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Russian Federation: attack on a hydroelectric power plant in Kabardino-Balkaria

In the early hours of 21 July, an attack took place on the Baksan hydroelectric power plant in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, in the Russian North Caucasus. As a result of the explosion, two of the three generators were damaged. The attackers, who killed two members of the security staff and injured two other people, succeeded in getting away. They are most likely to have been Islamist fighters under the command of Dokku Umarov. It must be expected that similar attacks will take place. As a consequence, Kabardino-Balkaria may join the least stable regions of the North Caucasus, together with Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya.

The guerrillas admitted the attack on their internet site. A statement by Umarov from March, in which he declared attacks on important infrastructure objects throughout Russia, also supports their claim. Two hours before the attack, a police base in the town of Baksan was shot at. In the opinion of the authorities, this was a manoeuvre aimed at distracting attention from the real attack.

The Kabardino-Balkarian Republic had been relatively calm, but since the beginning of this year tension has risen. In recent months, several dozen attacks on functionaries of the republic's armed forces have been noted. The attack on the Baksan plant confirms that guerrillas have strong support in the republic. This expansion of the 'geography of attacks' results from their desire to destabilise the whole Caucasus. The guerrillas will certainly try to attack targets located even further west – especially in the region of Sochi, where the Winter Olympics are planned for 2014. <GÓR>