

Terrorism in Russia and Saudi Arabia

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Chapter 1

Russian Apartment Bombings

Russian apartment bombings



Location	Russia (Buynaksk-Moscow-Volgodonsk)
Date	September 4–16, 1999
Target	Low-income apartment buildings
Attack type	Time bombings
Death(s)	Nearly 300
Injured	More than 1,000

The **Russian apartment bombings** were a series of explosions that hit four apartment blocks in the Russian cities of Buynaksk, Moscow, and Volgodonsk in September 1999, killing 293 people and injuring 651. The explosions occurred in Buynaksk on 4 September, Moscow on 9 September and 13, and Volgodonsk on 16 September. Several other bombs were defused in Moscow at the time.

A similar bomb was found and defused in the Russian city of Ryazan on 23 September 1999. On the next day Federal Security Service Director Nikolai Patrushev announced that the Ryazan incident had been a training exercise.

Together with the Invasion of Dagestan launched from Chechnya in August 1999 by Islamist militia led by Shamil Basayev and Ibn al-Khattab, the bombings caused the Russian Federation to launch the Second Chechen War.

Although on 2 September 1999, the militia commander Ibn Al-Khattab announced that "The mujahideen of Dagestan are going to carry out reprisals in various places across Russia," on 14 September he denied responsibility for the blasts, adding that he was fighting the Russian army, not women and children.

An official investigation of the bombings was completed by the Russian Federal Security Service in 2002. According to the investigation and the court ruling that followed, the bombings were organized by Achemez Gochiyaev, who remained at large as of 2010, and ordered by Ibn Al-Khattab and Abu Omar al-Saif, who were later killed. Six other suspects have been convicted by Russian courts.

State Duma member Yuri Shekotchikhin filed two motions for a parliamentary investigation of the events, but the motions were rejected by the Duma in March 2000. An independent public commission to investigate the bombings was chaired by Duma deputy Sergei Kovalev. The commission was rendered ineffective because of government refusal to respond to its inquiries. The Commission's lawyer Mikhail Trepashkin was arrested for exposing classified information.

The incident in Ryazan gave rise to a theory that the bombings were a "false flag" attack perpetrated by the FSB to justify the Second Chechen War and bring Vladimir Putin to power.

Gordon Bennett, Robert Bruce Ware, Paul J. Murphy, Henry Plater-Zyberk, Simon Saradzhyan, Nabi Abdullaev and Richard Sakwa criticized the conspiracy theory, pointing out problems such as the lack of evidence.

Previous threats and bombings

A bomb detonated in a crowded market in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia-Alania on March 19, 1999 killing 62 and injuring many.

A Finnish journalist who in mid-August 1999, before the bombings, travelled to the village of Karamakhi in Dagestan, interviewed some villagers and their military Commander General Dzherollak. The journalist wrote: "The Wahhabis' trucks go all over Russia. Even one wrong move in Moscow or Makhachkala, they warn, will lead to bombs and bloodshed everywhere." According to the journalist the Wahhabis had told him, "if they start bombing us, we know where our bombs will explode." In the last days of August, Russian military launched an aerial bombing of the villages.

Further bombings

On 29 March 2010, two suicide bombers blew themselves up on the Moscow Metro, killing 38 people. It was conjectured that the group responsible for the Russian apartment bombings might also have had links to the Moscow Metro bombings.

The bombings

Overview

Five apartment bombings took place and at least three attempted bombings were prevented. All bombing had the same "signature", judging from the nature and the volume of the destruction. In each case the explosive RDX was used, and the timers were set to go off at night and inflict the maximum number of civilian casualties. The explosives were placed to destroy the weakest, most critical elements of the buildings and force the buildings to "collapse like a house of cards". The terrorists were able to obtain or manufacture several tons of powerful explosives and deliver them to numerous destinations across Russia

Moscow mall

On 31 August 1999, at 20:00 local time (8:00 PM), a powerful explosion took place in a busy Moscow shopping center. One person was killed and 40 others injured. According to FSB, the explosion had been caused by a bomb of about 300kg of explosives.

Buynaksk, Dagestan

On 4 September 1999, at 22:00 (18:00 GMT), a car bomb detonated outside a five story apartment building in the city of Buynaksk in Dagestan, near the border of Chechnya. The building was housing Russian border guard soldiers and their families. 64 people were killed and 133 were injured in the explosion. Another car bomb was found and defused in the same town. The defused bomb was in a car containing 2,706 kilograms of explosives. It was discovered by local residents in a parking lot surrounded by an army hospital and residential buildings.

Moscow, Pechatniki



Bombing at Guryanova Street. One section of the building completely collapsed.

On 9 September 1999, shortly after midnight local time, at 20:00 GMT, 300 to 400 kg of explosives detonated on the ground floor of an apartment building in south-east Moscow (19 Guryanova Street). The nine-story building was destroyed, killing 94 people inside and injuring 249 others. 15 nearby buildings were also damaged. A total of 108 apartments were destroyed during the bombing. An FSB spokesman identified the explosive as RDX. Residents said a few minutes before the blast four men were seen speeding away from the building in a car.

The President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin ordered the search of 30,000 residential buildings in Moscow for explosives. He took personal control of the investigation of the blast. Vladimir Putin declared 13 September a day of mourning for the victims of the attacks.

Moscow, Kashirskoye highway

On 13 September 1999, at 5:00 a.m., a large bomb exploded in a basement of an apartment block on Kashirskoye Highway in southern Moscow, about 6 km from the place of the last attack. 118 people died and 200 were injured. This was the deadliest blast in the chain of bombings. The eight-story building was flattened, littering the street with debris and throwing some concrete pieces hundreds of yards away.

Moscow, attempted bombings

According to FSB public relations director Alexander Zdanovich and Oksana Yablokova of The Moscow Times, official investigators defused explosives on Borisovskiye Prudy street in Moscow 14 September 1999. Yuri Felshtinsky and Alexander Litvinenko added

a site in the Liublino district and another in Kapotnya to the list of caches. Satter wrote that three attempted bombings were prevented.

According to the messages received by Yuri Felshtinsky and by Prima News agency from someone claiming to be Achemez Gochiyaev, on 13 September 1999 a bomb was defused in a building in the Kapotnya area. A warehouse containing several tons of explosives and six timing devices was found at Borisovskiye Prudy. The author of the messages wrote that he called the police and warned about the bombing locations, which helped to prevent a large number of further casualties. Gochiyaev or his impersonators claimed that he was framed by his old acquaintance, an FSB officer who asked him to rent basements "as storage facilities" at four locations where bombs were later found.

Volgodonsk

A truck bomb exploded on 16 September 1999, outside a nine-story apartment complex in the southern Russian city of Volgodonsk, killing 17 people and injuring 69. The bombing took place at 5:57 am. Surrounding buildings were also damaged. The blast also happened nine miles from a nuclear power plant. Prime Minister Putin signed a decree calling on law enforcement and other agencies to develop plans within three days to protect industry, transportation, communications, food processing centers and nuclear complexes.

Ryazan incident

At 8:30 P.M. on **22 September**, 1999, a resident of an apartment building in the city of Ryazan noticed two suspicious men who carried sacks into the basement from a car with a Moscow license plate. He alerted the police, but by the time they arrived the car and the men were gone. The policemen found three 50 kg sacks of white powder in the basement. A detonator and a timing device were attached and armed. The timer was set to 5:30 AM. Yuri Tkachenko, the head of the local bomb squad, disconnected the detonator and the timer and tested the three sacks of white substance with a "MO-2" gas analyzer. The device detected traces of RDX, the military explosive used in all previous bombings. Police and rescue vehicles converged from different parts of the city, and 30,000 residents were evacuated from the area. 1,200 local police officers armed with automatic weapons set up roadblocks on highways around the city and started patrolling railroad stations and airports to hunt the terrorists down.

At 1:30 A.M. on **23 September**, the explosive engineers took a bit of substance from the suspicious-looking sacks to a firing ground located some kilometers away from Ryazan for testing. During the substance tests at that area they tried to explode it by means of a detonator, but their efforts failed, the substance was not detonated, and the explosion did not occur. At 5 A.M. Radio Rossiya reported about the attempted bombing noting that the bomb was set up to go off at 5:30 A.M. In the morning, "Ryazan resembled a city under siege". Composite sketches of three suspected terrorists, two men and a woman, were posted everywhere in the city and shown on TV. At 8:00 A.M. Russian television reported the attempt to blow out the building in Ryazan and identified the explosive used

in the bomb as RDX. Vladimir Rushailo announced later that police prevented a terrorist act. A news block at 4 p.m. reported that the explosives failed to detonate during their testing outside the city

At 7 P.M. Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin praised the vigilance of the Ryazanians and called for the air bombing of the Chechen capital Grozny in response to the terrorism acts. He said:

“ If the sacks which proved to contain explosive were noticed, that means there is a positive side to it, if only the fact that the public is reacting correctly to the events taking place in our country today. I'd like ...to thank the public... No panic, no sympathy for the bandits. ”

Later, the same evening, a telephone service employee in Ryazan tapped into long distance phone conversations and managed to detect a talk in which an out-of-town person suggested to others that they "split up" and "make your own way out". That person's number was traced to a telephone exchange unit serving FSB offices. When arrested, the detainees produced FSB identification cards. They were soon released on orders from Moscow.

On **24 September**, FSB director Nikolai Patrushev announced that the exercise was carried out to test responses after the earlier blasts. The Ryazan FSB "reacted with fury" and issued a statement saying:

“ This announcement came as a surprise to us and appeared at the moment when the ...FSB had identified the places of residence in Ryazan of those involved in planting the explosive device and was prepared to detain them. ”

FSB issued a public apology about the incident.

Related events

Ryazan incident controversy

Official explanation of the Ryazan incident

The Russia's General Prosecutor's Office, answering a parliamentary inquiry about apartment bombings in 2002 reported that

“ The investigation showed that to execute certain theses of the mutual order issued by the FSB Director and Russia's Minister of Internal Affairs about performing the Vortex-Antiterror operation, command of a special FSB unit approved a plan/task in 20 September 1999, which implied assembling groups of fake terrorists to be sent into certain regional cities, with the aim to test the security protection of vital infrastructure objects and apartments houses and to evaluate efficiency of undertaken special investigative techniques and regime measures.

A team of three was assigned to enter Ryazan, study the current situation, and evaluate measures taken by the local law enforcement bodies to counteract possible terrorist acts. They were also to select convenient places to perform a "diversion" (apartments of the ground floor and the floor above in apartment houses, underground or different rooms in inhabited buildings), buy from three to five sacks of sugar and store them at the selected place, and manufacture mock-ups of explosive detonators to be placed on the sacks.

The team arrived in Ryazan on 20 September 1999, in a car with license plate VAZ-2107. During the day of 21 September 1999 they studied the city, the local situation and selected the required object. They chose the house 14/16 at Novosyolov Street, since it matched their task the best — there were a local police office and a big store nearby, and the entrance door to the basement was broken. On the morning of 22 September 1999, at a local market, they bought three sacks of sugar, and batteries and clocks with which to manufacture a mock detonator. In the "Kolchuga" store they bought a 12-gauge shotgun cartridge. At about 9 PM, the sacks of sugar were delivered to the house and brought into the basement; the mock detonator was installed on one of sacks...

Investigation showed that ... operation in the city of Ryazan was not planned and carried out in the proper way, in particular, the question about limits of this action was not regulated, and there was no provision for informing local [security] bodies or police about the training nature of the installation in case it was unveiled.

Along with that, actions of FSB employees did not have dangerous consequences for the society and did not lead to violations of rights and interests secured by the Law. ”

Explosives in Ryazan

The Russian Deputy Prosecutor declared in 2002 that a comprehensive testing of the samples showed no traces of any explosives, and that sacks from Ryazan contained only sugar. However Yuri Tkachenko, the police explosives expert who defused the Ryazan bomb, insisted that it was real. Tkachenko said that the explosives, including a timer, a power source, and a detonator were genuine military equipment and obviously prepared by a professional. He also said that the gas analyzer that tested the vapors coming from the sacks unmistakably indicated the presence of RDX. Tkachenko said that it was out of the question that the analyzer could have malfunctioned, as the gas analyzer was of world class quality, cost \$20,000, and was maintained by a specialist who worked according to a strict schedule, checking the analyzer after each use and making frequent prophylactic checks. Tkachenko pointed out that meticulous care in the handling of the gas analyzer was a necessity because the lives of the bomb squad experts depended on the reliability of their equipment. The police officers who answered the original call and discovered the bomb also insisted that it was obvious from its appearance that the substance in the bomb was not sugar.

At a press conference on the occasion of the Federal Security Service Employee Day in December 2001 Yury Tkachenko, the police explosives expert who defused the Ryazan bomb, said that the gas analyzer had not been used. He added that the detonator was a hunting cartridge and that it would not be able to detonate any known explosives.

The type of explosives controversy

It was initially reported by the FSB that the explosives used by the terrorists was RDX (or "hexogen"). However, it was officially declared later that the explosive was not RDX, but a mixture of aluminum powder, niter (saltpeter), sugar, and TNT prepared by the perpetrators in a concrete mixer at a fertilizer factory in Urus-Martan, Chechnya. RDX is produced in only one factory in Russia, in the city of Perm. According to Satter, the FSB changed the story about the type of explosive, since it was difficult to explain how huge amounts of RDX disappeared from the closely guarded Perm facility.

A military storage with RDX disguised as "sugar"

In March 2000, the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* reported the account of Private Alexei Pinyaev of the 137th Regiment who guarded a military facility near the city of Ryazan. He was surprised to see that "a storehouse with weapons and ammunition" contained sacks with the word "sugar" on them. The two paratroopers cut a hole in one of the bags and made tea with the sugar taken from the bag. But the taste of the tea was terrible. They became suspicious since people were talking about the explosions. The substance turned out to be hexogen. After the newspaper report, FSB officers "descended on Pinyaev's unit", accused them of "divulging a state secret", and told them "You guys can't even imagine what serious business you've got yourselves tangled up in." The regiment later sued *Novaya Gazeta* for insulting the honor of the Russian Army, since there was no Private Alexei Pinyaev in the regiment, according to their statement. At an

FSB press conference Private Pinyaev stated that there was no hexogen in the 137th Airborne Regiment and that he was hospitalized in December 1999 and no longer visited the range.

Incident in Russian Parliament

On 13 September, just hours after the second explosion in Moscow, Russian Duma speaker Gennadiy Seleznyov of the Communist Party made an announcement: "*I have just received a report. According to information from Rostov-on-Don, an apartment building in the city of Volgodonsk was blown up last night*". However, the bombing in Volgodonsk took place three days later, on 16 September. When the Volgodonsk bombing happened, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy demanded an explanation in the Duma, but Seleznev turned his microphone off.

Two years later, in March 2002, Seleznyov claimed in an interview that he had been referring to an unrelated hand grenade-based explosion, which did not kill anyone and did not destroy any buildings, and which indeed happened in Volgodonsk. It remains unclear why Seleznyov reported such an insignificant incident to the Russian Parliament and why he did not explain the misunderstanding to Zhirinovskiy and other Duma members.

FSB defector Alexander Litvinenko described this as "the usual *Kontora* mess up": "*Moscow-2 was on the 13th and Volgodonsk on 16th, but they got it to the speaker the other way around,*" he said. Investigator Mikhail Trepashkin confirmed that the man who gave Seleznev the note was indeed an FSB officer.

Sealing of all materials by Russian Duma

The Russian Duma rejected two motions for parliamentary investigation of the Ryazan incident. The Duma, on a pro-Kremlin party-line vote, voted to seal all materials related to the Ryazan incident for the next 75 years and forbade an investigation into what happened.

Arrest of independent investigator Trepashkin

The commission of Sergei Kovalev asked lawyer Mikhail Trepashkin to investigate the case. Trepashkin found that the basement of one of the bombed buildings was rented by FSB officer Vladimir Romanovich and that the latter was witnessed by several people. However, Trepashkin was unable to bring the evidence to court, because he was arrested by FSB in October 2003 (imprisoned in Nizhny Tagil), allegedly for "disclosing state secrets", just a few days before he was to make his findings public. He was sentenced by a military closed court to four years imprisonment. Amnesty International issued a statement that "there are serious grounds to believe that Mikhail Trepashkin was arrested and convicted under falsified criminal charges which may be politically motivated, in order to prevent him continuing his investigative and legal work related to the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow and other cities". Romanovich subsequently died in a hit and run accident in Cyprus. According to Trepashkin, his supervisors and people from

the FSB promised not to arrest him if he left the Kovalev commission and started working with the FSB "against Alexander Litvinenko". Commission chairman Kovalev summarized their findings as follows: "What can I tell? We can prove only one thing: there was *no* training exercise in the city of Ryazan. Authorities do not want to answer any questions..."

On 10 December 2006 Trepashkin wrote a letter to newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* where he claimed that the officials of the Regional Directorate against the Organized Crimes (RUOP) of Main Directorate of the Internal Affairs (GUVD) in Moscow arrested several people who were questioned in regards of buying and selling RDX. Soon after the arrest several officials from the N.P.Petrushev Directorate of FSB came to the headquarters of the GUVD on Shabolovka Street, took all of the material evidences, and ordered to fire all the officials that conducted the arrest. Later sometime in 2000 Trepashkin had meetings with several of the high-ranking officers from the RUOP that disclosed him the whole story. They offered the videocassette containing the footage that led to the arrest of the RDX dealers and offered to appear in court as witnesses. Trepashkin never publicized that to the Public Commission of the State Duma headed by Kovalev to avoid further involvement of the state security services. A similar videocassette possessed Aleksandr Litvinenko with whom Trepashkin contacted as well. Soon thereafter Trepashkin was arrested as a bandit and thrown in a car under a *Chechen* handgun loaded with seven bullets of the FSB officials which were accusing him in a plot against the President of the Russian Federation and was taken to the city of Dmitrov. The whole court process in regards to the bombings took place without him and behind the closed doors to avoid the *information leak*. Trepashkin was surprised how the officials of FSB found out about his investigations and became suspicious of couple of journalists with whom he conducted his investigations Levitov (survivability of whom he doubted) and V.V.Shebalin. Trepashkin later found that the latter disclosed everything to D.A.Paramonov, the member of FSB.

Soon the controversial Litvinenko affair took place also. In January 2002 after the Shebalin's statement FSB confiscated the Trepashkin's PC where he had the last evidences of his investigations. After the FSB was not able to open the encrypted evidences in Trepashkin's computer they illegally destroyed it.

Claims and denials of responsibility for the blasts

After the first bombings, Moscow mayor Luzhkov asserted that no warning had been given for the attacks. A previously unknown group, protesting against growing consumerism in Russia, claimed responsibility for the blast. A note was found at the site of the explosion from the group, calling itself the Revolutionary Writers, according to the FSB.

On 2 September, Al-Khattab announced: "The mujahideen of Dagestan are going to carry out reprisals in various places across Russia.", but Khattab would later on 14 September deny responsibility in the blasts, adding that he is fighting the Russian army, not women and children.

On 9 September, an anonymous person, speaking with a Caucasian accent, phoned the Interfax news agency, saying that the blasts in Moscow and Buynaksk were "our response to the bombings of civilians in the villages in Chechnya and Dagestan." In an interview to the Czech newspaper Lidove Noviny on 9 September, Shamil Basayev denied responsibility, saying: "The latest blast in Moscow is not our work, but the work of the Dagestanis. Russia has been openly terrorizing Dagestan, it encircled three villages in the centre of Dagestan, did not allow women and children to leave." A few days later Basayev denied that Islamist fighters were responsible for the blasts, and instead were connected to "Russian domestic politics." In a later interview, Basayev said he had no idea who was behind the bombings. "Dagestani's could have done it, or the Russian special services."

From 9 September to 13 September, AP reporter Greg Myre conducted an interview with Ibn Al-Khattab, in which Al-Khattab as said, "From now on, we will not only fight against Russian fighter jets and tanks. From now on, they will get our bombs everywhere. Let Russia await our explosions blasting through their cities. I swear we will do it." The interview was published on 15 September. In a subsequent interview with Interfax, al-Khattab denied involvement in the bombings, saying "We would not like to be akin to those who kill sleeping civilians with bombs and shells."

On 15 September, an unidentified man, again speaking with a Caucasian accent, called the ITAR-TASS news agency, claiming to represent a group called the Liberation Army of Dagestan. He said that the explosions in Buynaksk and Moscow were carried out by his organization. According to him, the attacks were a retaliation to the deaths of Muslim women and children during Russian air raids in Dagestan. "We will answer death with death," the caller said. Russian officials from both the Interior Ministry and FSB, at the time, expressed skepticism over the claims. Sergei Bogdanov, of the FSB press service in Moscow, said that the words of a previously unknown individual representing a semi-mythical organization should not be considered as reliable. Mr. Bogdanov insisted that the organization had nothing to do with the bombing. On 15 September 1999 a Dagestani official also denied the existence of a "Dagestan Liberation Army".

Evidence that the bombings were staged

In his book *Darkness at Dawn* Satter reported that on 6 June 1999, three months before the bombings, Swedish journalist Jan Blomgren wrote in *Svenska Dagbladet* that one of options considered by the Kremlin leaders was "a series of terror bombings in Moscow that could be blamed on the Chechens." Satter also noted that on 22 July, the Moscow newspaper *Moskovskaya Pravda* published leaked documents about an operation, "Storm in Moscow", which, by organizing terrorist acts to cause chaos, would bring about a state of emergency, thus saving the Yeltsin regime.

Duma member Konstantin Borovoi said that he had been "warned by an agent of Russian military intelligence of a wave of terrorist bombings" prior to the blasts.

Investigations and theories

Criminal investigation and court ruling

The official investigation was concluded in 2002. According to the Russian State Prosecutor office, all apartment bombings were executed under command of ethnic Karachay Achemez Gochiyayev. The operations were planned by Ibn al-Khattab and Abu Omar al-Saif, Arab militants fighting in Chechnya on the side of Chechen insurgents. Both Russia and USA accuse Al-Khattab of having direct links with Al-Qaida, though Khattab himself has always denied this. Al-Khattab and al-Saif were later killed during the Second Chechen War. The planning was carried out in Khattab's guerilla camps in Chechnya, "Caucasus" in Shatoy and "Taliban" in Avtury, according to the prosecution. Gochiyayev's group was trained at Chechen rebel bases in the towns of Serzhen-Yurt and Urus-Martan. The group's "technical instructors" were two Arab field commanders, Abu Umar and Abu Djafar, Al-Khattab was the bombings' brainchild. The explosives were prepared at a fertilizer factory in Urus-Martan Chechnya, by "mixing aluminium powder, nitre and sugar in a concrete mixer", or by also putting their RDX and TNT. From there they were sent to a food storage facility in Kislovodsk, which was managed by an uncle of one of the terrorists, Yusuf Krymshakhalov. Another conspirator, Ruslan Magayayev, leased a KamAZ truck in which the sacks were stored for two months. After everything was planned, the participants were organized into several groups which then transported the explosives to different cities.

Court ruling on events in Moscow

Al-Khattab paid Gochiyayev \$500,000 to carry out the attacks at Guryanova Street, Kashirskoye Highway, and Borisovskiye Prudy, and then helped to hide Gochiyayev and his accomplices in Chechnya. In early September, 1999, Magayayev, Krymshakhalov, Batchayev and Dekkushev reloaded the cargo into a Mercedes-Benz 2236 trailer and delivered it to Moscow. En route, they were protected from possible complications by an accomplice, Khakim Abayev, who accompanied the trailer in another car. In Moscow they were met by Achemez Gochiyayev, who registered in Hotel Altai under the fake name "Laipanov", and Denis Saitakov. The explosives were left in a warehouse in Ulitsa Krasnodonskaya, which was leased by pseudo-Laipanov (Gochiyayev.) The next day, the explosives were delivered in "ZIL-5301" vans to three addresses – Ulitsa Guryanova, Kashirskoye Shosse and Ulitsa Borisovskiye Prudy, where pseudo-Laipanov leased cellars. Gochiyayev supervised the placement of the bombs in the rented cellars. Next followed the explosions at the former two addresses. The explosion at 16 Borisovskiye Prudy was prevented. Batchayev and Krymshakhalov admitted transporting a truckload of explosives to Moscow but said "they have never been in touch with Chechen warlords and did not know Gochiyayev". They said that someone "who posed as a jihad leader had duped them into the operation" by hiring them to transport his explosives, and they later realized this man was working for the FSB. They claimed that bombings were directed by German Ugryumov who supervised the FSB Alpha and Vympel special forces units at that time.

Court ruling on events in Buinaksk

The 4 September Buinaksk bombings were ordered by Al-Khattab, who promised the bombers \$300,000 to drive their truck bombs into the center of the compound, which would have destroyed four apartment buildings simultaneously. However, the bombers parked on an adjacent street instead and blew up only one building. At the trial they complained that Khattab had not given them all the money he owed them. One of the bombers confessed working for Al-Khattab, but claimed he did not know the explosives were intended to blow up the military apartment buildings.

Court ruling on events in Volgodonsk

According to Dekkushev's confession he, together with Krymshamkhalov and Batchayev, prepared the explosives, transported them to Volgodonsk, and randomly picked the apartment building on Ocyabrskoye Shosse to blow up. Abu Omar had promised to pay him for the job, but Dekkushev never got a single kopeck. According to Dekkushev, it wasn't the FSB that ordered the bombing, as Berezovsky later claimed, but the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Sentences

Two members of Gochiyayev's group, which had carried out the attacks, Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Crymshamhalov, have both been sentenced to life terms in a special-regime colony. Both defendants have pleaded guilty only to some of the charges. For instance, Dekkushev acknowledged that he knew the explosives he transported were to be used for an act of terror. Dekkushev also confirmed Gochiyaev's role in the attacks. Dekkushev was extradited to Russia on 14 April 2002 to stand trial. Crymshamhalov was apprehended and extradited to Moscow. In 2000, six bombers involved in the Buynaksk attack were arrested in Azerbaijan and convicted of the bombing. Achemez Gochiyaev, the head of the group that carried out the attacks and allegedly the main organizer, remains a fugitive, and is under an international search warrant. In a statement released in January, 2004, the FSB said, "until we arrest Gochiyayev, the investigation of the apartment bloc bombings of 1999 will not be finished."

Suspects and accused

In September 1999, hundreds of Chechen nationals (out of the more than 100,000 permanently living in Moscow) were briefly detained and interrogated in Moscow, as a wave of anti-Chechen sentiments swept the city. All of them turned out to be innocent. According to the official investigation, the following people either delivered explosives, stored them, or harbored other suspects:

- Ibn al-Khattab (a Saudi-born Mujahid), who was killed by the FSB in 2002.