

Reconciliation between rebel commanders and Dokku

Umarov

On 25 July, a militant website announced that Hussein Gakayev and Aslambek Vadalov, two commanders who last year renounced their allegiance to Dokku Umarov (the leader of the armed underground in the North Caucasus), had reconciled with him, and once again sworn him an oath of fidelity. This reinforces Umarov's position, and increases the potential for the militants, who remain capable of destabilising the situation in the region.

Dokku Umarov is the leader of the so-called 'North Caucasian Emirate', a virtual 'state' existing since 2007 which is working to separate the region from Russia and establish an Islamic republic there ruled by sharia law. The rebel commanders did not reject the struggle to Islamise the region, but they had also recognised the right of the individual Caucasian nations to independence. In addition, they accused Umarov of passivity and procrastination. The leader of the secessionists was Hussein Gakayev, who headed the National Defence Committee (Shura Majlis).

The rebel commanders were unable to attract a larger group of fighters to their side, and were probably unable to secure independent sources of funding. A decision by a sharia court was aimed at bringing them back into Umarov's fold. Umarov's position as leader is now unquestioned by any important commander. The potential for the armed underground to carry out terrorist attacks, both within and outside the North Caucasus, has thus been strengthened. The number of active fighters is estimated at over a thousand men; since the beginning of this year, about one hundred Interior Ministry soldiers have been killed in various kinds of attacks in the Caucasus. <GÓR>