed in the name of the Caucasus Emirate by Umarov, and in February 2010 he released a statement threatening further attacks on mainland Russia, warning that "the war is coming to their cities". The following month Umarov claimed responsibility for a double suicide bombing on the Moscow metro system on 29 March which left 39 civilians dead. Umarov claimed another attack in Moscow in the name of the Caucasus Emirate in February 2011, stating that he had ordered the suicide attack at Moscow's Domodedovo international airport on 24 January which left 36 civilians dead. Furthermore, the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade – originally founded by Basayev in 2002 but reconstituted by Umarov in May 2009 – claimed responsibility for a series of low-level improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on FSB targets in Moscow in March, although Russian officials downplayed the claim.

A group of militants, identifying themselves as the Mujahideen of Tatarstan, released a video on the internet on 27 July 2012, pledging allegiance to Umarov. The group, numbering seven militants and a self-identified leader named only as Mukhamed, appeared in a forest with a black flag bearing the shahada (Islamic profession of faith) – a flag popularised by militant Islamist groups identifying with Al-Qaeda's transnational jihadist ideology. The potential presence of Islamist militants

in Tatarstan had been suggested only a week earlier when the chief mufti of the republic was wounded and his deputy killed in two separate IED attacks in the city of Kazan on 19 July. The following day, four suspected militants were killed when an explosive device detonated prematurely inside their vehicle while it was being transported on the Kazan-Zelenodolsk highway in the republic.

Following the uprising in Syria against President Bashar al-Assad which began in February 2012, occasional media reports claimed that Chechen militants were participating in the fighting against the Syrian government. The reports were unsubstantiated, and were refuted by the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, in a statement on 23 July 2012. However, in a video uploaded to Youtube on 13 November 2012, Dokka Umarov lent credence to the reports by attempting to disassociate the Caucasus Emirate from the Chechens reportedly fighting in Syria, claiming that they were not operating under his command.

While it is possible that Caucasus Emirate militants travelled to Syria, there is no evidence to support this, and it is equally possible that any ethnic Chechens operating in Syria came instead from the large Chechen diaspora in Turkey. While Rustam Gelayev, the son of a prominent Chechen warlord, was reported killed by Syrian government artillery in August 2012, a relative quoted by Kommersant claimed Gelayev had been studying in Syria and was killed as he tried to flee to Turkey.

Alliances and Rivalries

The Caucasus Emirate is frequently linked to Al-Qaeda by the Russian government, but to date no evidence of such links has been provided. The Russian allegations have their origin in the arrival of foreign jihadists – mainly from the Middle East – to participate in the Chechen wars, and the financial networks they provided access to, but there is no evidence that Al-Qaeda had any hand in channeling these funds or fighters into the region.

While Al-Qaeda deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri was reportedly interested in creating an "Islamic belt" beneath Russia from Chechnya to Afghanistan in the early 1990s, Osama Bin Laden showed little interest in Chechnya and was intent on refocusing the international jihad away from supporting local struggles and towards a confrontation with the so-called "far enemy", embodied by the United States – as manifested in his 1996 "Declaration of War" statement.

Furthermore, the insurgency in Chechnya, and more recently in the wider North Caucasus, has had little or no profile in Al-Qaeda statements in the ensuing years.

Ibn al-Khattab, whose alliance with Shamil Basayev played a key role in embedding Islamist militancy in the North Caucasus, was a veteran of Afghanistan, where he is reported to have met Bin Laden – although there is no indication that Khattab joined Al-Qaeda, or even that they had any significant interaction. Khattab later described Bin Laden as a "good Muslim", and there is some evidence of limited communication between them after

Khattab had established himself in Chechnya, although Khattab claimed that "long distance" and "difficult connections" prevented any such contact. Furthermore, what evidence as does exist indicates that the relationship was more competitive than collaborative, particularly as Khattab's reputation grew. While subscribing to the concept of global jihad, Khattab remained committed to the ideology of defensive jihad waged exclusively against infidel occupiers of Muslim lands – as preached by Abdullah Azzam, the hugely influential leader of the Afghan-Arabs during the 1979-1989 Soviet-Afghan war – in contrast to Bin Laden's new focus on targeting the West and overthrowing so-called apostate secular governments in the Muslim world itself.

Khattab's successors as the facilitators and leaders of foreign fighters in Chechnya – Abu al-Walid, killed 2004; Abu Hafs al-Urdani, killed 2006; and Mukhannad, killed April 2011 – have all been accused by Russian officials of links to Al-Qaeda. However, while these individuals have presided over the continued transfer of funds and fighters from the Middle East, this is not in itself proof of links to Al-Qaeda.

The Russian government has also claimed that Al-Qaeda maintains a permanent representative in the North Caucasus, claiming to have killed such an individual – identified only as Algerian national Doctor Muhammad – in Dagestan in August 2009. Muhammad's alleged successor, identified as Egyptian national Mahmud Muhammad Shahban alias Sayf Islam, was then killed

by security forces in Dagestan in February 2010.

Despite these allegations, under the leadership of Dokka Umarov the Caucasus Emirate has given no indication of any intent to strike at targets outside Russia, or at international targets within Russia itself. While Umarov has expressed solidarity with other Muslim peoples occupied by foreign invaders, and an eventual aspiration to help liberate such peoples, statements by the Caucasus Emirate have made no effort to align its fight with that of Al-Qaeda, and Umarov's internationalist ideals – at least as expressed in his communiqués – are closer to the defensive jihad advocated by Azzam and Khattab than the anti-Western and revolutionary jihad advocated by Bin Laden.

It is possible that the January 2011 suicide attack at Moscow's Domodedovo international airport represented a deliberate attempt to target foreigners, but there is no evidence that such considerations influenced the targeting decision, and the targeting was consistent with earlier attacks on key transportation infrastructure, such as the November 2009 bombing of the Nevsky Express, and the March 2010 Moscow metro suicide bombing.

As such, while there is circumstantial evidence linking the Caucasus Emirate to Al-Qaeda – and while some form of relationship cannot be ruled out – Russian claims regarding Al-Qaeda's role in the north Caucasus are unsubstantiated, and likely motivated by political and diplomatic

expediency. This apparent tendency to conflate the Caucasus Emirate with wider geopolitical developments was also evident following the Domodedovo airport attack, when the deputy speaker of Russia's upper house of Parliament, Alexander Torshin, alleged that the attack had been orchestrated by the Georgian government, with whom Moscow has had hostile relations since Russia intervened militarily in Georgia's breakaway republic of South Ossetia in 2008. This allegation of involvement in the attack, and of assisting the Caucasus Emirate, was strongly denied by the Georgian government, and there is no evidence supporting any such allegation.

The Caucasus Emirate has no overt sub-state rivals, but following the end of the First Chechen War relations between the political leadership of the CRI and militant Islamist forces under Basayev became increasingly strained. This relationship deteriorated further as the remaining militant Islamist forces in Chechnya increasingly focused on establishing a pan-Caucasian emirate rather than an independent Chechnya. A split in the relationship formally occurred with the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate in October 2007, which saw Umarov formally dissolve the CRI. The CRI's exiled political leadership, led by Deputy CRI Prime Minister Akmed Zakayev, fervently opposed the move and distanced themselves from the group. In November 2007, Zakayev declared that the CRI government was still in existence, with himself as prime minister. The nature of the relationship was underlined in August

2010 when Zakayev backed Chechen commander Aslanbek Vadalov in his attempt to overthrow Umarov as Caucasus Emirate emir.

In early November 2011, a senior official from the Uzbek National Security Service (NSS), Abduvali Tashirov, claimed that his officers had obtained information suggesting that Caucasus Emirate militants had for some time been engaged in militant activity on the side of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) against the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. According to Tashirov, the alleged links between the two groups were purportedly evidenced by the killing of two suspected Caucasus Emirate militants – one from Russia's North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, another a citizen of Azerbaijan – by Pakistani security forces in the IMU's known stronghold of North Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the summer of 2010. Tashirov further alleged that the co-operation between the two groups was founded on the shared objective of establishing a caliphate within their respective areas of operation in the North Caucasus region and in Central Asia. However, Tashirov provided no specific evidence to substantiate his allegations.

Threat Assessment

Tactics and Targeting

Since the formal constitution of the Caucasus Emirate in October 2007 its constituent jamaats have employed a relatively broad set of tactics, although there is a clear operational preference for

ambush operations. Typically characterised by low-level small-arms or improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, such operations constitute a sizeable majority of all jamaat actions.

This preference reflects the ability of the jamaats to exploit a heavily forested and mountainous terrain to launch attacks against isolated patrols and checkpoints, typically targeting security force personnel who are much less familiar with the local terrain. However, the jamaats have also proven adept at carrying out ambushes involving small-arms and explosives in the region's major urban areas.

While the majority of Caucasus Emirate operations are low-level in nature, the organisation's jamaats have also demonstrated an increasing capability in the execution of high-profile, mass-casualty attacks – particularly with the deployment of suicide bombers, both person-borne and vehicle-borne.

The number of suicide attacks recorded in the North Caucasus increased noticeably from mid-2009, and within this trend the use of suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs) also increased, more than doubling from three in 2009 to seven in 2010.

However, this trend subsequently reversed in 2011, with four such attacks recorded, and continued to decline in 2012, with only two recorded. The Caucasus Emirate has also exploited its increasing capabilities to launch such mass-casualty attacks outside the North Caucasus, as exemplified by the double suicide attack on Moscow's metro

system in March 2010 and the suicide attack at Moscow's Domodedovo international airport in January 2011.

The jamaats of the Caucasus Emirate sporadically utilise assassination tactics in attempts to eliminate specific targets. In 2009, the jamaats utilised such tactics against senior local government figures in the North Caucasus with substantial success. On 5 June, Dagestani Minister of the Interior Adilgeri Magomedtagirov was shot dead by a sniper, and little over a fortnight later Ingush President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was seriously wounded in an SVBIED attack. However, while attacks targeting high profile government figures continued in the following years, they were unsuccessful, with successful operations limited to lower-ranking government and security force officials.

As a result of the guerrilla nature of the campaign, insurgents typically avoid open confrontation with security forces and as such, rarely utilise assault tactics. On the infrequent occasions that such tactics are used, they are typically deployed against low-level targets, such as checkpoints or other minor security force facilities. While this marks a transition away from some of the more notable operations executed by the jamaats prior to the formation of the Caucasus Emirate – such as the June 2004 assault on government facilities in Nazran and the October 2005 assault on security force facilities in Nalchik in October 2005 – occasional high-profile assaults continue to be recorded. The most notable such operation was the October 2010 assault on the Chechen

parliament building in Grozny by three suicide bombers.

In addition to clear tactical preferences, the Caucasus Emirate also has clear targeting preferences, with the vast majority of attacks directed at local and federal security force personnel in the North Caucasus region. Within this sector, law enforcement personnel and facilities are the most commonly targeted, which reflects their lead role in the counter-insurgency campaign, and the fact they typically present the greatest target of opportunity. Indeed, attacks on military targets in the North Caucasus have declined since 2008, with military personnel typically only deployed during special offensives. Nevertheless, the continuing presence of Russian soldiers in the North Caucasus guarantees that attacks against the sector will continue.

The Caucasus Emirate's efforts to undermine governance structures in the North Caucasus have also seen frequent attacks on local government personnel and facilities, with such attacks typified by low-level small-arms ambush or assassination attacks. In a similar vein, jamaats of the Caucasus Emirate have also attacked pro-government Muslim clerics, typically members of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Caucasus which has come under increasing government pressure to criticise militant Islamist ideology and operations. Such operations against clerics are particularly prevalent in Dagestan but are also reflective of a long-standing popular mistrust of state-controlled 'official Islam' which was established in the Soviet era. As such, the

group was blamed for two separate attacks which wounded the chief Mufti for the republic of Tatarstan, Ildus Fayzov, and killed his deputy, Valiulla Yakupov, in the republic's capital Kazan on 19 July 2012. Then, on 28 August, a senior Sufi Muslim leader, Said Atsayev, was killed along with six of his followers when a female suspected Caucasus Emirate suicide bomber detonated her explosives inside his residence in the village of Chirkei in Dagestan. Insurgents also launch sporadic attacks on Orthodox Christian targets in republics with a sizeable minority of ethnic Russian Christians, such as Kabardino-Balkaria.

The jamaats of the Caucasus Emirate launch occasional attacks targeting energy infrastructure in the North Caucasus, typically explosive device attacks targeting pipelines or other minor facilities. In early 2013, the group also appeared to have begun a series of attacks targeting traditional healers and fortunetellers, likely as a result of their professions' contradiction with the Caucasus Emirate's Islamic beliefs.

In addition, while the primary targeting focus of the Caucasus Emirate is security force and government personnel and facilities in its local area of operations in the North Caucasus, the organisation has also launched a number of largely indiscriminate attacks on civilians in the Russian heartland. On several occasions such operations have been identified by the Caucasus Emirate specifically as reprisal operations. A notable example was the January 2011 suicide attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport which

Caucasus Emirate Emir Dokka Umarov stated was in direct retaliation for the alleged killing of civilians by security forces in the North Caucasus.

On 3 February 2012, Caucasus Emirate Emir Dokka Umarov issued a statement in which he ordered the group's militants to cease attacks on civilians in mainland Russia. The announced change of tactics was purportedly motivated by the recent emergence in Russia of a grassroots movement opposing the government of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, whose ruling United Russia party gained nearly 50% of the vote in parliamentary elections in December 2011 amid widespread accusations of fraud. In the statement, Umarov claimed that the growing opposition to Putin's government was at least partially the result of a rejection by Russian society of the Kremlin's hard-line policies towards the North Caucasus region, which he claimed had earned the civilian population an immunity from militant attacks.

Umarov warned, however, that a return of public support for Russia's security measures in the North Caucasus would make the civilian population a renewed target of attacks. Umarov subsequently announced an end to the moratorium on attacks in mainland Russia on 3 July 2013, claiming that it had been interpreted by Moscow as weakness, rather than an act of good will, and had resulted in the death of Muslim civilians. He emphasised, however, that future operations in mainland Russia would specifically target the government, not civilians. In the statement, Umarov also urged the group's

militants to use "maximum force" to stop the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics – which is to be held only several hundred kilometres from the North Caucasus – stating: "They plan to hold the Olympics on the bones of our ancestors... we as mujahideen are obliged to not permit that, using any methods allowed us by the almighty Allah."

On 21 October 2013 – three months after Umarov announced an end to the moratorium on attacks in mainland Russia – seven people were killed and 36 others were wounded when a female suspected Islamist suicide bomber detonated her explosives on a passenger bus travelling in the city of Volgograd in Russia's Volgograd Oblast. Although no claim or responsibility was made, unverified reports citing security officials claimed the attack was carried out by 30-year-old Naida Asiyalova – an alleged recent convert to Islam and the wife of "a militant leader" based in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan.

This was then followed by a suicide attack at a train station in Volgograd on 29 December, which killed at least 18 civilians and wounded 40. The following day, on 30 December, 14 civilians were killed and 23 were wounded in another suicide attack on a trolley bus near a market, again in the city of Volgograd. Vilayat Dagestan – a jammah of Imarat Kavkaz – claimed responsibility for both attacks in a video statement released on 19 January 2014.

Despite issuing threats against the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games, which took place in February, there was no reports of any attacks at the venues in open sources.

This seemingly failure was followed by another setback for the group. On 18 March, pro-militant website Kavkaz Centre claimed that Umarov had died on an earlier unspecified date, and reported that Aliaskhab Kebekov (alias Ali Abu Muhammad al-Dagestani), the group's Qadi (Islamic judge), had announced himself as the new emir. Chechen president Ramzan Kadyro had claimed in January that Umarov had died during a security operation in Chechnya in November 2013 which, if true, may account for why no major militant operations were seemingly launched by the group during the Games.

Weaponry and Equipment

The Caucasus Emirate utilises a wide variety of principally Soviet-origin small-arms in its operations – such as AK-series assault rifles and Dragonov sniper rifles – along with smaller numbers of general purpose machine guns, grenades, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). Such weaponry reflects the guerrilla-style nature of the organisation's insurgency, and the necessity for mobility and concealment. As such, the Caucasus Emirate is likely to have little in the way of heavy weaponry, although it has ready access to explosives and explosive components which are used in the construction of IEDs.

Training and Experience

Many of the founding members of the individual jamaats had benefited from training gained in camps established in Chechnya by Shamil Basayev and Ibn al-Khattab following the end of the First Chechen War in 1996. Many had also

gained combat experience during the opening phase of the Second Chechen War, which began in 1999, before returning to their own republics following the fall of the Chechen capital Grozny in February 2000. Since then, the individual jamaats have carried out their own training and have garnered years of fighting experience in the course of their respective low-level insurgencies.

This individualistic approach has continued following the formation of the Caucasus Emirate in October 2007, with little evidence to indicate shared training structures between the organisation's jamaats. However, the re-establishment of the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade by Umarov in May 2009 may have brought together militants from different republics for specialist training, although there is little evidence to date of this unit establishing itself as a fully operational independent entity.

Information Campaigns

The Caucasus Emirate disseminates statement, both written and video, through a number of separate websites which are supportive of the organisation. The most prominent such site is KavkazCenter.com, a sophisticated site which acts as an international news portal for the insurgency. It maintains a full archive of statements released by insurgents in the North Caucasus as well as interviews with senior members of the Caucasus Emirate, and is published in Russian, English, Chechen, Arabic, and Turkish.

In addition, Dagestan's Jamaat Shariat maintains its own website – JamaatShariat.com/ru – through which it releases statements and videos.

Popular Support

In the North Caucasus, the federal government enjoys a low degree of legitimacy among the local population, owing to years of socioeconomic neglect, religious discrimination, and perceived corruption and cronyism among the Moscow-appointed local authorities. This has allowed the Caucasus Emirate to draw upon significant active support, and widespread passive support, from a largely sympathetic population in the Muslim-majority republics of the North Caucasus. This situation has only been exacerbated by the frequently brutal and indiscriminate counter-insurgency campaign waged by the federal authorities, and the neglect of any serious attempt to address underlying grievances.

However, while sympathetic to the insurgency, there is little evidence of widespread support within the population for the actual aims and objectives of the Caucasus Emirate. Its fundamentalist interpretation of Sunni Islam is at odds with the more moderate form of Sufi Sunni Islam prevalent throughout the region, and there is no evidence of any significant support for the formation a theocratic caliphate, or for a more rigid imposition of sharia (Islamic law).

Organisation and Logistics

Personnel and Recruitment

Assessing the numerical strength of the Caucasus Emirate is problematic, with few independently verifiable reports providing such details. The issue is further complicated by varying numerical strengths across the different jamaats, which themselves are likely to fluctuate depending on a number of factors.

Indeed, while IHS recorded almost 800 militants reported killed across the North Caucasus in 2009 and 2010, the proportion of those who were actually jamaat members is questionable. One thing remains clear, while Russian security forces continue to kill substantial numbers of suspected Caucasus Emirate militants, the individual jamaats continue to maintain a relatively steady operational tempo. Furthermore, the degree of active and passive support the jamaats enjoy acts as a force multiplier for the insurgents, bolstering their strength beyond the relatively small core of active fighters.

Judging by the significantly higher number of operations in the republic, in addition to the geographical distribution of such operations, the largest jamaat is likely to be Jamaat Shariat in Dagestan. While the jamaat has sustained relatively heavy casualties since the formation of the Caucasus Emirate, its ability to significantly increase its operational tempo during this time likely indicates a relatively substantial manpower reserve, or at least ready access to willing recruits. As such it is probable that Jamaat Shariat has a

strength of approximately 100-300 militants.

The other principal jamaats of the Caucasus Emirate – Yarmuk Jamaat, Ingush Jamaat, and the Chechen Jamaats – are likely to be composed of a smaller number of fighters. In the case of Ingush Jamaat and the Chechen Jamaats this reflects the increasingly intense and attritional nature of the counter-insurgency in Ingushetia and Chechnya. In May 2011, Ingush President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov claimed that less than 50 militants remained active in the republic.

While a decline in personnel was likely behind the overall decline in Ingush Jamaat activity since mid-2009, the specific figure quoted by Yevkurov cannot be independently verified and likely represented an underestimation of its actual strength. Similarly, in Kabardino-Balkaria a senior Russian Ministry of the Interior official claimed in May 2011 that only 60-70 militants remained active in the republic – a claim that was somewhat belied by the steadily increasing operational tempo of Yarmuk Jamaat since early 2010.

The actual composition of the various jamaats has changed over the course of the campaign. In the initial years following their formation, the majority of the jamaats were composed of veterans of the First and Second Chechen wars. However, the ongoing attrition of the jamaats and the targeting of their senior leadership structures has seen the number of such veterans decrease substantially. As such, the majority of the jamaats are increasingly

composed of young men recruited locally by the individual jamaats since the onset of the insurgency.

While the jamaats' initial recruits were motivated by specific socioeconomic and political issues in their republics, the transition of the insurgency in the North Caucasus from a national separatist conflict in Chechnya to a wider militant Islamist campaign has seen religion become an increasingly important tool of recruitment. However, in the absence of reliable evidence accurate assessments of the motivations of new recruits are impossible to establish, and the role of religion should therefore not be overstated. In many cases, anecdotal accounts indicate individuals were initially motivated by personal grievances – typically harm inflicted on the individual or a relative by security forces – experienced against a general backdrop of deprivation and exclusion.

Although the individual jamaats are predominantly composed of local recruits, a small number of foreign fighters – mainly from the Middle East – continue to be successfully recruited by the Caucasus Emirate. While the presence of foreign fighters in the North Caucasus is heavily publicised by Russian officials – and is alleged to be indicative of Al-Qaeda connections – the number of such fighters is typically overstated and are assessed to likely number less than 50.

On 30 September, the presidential envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District, Aleksandr Khloponin, claimed in a statement made to Russia Today TV that

there were approximately 1,000 militants active in the region, and that security forces allegedly had a strong knowledge of the Caucasus Emirate's leadership structure.

Command and Control

The overall leader of the Caucasus Emirate is Emir Aliaskhab Kebekov (alias Ali Abu Muhammad al-Dagestani). Kebekov announced himself as the new emir of the group via a video released in early March 2014 – which was subsequently reported by pro-militant website Kavkaz Centre – following the reported death of the group's emir and founder, Dokka Umarov (alias Abu Usman).

Through its propaganda releases and the creation of structures, such as the majlis al-shura, the Caucasus Emirate has sought to portray itself as a discrete and coherent organisation under the hierarchical leadership of Umarov. However, there are several factors which belie this representation.

Firstly, the geographical distribution of the jamaats makes it difficult for all members of the majlis al-shura to meet at all, let alone on a regular basis. Secondly, considering the considerable pressure the jamaats are under by security forces, the security risks of such a regular meeting would likely make the practice almost inconceivable. The limited capabilities of the organisation's majlis al-shura were demonstrated during a meeting in Chechnya in May 2009, with a transcript of the event indicating that in addition to

Umarov, only Chechen commanders were present.

It is much more likely, therefore, that each of the jamaats essentially operates semi-autonomously under Umarov's largely figurehead leadership. Each jamaat is responsible for the planning and execution of its own operations within its respective wilayah, and the claims of responsibility for attacks are typically either released by the jamaats themselves or are distributed via allied media outlets such as the Kavkaz Center website. While Umarov himself has claimed responsibility for a number of more significant operations, such as the suicide attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport in January 2011, the extent of his involvement in the planning and execution of such operations is unknown, although it is likely such external operations involve a greater degree of central co-ordination than the local operations.

However, while Russian authorities have derided the value of Umarov's figurehead leadership, it is an important structure for maintaining the unity of the jamaats and each jamaat emir seems to recognise the value of operating as a co-ordinated front – at least in the short-term. This was indicated clearly in August 2010 when the emirs of Ingush Jamaat, Jamaat Shariat, and Yarmuk Jamaat reiterated their support for Umarov's leadership during the coup attempt by Chechen commanders. Meanwhile, the very attempt by the Chechen commanders to seize control of the organisation suggests the jamaat commanders recognise the importance of the role of emir.

Nonetheless, the jamaats themselves – based on documents and statements released by the respective jamaats – appear to be structured and hierarchical organisations in their own right. Each jamaat is led by an emir and divides into sub-units, typically corresponding to districts within the respective republic, which are led by local emirs. However, there is little indication as to whether such sub-units within the jamaat operate semi-autonomously or whether the overall jamaat emir is closely involved in the planning and executing of operations. Such command and control dynamics may well differ between jamaats, or even sub-units, and likely depend on the size, experience, and capabilities of the units involved.

Political Representation

The October 2007 declaration of the Caucasus Emirate by Dokka Umarov saw the formal dissolution of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI) and its political structures. Since then the organisation has shown no intention of participating in the political process and has shown no proclivity towards negotiations with either the federal or republican governments.

While elements of the CRI continue to exist in exile outside the North Caucasus, they are highly hostile to the Caucasus Emirate and cannot be considered to be politically representative of the organisation.

Funding

The Russian government has made repeated claims that the Caucasus Emirate receives significant funds from overseas, often linking such claims to Al-Qaeda. While the Caucasus Emirate's Emir of Ansaris, notably Mukhannad who was killed in April 2011, is in charge of facilitating the flow of volunteers and funds from overseas, the actual amount received by the group is questionable. Indeed, the Caucasus Emirate is largely self-financing and receives the vast majority of its income from activities within the North Caucasus.

The primary source of funding for the Caucasus Emirate is a wide range of criminal activity. Militants extort money from local businessmen and residents in their areas of operation under the premise of a religious tax. Russian media reports in early 2011 claimed that militants extorted a 20 per cent "jihad" tax from prominent figures considered to be pro-government.

A senior Russian Ministry of Internal official, Sergey Chenchik, stated in April 2011 that Jamaat Shariat in Dagestan had extorted a total of RUB100 million (USD3.5 million) from local businessmen in 2010 alone, and alleged that a local businessman – killed by security forces in a counter-terrorism operation in January 2011 – had provided insurgents with a total of RUB165 million (USD5.9 million).

In addition, FSB officials stated that information found on the corpse of then Jamaat Shariat Emir Umalat Magomedov, following his killing in December 2009,

indicated that the jamaat had operating funds of "tens of millions of roubles". Moreover, presidential envoy to the North Caucasus region, Aleksandr Khloponin, claimed in September 2011 that 90 per cent of the Caucasus Emirate's funding came from within the region, most prominently from local businesses, and the remaining 10 per cent came from unspecified international sources.

Unverified reports have further alleged that funds are also sourced from local government officials, either through covert support for the organisation's objectives or through intimidation. In addition to extortion, Russian officials have alleged that Caucasus Emirate militants also derive funds from involvement in drug trafficking and robbery.

Another potential source of funding for the Caucasus Emirate is diaspora networks around the world. However, while such communities typically continue to provide moral support for the insurgency, the extent to which such support extends to the provision of funds is unclear, and the likely income from such networks is assessed to be minor.

In addition to alleging that the Caucasus Emirate receives funds from other Islamist militant groups, Russian officials have occasionally accused the Georgian government of facilitating the transfer of funds to insurgents in the North Caucasus. However, no substantive evidence of any such activities has been provided by the Russian government, and Georgian officials have consistently denied any such links.

Procurement and Supply Lines

Weaponry is readily available in the North Caucasus amid a widely-observable 'gun culture'. A key source of weaponry for insurgents has been former Soviet weapons stockpiles, especially in Chechnya from where they have diffused into the remainder of the North Caucasus.

However, such stockpiles are largely exhausted and the black market has become the primary source of weaponry for the Caucasus Emirate. Organised crime groups source weapons for insurgents both within Russia and from neighbouring Georgia and Azerbaijan. In addition, police in the Czech Republic arrested eight men in early May 2011 on suspicion of smuggling weapons to insurgents in the North Caucasus.

Caucasus Emirate militants also obtain weapons through raids on security force facilities and in the aftermath of attacks on security force personnel. Indeed, a senior Russian judicial official claimed in October 2010 that the majority of weaponry utilised by insurgents in the region had their origin with security forces.

This heavily abridged sample is a static extract for indicative purposes only. The full, updated content – including vessel equipment and specifications – is available within [IHS Jane's World Insurgency & Terrorism](#).

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