# Train bombing in Moscow kills dozens

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**30 March 2010**

Bombs exploded in two Moscow metro stations on Monday morning, killing at least 38 people and injuring dozens more. An initial blast hit the Lubyanka station, which is located just below the headquarters of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and is a short walk from Red Square. It was followed by an explosion at Park Kultury, a station located on the edge of the city center and near several state news agencies.

Timed to coincide with rush hour, the first bomb went off just before 8 a.m. and the second detonated about 40 minutes later. Those underground at the time described scenes of panic, as both injured and able-bodied people struggled to make their way through thick smoke. The Moscow metro is one of the most utilized subway systems in the world, carrying approximately seven million people on any given workday.

Service was partially suspended on the metro after the first bombing. It has since been fully restored throughout the city.

The Kremlin has moved quickly to use the horrific tragedy as an opportunity to step up internal repression and justify further actions in the north Caucasus.

Only a few hours after the events, the FSB declare that a preliminary investigation uncovered that female suicide bombers had carried out the bombings with several pounds of TNT. The agency claims to have discovered identifiable body parts from the culprits. According to *Interfax*, the women's faces were also captured on security cameras when they entered the Yugo-Zapadnaya station, which is on the same subway line as the two stations where the explosions happened.

The Kremlin is blaming Islamic separatists from the north Caucasus, where the Russian government has been conducting a brutal crackdown over the last several months. The press has begun to speculate that the women, so-called "black widows," were relatives of men killed in the government's counter-insurgency campaign in Dagestan and Ingushetia, which border Chechnya.

"They want to take revenge for the actions of the security forces against them, for the arrests and liquidations of their leaders," Viktor Ilyukhin, deputy chair of the parliamentary security committee, told the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Over the course of the past two years, there have been almost daily reports of arrests, kidnappings, and killings carried out by rebel forces, local militias, and the Russian military. In early December of last year, a bomb ripped through a passenger train traveling from Moscow to Saint Petersburg, killing 26 people, including top civil servants.

The Russian government has responded to the increasingly bold attacks on government offices and officials with force. Alexei Malashenko, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, has likened conditions in parts of the north Caucasus to that of "civil war." Events in the region have increasingly undermined Dmitri Medvedev's claim last April that the situation had been brought under control.

Various commentators have pointed to the location of Monday's bombings as a sign that the bombers intended to strike at major government institutions. "There is no mistaking the symbolism of the targets; first the security services and then the main center of state journalism," said Alexei Mukhin, director of the Center for Political Information in Moscow.

Others are insisting that the coordination and specificity of the attacks indicate the existence of a terrorist cell in the capital. "These kinds of attacks could only be planned by people who have lived in Moscow for some time," said Vice President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems Vladimir Anokhin.

In the aftermath of the explosions, both President Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin promised to respond with force and to expand the work of the security services throughout Russia.

"We will continue the operation against terrorists without hesitation and to the end…. We need to considerably step up all measures and to reconsider this problem on the scale of the state, not for a particular type of public transportation or for a particular town, but for

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the whole country. Obviously, measures that have been practiced up to now have proven to be insufficient," said Medvedev after an emergency meeting called at the Kremlin.

"Terrorists will be destroyed," said Putin.

The president has ordered the FSB and other state security organs to "firmly control the situation in the country," insisting that everything would be done to prevent its destabilization.

According to *Gazeta.ru*, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NAK) has been given authorization to do what is necessary to "secure the safety of the citizenry" wherever people congregate, including transportation and essential infrastructure. The government has yet to outline specific measures.

Currently law enforcement, which is known for its corruption and brutality, is out in force in Moscow. The police have stepped up patrols throughout the city the subway system, as part of operation "Vulkan." Passport controls have been set up at every station along the subway line where the attacks occurred. Everyone in Russia, including citizens, is required to carry a passport at all times for identification purposes.

The metro bombings are also being used to call for an expansion of the work of the FSB in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya. The Kremlin's English-language news service, *Russia Today*, carried an article on Monday entitled, "The fight against terrorism has not finished."

"Terrorist acts have demonstrated serious faults in the work of law enforcement agencies with getting intelligence in the North Caucasus, believes deputy chairman of the State Duma Security Committee, Gennady Gudkov. He even suggested establishing a special department of the Federal Security Service dealing with operatives in the Caucasus," the website reported.

Medvedev and Putin have been joined by a chorus of governmental officials calling for a crackdown and an extension of the state's powers. ?ccording to *Gazeta.ru*, shortly after the bombings, a representative from the general prosecutor's office, Vladimir Markin, reiterated the need to create a national fingerprint and DNA database.

"It would have been possible to identify the dead in half an hour," Markin stated in an effort to make the measure appear to be aimed at helping victims and their families. Aleksandr Torshin, vice speaker of the upper house of the Russian parliament, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the head of the far-right Liberal Democratic Party, endorsed the call for a genome database.

Despite the speed with which the Kremlin has identified the source of Monday's attack, many questions remain unanswered as to who is responsible and how they were able to carry this out. Over the course of any forthcoming investigation, undoubtedly more questions will arise.

The position emerging from the government, and being echoed in media commentary, that the FSB failed to detect plans for the bombings because it did not have the proper resources in place should not be taken at face value. In reality, the North Caucasus has been the object of extensive Russia security operations for years.

If it is the case that Islamic separatists from this area were behind Monday's attack, the existence of such forces is due in no small part to the extraordinary brutality of the Russian military in this region and the widespread social misery that exists. These republics are the poorest in the entire country and have unemployment rates of upwards of 50 percent. In 2003, the UN declared Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, the most destroyed city on earth.

Regardless of who is behind Monday's deadly train bombings in Moscow, they will be used by the Kremlin to justify further military action in the North Caucasus and an expansion of the repressive powers of the state.

The Russian government has used terrorist acts for similar purposes in the past. In August-September 1999 a series of apartment bombings became the basis for galvanizing support for a second war in Chechnya, which otherwise would have been opposed by the population. While the Kremlin claimed at that time that Chechen militants were behind the explosions, which killed 293 people, there is evidence that the FSB played a role in facilitating the attacks.

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