

Putin, who

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knew Patrushev from Leningrad, became the head of the president's Central Control Department (GKU) and invited his old acquaintance to become his first deputy.

Patrushev moved over to Putin's team.

Patrushev's subsequent rapid professional ascent is linked with Putin's own rise. When Putin became first deputy head of the Kremlin Administration in May 1998, he promoted Patrushev to the vacant position of head of the president's GKU. In October the same year, Patrushev returned to the Lubyanka, initially as Putin's deputy, a post to which he was appointed by Yeltsin in a decree of July 25, 1998, and later as First Deputy Director of the FSB.

On March 29, 1999, Yeltsin appointed Putin secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, while leaving him in position as director of the FSB, and on August 9 the same year, Yeltsin appointed Putin Prime Minister of Russia. In summing up the first few months of his administration, *Novaya Gazeta* wrote: "Long, long ago in a highly democratic country an elderly president entrusted the post of chancellor and Prime Minister to a young and energetic successor. Then the Reichstag went up in flames..."

Historians have not yet given us an answer to the question of who set fire to it, but history has shown us who benefited." In Russia, however, "an elderly Guarantor [of the Constitution] entrusted the post of prime minister to a successor who had yet to be democratically elected. Then apartment blocks were blown up, and a new war began in Chechnya, and this war was glorified by arch-liars."

These events which shook the entire country were also linked with the ascendancy of one other man: on the day Putin became Prime Minister of Russia, Patrushev was given the directorship of the FSB. People with inside knowledge claim that Putin had no choice but to promote Patrushev, because Patrushev was in possession of compromising material about him. On August 17, 1999, Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev was appointed director of the Federal Security Service of Russia. And then it began...

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Chapter 5

The FSB fiasco in Ryazan When someone commits a crime, it's very important to catch them while the trail is still hot.

Nikolai Patrushev-about the events in Ryazan. *Itogi*, 5 October 1999 In September 1999, monstrous acts of terrorism were perpetrated in Buinaksk, Moscow, and Volgogradsk.

We shall begin with the terrorist attack which could have been the most terrible of them all, if it had not been foiled. On September 22, something unexpected happened: in Ryazan, FSB operatives were spotted planting sugar sacks containing hexogene in the bedroom community of Dashkovo-Pesochnya.

At 9:15 p.m., Alexei Kartofelnikov, a driver for the Spartak soccer club who lived in the single-entrance twelve-story block built more than twenty years earlier at number

14/16 Novosyolov Street, phoned the Dashkovo-Pesochnya office of the Oktyabrsky Region Department of the Interior (ROVD) in Ryazan and reported that ten minutes earlier, he had seen a white model five or seven Zhiguli automobile with the Moscow license plate T534 VT 77 RUS outside the entrance to his apartment block, where there was a twentyfour hour “Night and Day” shop on the ground floor. The car had driven into the yard and stopped. A man and a young woman got out, went down into the basement of the building, and after a while came back. Then the car was driven right up against the basement door, and all three of the people in it began carrying some kind of sacks inside.

One of the men had a mustache and the woman was wearing a tracksuit. Then all of them got into the car and drove away.

Note how quickly Kartofelnikov reacted. The police were less prompt in their response.

“I spotted the model seven Zhiguli as I was walking home from the garage,”

Kartofelnikov recalled, “and I noticed the license plate out of professional habit. I saw that the regional number had been masked by a piece of paper with the Ryazan serial number ‘62’. I ran home to phone the police. I dialed ‘02’ and got this lazy reply: ‘call such-and-such a number.’ I called it, and it was busy. I had to keep dialing the number for ten minutes before I got through. That gave the terrorists enough time to carry all of the sacks into the basement and set the detonators... If I’d gotten through to the police immediately...the terrorists would have been arrested right there in their car.”

When they arrived at 9:58 p.m. Moscow time, the policemen, commanded by warrant officer Andrei Chernyshov, discovered three fifty-kilogram sugar sacks in the basement of a residential block containing seventy-seven apartments. Chernyshov, who was the first to enter the mined basement, recalled:

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“At about ten, we got a warning call from the officer on duty: suspicious individuals had been seen coming out of the basement of house number 14/16 Novosyolov Street. Near the house we were met by a girl who told us about a man who had come out of the basement and driven away in a car with its license plates masked. I left one officer in front of the entrance and went down into the basement with the other. The basement in that house is deep and completely flooded with water. The only dry spot is a tiny little storeroom like a brick shed. We shined the light in, and there were several sugar sacks arranged in a stack. There was a slit in the upper sack, and we could see some kind of electronic device: wires wrapped round with insulating tape, a timer... Of course, it was all a bit of a shock for us. We ran out of the basement, I stayed behind to guard the entrance, while the guys went to evacuate the inhabitants. After about fifteen minutes, reinforcements arrived, and the chief of the UVD turned up. The sacks of explosive were removed by men from the Ministry of Emergencies [MChS] in the presence of representatives of the FSB. Of course, after our bomb technicians had rendered them harmless. No one had any doubt that this was a genuine emergency situation.”

One of the sacks had been slit open, and a homemade detonating device had been set inside, consisting of three batteries, an electronic watch, and a homemade detonating charge. The detonator was set for 5.30 a.m. on Thursday morning. The bomb technicians from the police engineering and technology section of the Ryazan Region UVD took just eleven minutes to disarm the bomb, under the leadership of their section head, police

Lieutenant Yury Tkachenko, and then immediately, at approximately 11 p.m., they conducted a trial explosion with the mixture. There was no detonation, either because the sample was too small, or because the engineers had taken it from the upper layers of the mixture, while the main concentration of hexogene might be in the bottom of the sack.

Express analysis of the substance in the sacks with the help of a gas analyzer indicated “fumes of a hexogene-type explosive substance.” It is important at this point to note that there could not have been any mistake. The instruments used were modern and in good condition, and the specialists who carried out the analysis were highly qualified.

The contents of the sacks did not outwardly resemble granulated sugar. All the witnesses, who discovered the suspicious sacks, later confirmed that they contained a yellow substance in the form of granules that resembled small vermicelli, which is exactly what hexogene looks like. On September 23, the press center of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia also announced that “analysis of the substance concerned indicated the presence of hexogene vapor,” and that an explosive device had been disarmed. In other words, on the night proceeding September 23, local experts had determined that the detonator was live, and the “sugar” was an explosive mixture. “Our initial examination indicated the presence of explosive substances... We believed there was a real danger of explosion,”

Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Kabashov, head of the Oktyabrsky Region OVD, later stated.

House number 14/16 on Novosyolov Street was no chance selection on the bombers’ part. It was a standard house in an unprestigious part of town, inhabited by simple people.

Set up against the front of the house was a twenty-four hour shop selling groceries. The inhabitants of the house would surely not suspect that people unloading goods by the trap door of a twenty-four hour food store might be terrorists. The house stood on the edge of

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Ryazan close to an open area, which was known to local people as “the Old Circle,” on a low rise. It was built of silicate brick. The sacks of explosives in the basement had been placed beside the building’s main support, so if there had been an explosion, the entire building would have collapsed. The next house, built on the soft sandy soil of the slope, could also have been damaged.

So the alarm was raised, and the inhabitants of a house in Ryazan were roused from their beds and evacuated into the street in whatever they happened to be wearing at the time.

This is how the newspaper Trud described the scene: “In a matter of minutes, people were forced to abandon their apartments without being allowed to gather their belongings (a fact which thieves later exploited) and gather in front of the dark, empty house.

Women, old men, and children shuffled about in front of the entrance, reluctant to set out into the unknown. Some of them were not wearing outer clothing, or were even barefooted... They hopped from one foot to the other in the freezing wind for several hours, and the invalids who had been brought down in their wheelchairs wept and cursed the entire world.”

The house was cordoned off. It was cold. The director of the local cinema, the Oktyabr, took pity on the people and let them into the hall, and she also prepared tea for everyone.

The only people left in the building were several old invalids, who were in no physical condition to leave their apartments, including one old woman who was paralyzed and whose daughter stayed all night with the police cordon expecting an explosion. This is how she recalled the event: “Between 10 and 11 p.m., police officers went to the apartments, asking people to get outside as quickly as possible. I ran out just as I was, in my nightshirt, with only my raincoat thrown over it. Outside in the yard, I learned there was a bomb in our house. I’d left my mother behind in the flat, and she can’t even get out of bed on her own. I dashed over to the policemen in horror: ‘Let me into the house, help me bring my mother out!’

They wouldn’t let me back in. It was half past two before they started going to each of the flats with its occupants and checking them for signs of anything suspicious. They came to me too. I showed the policeman my sick mother and said I wouldn’t go anywhere without her. He calmly wrote something down on his notepad and disappeared.

And I suddenly had this realization that my mother and I were probably the only two people in a house with a bomb in it. I felt quite unbearably afraid... But then suddenly there was a ring at the door. Standing on the doorstep were two senior police officers.

They asked me sternly: ‘Have you decided you want to be buried alive, then, woman?’ I was so scared my legs were giving way under me, but I stood my ground, I wouldn’t go without my mother. And then they suddenly took pity on me: ‘All right then, stay here, your house has already been made safe.’ It turned out they’d removed the detonators from the ‘charge’ even before they inspected the flats. Then I just dashed straight outside...”

All kinds of emergency services and managers turned up at the house. In addition, since analysis had determined the presence of hexogene, the cordon was ordered to expand the exclusion zone, in case there was an explosion. The head of the local UFSB, Major49 General Alexander Sergeiev, congratulated the inhabitants of the building on being granted a second life. Hero of the hour Kartoffelnikov was told that he must have been born under a lucky star (a few days later, he was presented with a valuable gift from the municipal authorities for finding the bomb—a Russian-made color television). One of the Russian telegraph agencies informed the world of his fortunate discovery as follows: “Terrorist bombing thwarted in Ryazan: sacks containing a mixture of sugar and hexogene found by police in apartment house basement.

“First deputy staff officer for civil defense and emergencies in the Ryazan Region, Colonel Yury Karpeiev, has informed an ITAR-TASS correspondent that the substance found in the sacks is undergoing analysis. According to the operations duty officer of the Ministry of Emergencies of the Russian Federation in Moscow, the detonating device discovered was set for 5.30 Moscow time on Thursday morning. Acting head of the UVD of the Ryazan Region, Alexei Savin, told the ITAR-TASS correspondent that the make, color, and number of the car in which the explosive was brought to the scene had been identified. According to Savin, specialists were carrying out a series of tests to determine the composition and explosion hazard posed by the mixture discovered in the sacks...

First deputy mayor of the region, Vladimir Markov, said that the situation in Ryazan is calm. The inhabitants of the building, who were rapidly evacuated from their

apartments immediately following the discovery of the suspected explosive, have returned to their apartments. All the neighboring houses have been checked. According to Markov, it is the inhabitants themselves who must be the main support of agencies of law enforcement in their struggle with 'this evil which has appeared in our country... The more vigilant we are, the more reliable the defense will be.'"

At five minutes past midnight, the sacks were carried out of the basement and loaded into a fire engine. However, it was four in the morning before a decision was taken on where the explosives should be taken. The OMON, the FSB, and the local military units refused to take in the sacks. In the end, they were taken to the yard of the Central Office for Civil Defense and Emergencies of Ryazan, where they were stacked in a garage, and a guard was placed over them. The rescuers later recalled that they would have used the sugar in their tea, except that the analysis had shown the presence of hexogene.

The sacks lay at the civil defense base for several days, until they were taken away to the MVD's expert center for criminalistic analysis in Moscow. The press office of the UVD of the Ryazan Region actually announced that the sacks had been taken to Moscow on September 23. At 8.30 in the morning, the work of removing the bomb and checking the building was completed, and the residents were allowed to return to their apartments.

On the evening of September 22, 1,200 policemen were put on alert and a so-called Intercept plan was set in motion. Several eyewitnesses were identified, sketches were produced of three suspects, and roadblocks were set up on highways in the region and in nearby localities. The witnesses' testimony was quite detailed, and there was some hope that the perpetrators would be apprehended.

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The governor of the region and the municipal authorities allocated additional funds to the counter-terrorist offensive. Members of the armed forces were used to guard apartment blocks, and at night watch was organized among residents in all the buildings, while a further search was carried out of the entire residential district, especially of the apartment houses (by Friday, eighty percent of the houses in the town had been checked.) The city markets were deserted, with traders afraid to bring in their goods and customers afraid to go out shopping. According to the deputy mayor of Ryazan, Anatoly Baranov, "Practically no one in the town slept, and not only did the residents of that house spend the night on the street, so did the entire 30,000 population of the suburb of DashkovoPesochnya in which it is located." The panic response in the city grew stronger: there were rumors circulating that Ryazan had been singled out for terrorist attack, because the 137th airborne assault guards regiment which had fought in Dagestan, was stationed there. In addition, the Dyagilev military aerodrome, from which military forces had been airlifted to the Caucasus, was located close to Ryazan. The main road out of Ryazan was jammed solid, because the police were checking all cars leaving the city. However, Operation Intercept failed to produce any results, the car used by the terrorists was not found, and the terrorists themselves were not arrested.

On the morning of September 23, the Russian news agencies broadcast the sensational news that "a terrorist bombing had been foiled in Ryazan." From eight in the morning, the television channels started broadcasting details of the failed attempt at mass murder:

Every TV and radio broadcasting company in Russia carried the same story: “According to members of the law enforcement agencies of the Ryazan UVD, the white crystalline substance in the sacks is hexogene.”

At 1 p.m., the TV news program Vesti on the state’s RTR channel carried a live interview with S. Kabashov: “So provisional guidelines have been issued for the detention of an automobile matching the features which residents have described. There are no results so far.” Vesti announced that “bomb specialists from the municipal police have carried out an initial analysis and confirmed the presence of hexogene. The contents of the sacks have now been sent to the FSB laboratory in Moscow for definitive analysis. Meanwhile, in Ryazan the mayor, Pavel Dmitrievich Mamatov, has held an extraordinary meeting with his deputies and given instructions for all basements in the city to be sealed off, and for rented premises to be checked more thoroughly.”

And so it turned out that the contents of the sacks were sent for analysis, not only to the MVD laboratory, but to the FSB laboratory, as well.

Mamatov answered questions from journalists: “Whatever agencies we might bring in today, it is only possible to implement all the measures for sealing off attics and basements, repairs, installing gratings, and so on in a single week on one condition-if we all combine our efforts.” In other words, at 1 p.m. on September 23, all of Ryazan was in a state of siege. They were searching for the terrorists and their car and checking attics and basements. When Vesti went on air again at 5 p.m., it was mostly a repeat of the broadcast at 1 p.m.

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At 7 p.m., Vesti went on air with its normal news coverage: “Today, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin spoke about the air strikes on the airport at Grozny.” So while they were looking for terrorists in Ryazan, Russian planes had been bombarding Grozny.

The people of Ryazan were avenged. Those who were behind the terrorist attack would pay dearly for their sleepless night and their spoiled day.

Putin answered questions from journalists: “As far as the strike on Grozny airport is concerned, I can’t make any comment. I know there is a general directive under which bandits will be pursued wherever they are. I’m simply not in the know, but if they were at the airport, that means at the airport. I can’t really add anything to what has already been said.” Evidently, as Prime Minister, Putin had known something the general public hadn’t heard yet, that there were terrorists holed up at Grozny airport.

Putin also commented on the latest emergency in Ryazan: “As for the events in Ryazan, I don’t think there was any kind of failure involved. If the sacks which proved to contain explosives, were noticed, that means there is a positive side to it, if only in the fact that the public is reacting correctly to the events taking place in our country today. I’d like to take advantage of your question in order to thank the public of our country for this... This is absolutely the correct response. No panic, no sympathy for the bandits. This is the mood for fighting them to the very end. Until we win. And we shall win.”

Rather vague, but the general meaning is clear enough. The foiling of the attempted bombing in Ryazan is not a fumble by the secret services, who failed to spot the explosive being planted, but a victory for the entire Russian people who were keeping a vigilant lookout for their cruel enemies even in provincial towns like Ryazan. For that, the Prime Minister expresses his gratitude to the public.

This is a good point at which to draw our first conclusions. The FSB subsequently claimed that training exercises were being held in Ryazan, but this is contradicted by the following circumstances. On the evening of September 22, after the sacks of explosives had been discovered in the basement of the apartment building, the FSB made no announcement that training exercises were being held in Ryazan, that the sacks contained ordinary sugar, or that the detonating device was a mock-up. The FSB had a second opportunity to issue a statement concerning exercises on September 23, when the news agencies of the world carried the story of the failed terrorist attack in Ryazan. The FSB did not issue any denial, nor did it announce that training had been taking place in Ryazan. As of September 23, the Prime Minister of Russia and Yeltsin's successor in the post of president, Vladimir Putin, still supported the FSB version of events and sincerely believed (or at least pretended to believe) that a terrorist attack had been thwarted in Ryazan.

Let us imagine just for a moment that training exercises really were taking place in Ryazan. Could we possibly expect the FSB to say nothing all day long on September 23, while the whole world was buzzing with news of a failed terrorist attack? It's impossible to imagine it. Is it possible to imagine that the Prime Minister of Russia and former director of the FSB, who, moreover, has personal links with Patrushev, was not informed

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about the "exercises"? It is quite impossible to imagine it, even in your wildest dreams. It would be an open gesture of disloyalty to Putin by Patrushev, after which one or the other of them would have had to quit the political arena. The fact that at seven o'clock in the evening, on September 23, 1999, Putin did not make any statement about training exercises taking place in Ryazan was the weightiest possible argument in favor of interpreting events as a failed attempt by the FSB to blow up an apartment building in Ryazan.

The mayor of Moscow, Yury Luzhkov, who has pretty good contacts among the departments of the armed forces and law enforcement, was not informed about any FSB "exercises" in Ryazan, either. On the contrary, on September 23, the Moscow authorities gave instructions for intensive precautions to be taken to prevent terrorist attacks in the capital, primarily because in the opinion of representatives of the agencies of law enforcement, the composition of the explosive found in Moscow and Ryazan, and the way it was planted, were similar. The Moscow police were given instructions to thoroughly check all premises, including non-residential, from top to bottom, and to carefully inspect every vehicle carrying goods into the city. In Moscow, the events in Ryazan were seen as a prevented terrorist attack.

But the most remarkable thing of all is that not even Rushailo, who headed the commission for combating terrorism and supervised the Whirlwind Anti-Terror operation, knew anything at all about exercises in Ryazan. Oleg Aksonov, head of the information department of the MVD of Russia, later said: "For us, for the people of Ryazan, and the central administration, this is a total surprise; it was treated as a serious crime." On September 23, in his capacity as press secretary for the MVD, Aksonov met the press several times. To Rushailo's shame, Aksonov announced that, having familiarized himself with the situation, the minister had ordered that all the basements and attics in Ryazan should be checked once again in the space of a day and that vigilance

should be increased. Aksyonov emphasized that the implementation of the order was to be closely monitored, since “people could pay for a minor slip-up with their lives.”

Even on September 24, when he addressed the First All-Russian Congress for Combating Organized Crime, Rushailo spoke about the terrorist attack that had been thwarted in Ryazan and said that “a number of serious miscalculations have been made in the activities of the agencies of the interior” and that “harsh conclusions” had been drawn.

Having pointed out the miscalculations of the agencies that had failed to spot the explosives being planted, Rushailo followed Putin in praising the people of Ryazan who had managed to foil the terrorist attack. “The struggle against terrorism is not the exclusive prerogative of the agencies of the interior,” said Rushailo. A significant role in this matter was allotted to “the local authorities and administrations, whose work, however, also contains significant flaws.” Rushailo recommended to his audience “the immediate creation of interdepartmental monitoring and that would travel to the regions to check the implementation of decisions on site and to provide practical assistance.” He pointed out that in the MVD such work was already being carried out and there had been definite improvements, such as the foiling of the attempt to blow up the apartment

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building in Ryazan. “The thwarting of new terrorist attacks and the punishment of the guilty parties in crimes already committed is the main task facing the MVD of Russia at the present stage,” Minister of the Interior Vladimir Rushailo emphasized with pride in the one thwarted terrorist attack he already had to his credit in Ryazan.

If the minister himself regarded the Ryazan episode as a foiled terrorist attack, then what can we say about the regional UVD? The appeals composed in revolutionary style simply begged to be set to music: “The war declared by terrorism against the people of Russia continues. And this means that the unification of all the forces of society and the state to repel the treacherous foe is the essential requirement of the present day. The struggle against terrorism cannot remain a matter only for the police and the secret services. The most striking possible confirmation of this is the report of an attempt to blow up an apartment building in Ryazan which was thwarted thanks to the vigilance of the public. On September 23, in Ryazan... while checking the basement of an apartment building a police detachment discovered an explosive device consisting of three sacks of hexogene and a timing mechanism set for half-past five in the morning. The terrorist attack was thwarted thanks to the inhabitants of the building, which the criminals had chosen as their target. The evening before, they had noticed strangers carrying sacks of some kind into the basement from a Zhiguli automobile with its license plate papered over. The residents immediately contacted the police. Initial analysis of the contents of the sacks showed that they actually did contain a substance similar to hexogene mixed with granulated sugar. The sacks were immediately dispatched to Moscow under guard. Following expert analysis, the staff at the FSB laboratory will give a final answer as to whether this was an attempted terrorist attack or merely a diversionary ploy.

“In this connection, the department of the interior for the region wishes to remind citizens yet again of the need to remain calm and take an organized, business-like approach to ensuring one’s own safety. The best reply to the terrorists will be the vigilance of us all.

All this requires is to look a little closer at the people around you, pay attention to

strangers noticed in the entrance way, in the attic, or the basement of your building, to abandoned automobiles parked directly beside apartment buildings. At the slightest suspicion phone the police.

“Do not on any account attempt to examine the contents of any suspicious boxes, bags, and other unidentified objects, which you may find. In such situations you should restrict access to them by other people and call the police.

“The establishment of house committees to organize the protection of buildings and surrounding territory during the night will also serve to reduce significantly the likelihood of terrorist incidents in our city. Remember, today it depends on every one of us just how effective the fight against evil will be.” -UVD Information Group.

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Unfortunately for him, on September 23, 1999, General Alexander Zdanovich, head of the Center for Public Relations of the FSB of Russia, was due to appear in the television program Hero of the Day on the NTV channel. Thanks to this, we have yet another important piece of evidence that the FSB was planning to just sit it out and allow the people of Ryazan and the journalists to swallow the version of events as a failed terrorist attack by Chechens. It is obvious that prior to Zdanovich's appearance, the FSB had no intention of making any statement about “exercises.” Their calculations were simple enough: the police had not found any terrorists from the FSB or the car. The story of the thwarted terrorist attack was still working, and, best of all, it suited everyone, since even Rushailo could claim a share of the credit for thwarting the bombing.

Zdanovich had, however, been instructed by his bosses to try feeling out the public reaction to the fairy tale about “exercises,” in case something went wrong or there was a leak of information about the FSB's involvement in the terrorist attack in Ryazan. Note how gently Zdanovich began hinting that no actual crime had been committed in the attempt to blow up the house in Ryazan, as if trying to convince people that there was nothing to get excited about. The press secretary of the FSB declared that the initial report indicated that there was no hexogene in the sacks discovered in the basement of one of the apartment blocks in the city, but that they contained “something like remotecontrol devices.” Nor were there any detonating mechanisms, although it was now possible to confirm that “certain elements of a detonating mechanism” had been discovered.

At the same time, Zdanovich emphasized that the final answer would have to be given by the experts, his colleagues from the FSB laboratory in Moscow, who were Patrushev's subordinates. Zdanovich knew perfectly well just what “final answer” would be given by the FSB experts: it would be the one their boss ordered them to give (this answer would be communicated to us only after a certain delay, on March 21, 2000, a year-and-a half after the foiled terrorist attack, and just five days before the presidential election).

But even so, at the beginning of the program Hero of the Day, Zdanovich was not in possession of any information to the effect that the FSB had apparently been carrying out “exercises” in Ryazan. He did not even hint at the possibility that training exercises might be involved. In his interview, Zdanovich did express doubts that the sacks contained explosive and that there was a live detonating device, but there was not a single word about any possible exercises. This discrepancy was yet another indication that the secret services had planned a terrorist attack in Ryazan. It is simply not possible to imagine that

the leadership of the FSB had kept information on exercises already completed in Ryazan a secret from Zdanovich.

The evening of September 23 brought yet another absurdity. The Novosti news agency broadcast a recording of the NTV interview with General Zdanovich and announced that the Intercept search plan for the white VAZ-2107 automobile was still continuing. "A lot of things about this entire story are unclear." In particular, the witnesses gave different descriptions of the color and make of the automobile. Doubts had even arisen about whether the car's license plate had been papered over. At the same time, as the press

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center remarked, the search for the car was being continued "in order to reconstruct an objective picture."

Despite Zdanovich's assurances that there had been no explosive or detonating device, the Ryazan UFSB was still unable "to reconstruct an objective picture." On September 24, the morning newspapers carried details of how the terrorist attack in Ryazan had been foiled, but still no statement from the FSB about exercises.

Not until September 24 did FSB director Patrushev finally decide to issue a statement about the "exercises" which had been held in Ryazan. What could have made Patrushev shift tactics in this way? Firstly, the main clues, three sacks of explosive with a live detonating device, had been delivered into Patrushev's hands in Moscow, which was good news for Patrushev. Now he could substitute the sacks and confidently assert that the provincials in Ryazan had made a mistake, and the results of their analysis were wrong. There was also bad news: the Ryazan UFSB had detained two terrorists.

Let's lend the FSB a hand in establishing the "objective picture" which was so zealously concealed from the people. In simplified form, the most brilliant part of the joint operation, conducted by the Ryazan police and the Ryazan Region UFSB, went as follows.

Following the discovery in Ryazan of the sacks containing explosive and a live detonating device, the Intercept plan had been announced in the city. The senior officer responsible for public relations (press secretary) of the UFSB of the Ryazan Region, Yury Bludov, announced that Patrushev's statement had come as a complete surprise to the local members of the state security services. "Until the last moment, we worked across the board in close collaboration with the police, just as though the threat of a terrorist attack was real, we made up sketches of the suspected terrorists; on the basis of the results of the analysis, we initiated criminal proceedings under article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (terrorism); we conducted a search for cars and terrorists."

After the announcement of Operation Intercept, when the routes out of town were already closed off, the operational divisions of the Ryazan UVD and UFSB attempted to determine the precise location of the terrorists they were seeking. They had a few lucky breaks. Nadezhda Yukhanova, an employee of the Electrosvyaz Company (the telephone service), recorded a suspicious call to Moscow. "Leave one at a time, there are patrols everywhere," replied the voice at the other end of the line. Yukhanova immediately reported the call to the Ryazan UFSB, and it was a simple technical matter for the suspicious telephone to be monitored immediately. The operatives had no doubt that they

had located the terrorists. However, difficulties arose, because when the bugging technology identified the Moscow telephone number the terrorists were ringing, it turned out to be the number of one of the offices of the FSB in Moscow.

After leaving Novosyolov Street shortly after 9 p.m. on September 22, the terrorists had not risked driving straight to Moscow, because a solitary car is always noticeable on a

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deserted highway at night, and the chances of being stopped at a traffic police post were too high. Any car stopped at night would be noted in the duty officer's journal, even if the people sitting in it were members of the FSB or other secret services, and the next day when the news of the explosion was announced, the policeman would be bound to recall stopping a car with three people. If there also happened to be reports by witnesses in Ryazan, they would pick up the car and its passengers immediately. The terrorists had to wait until the morning, since they couldn't leave the target area until after the explosion had taken place, and their military mission had been accomplished. In the morning, there would be a lot of cars on the highway. For the first few hours after the attack, there would be panic. If witnesses had spotted two men and a woman in a car, the police would be looking for three terrorists, two men and one woman. One person alone in a car could always give any police cordon the slip.

That this was the way things really were is clear from the report of operation Intercept in the newspaper Trud: "By now the situation in Ryazan had reached red hot. Reinforced patrols of police and cadets from the local military colleges walked the streets. All road routes out of and into the city were blocked by the patrols and sentries armed to the teeth and road traffic police. Miles-long traffic jams had built up with cars and trucks moving to and from Moscow. They searched all the cars thoroughly, looking for three terrorists, two men and a woman, whose descriptions were posted on almost every street lamp post."

Following instructions received, one of the terrorists set out towards Moscow in the car on September 23, abandoned the car in the area of Kolomna, and made his way to Moscow unhindered. One of the terrorists had now escaped the clutches of the Ryazan police and taken the car with him as well. Late in the day of September 23, less than twenty-four hours later, an empty car was found by the police on the Moscow-Ryazan highway close to Kolomna, about halfway to Moscow. It was the same car "with the papered-over license plates, which was used to transport the explosive," Bludov announced. The car turned out to be registered as missing with the police. In other words, the terrorists had carried out their operation in a stolen car (a classical feature of terrorist attacks).

The car had not been dumped near Kolomna by chance. If it had been stolen in Moscow or the Moscow Region, the police would have returned it to the owner at his home address, and it would probably never have entered anyone's head to think it might be the car used by unknown terrorists to transport hexogene for blowing up a building in a different region of the country, in Ryazan. Accordingly, they wouldn't have bothered to analyze the contents of the car for microparticles of hexogene and other explosive substances. The accomplice could go back for the two terrorists left behind in Ryazan the next day in a standard FSB operational vehicle and take them to Moscow without any risk of being caught. On the other hand, if it were discovered that the car found near Kolomna

was the one used for the terrorist attack, the fact that it was abandoned halfway to Moscow would tell the Ryazan police that the terrorists had gotten away. The cordon in place around Ryazan would then be relaxed, which would make it easier for the remaining two terrorists to leave.

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So now there were two terrorists left in Ryazan. From information provided by the Ryazan UFSB, we know that the terrorists stayed overnight somewhere in Ryazan and didn't spend the night of September 22 hanging about in the hallways of buildings in a strange and unfamiliar town. The conclusion must be drawn that the terrorists had arranged places to stay in advance, even if they themselves were not from Ryazan. In that case, it is clear that they had time to choose their target, which was far from random, and to prepare for their terrorist attack. When they were caught by surprise by operation Intercept starting earlier than expected, the terrorists decided to wait it out in the town.

The arguments in support of this interpretation are as follows.

It is very important to note that the leaders of the Ryazan Region were not aware of the explosion planned for Ryazan (or the "exercises," as the events are referred to diplomatically by all the officials involved in them and by employees of the agencies of coercion). The governor of the region, V.N. Liubimov, announced this in an interview broadcast live on September 24, when he said: "Not even I knew about this exercise."

Mamatov, the mayor of Ryazan, was frankly annoyed: "They've used us as guinea pigs.

Tested Ryazan for lice. I'm not against exercises. I served in the army myself, and I took part in them, but I never saw anything like this."

The FSB department for the Ryazan Region was also not informed about the "exercises."

Bludov stated that "the FSB was not informed in advance that exercises were being conducted in the city." The head of the Ryazan UFSB, Major-General A.V. Sergeiev at first stated in an interview with the local television company Oka that he knew nothing about any "exercises" being held. It was only later, in response to a question from journalists about whether he had in his possession any official document confirming that exercises were held in Ryazan, that he answered through his press secretary that he accepted as proof of the exercises the television interview given by FSB director Patrushev. One of the women living in house 14/16, Marina Severina, recalled how, afterwards, the local FSB went round the apartments apologizing: "Several people from the FSB came to see us, led by a colonel. They apologized. They said that they hadn't known anything, either." This is one case in which we can believe the members of the FSB and accept their sincerity.

The Ryazan UFSB realized that the people of Ryazan had been "set up" and that the Public Prosecutor's Office of Russia and the public might accuse the Ryazan UFSB of planning the explosion. Shaken by the treachery of their Moscow colleagues, the Ryazan UFSB decided to provide themselves with an alibi and announced to the world that the Ryazan operation had been planned in Moscow. There could be no other explanation for the statement from the Ryazan Region UFSB, which appeared shortly after Patrushev's interview about "exercises" in Ryazan. We give the text of the statement in full.

"It has become known that the planting on 22.09.99 of a dummy explosive device

was part of an ongoing interregional exercise. This announcement came as a surprise to us and appeared at a moment when the department of the FSB had identified the places of residence in Ryazan of those involved in planting the explosive device and was preparing

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to detain them. This had been made possible due to the vigilance and assistance of many of the residents of the city of Ryazan, collaboration with the agencies of the Ministry of the Interior and the professionalism of our own staff. We thank everyone who assisted us in this work. We will continue in future to do everything possible to ensure the safety of the people of Ryazan.”

This unique document provides us with answers to the most important of our questions.

Firstly, the Ryazan UFSB had nothing to do with the operation to blow up the building in Ryazan. Secondly, at least two terrorists were discovered in Ryazan. Thirdly, the terrorists lived in Ryazan, if only temporarily, and evidently a network of at least two secret safe apartments were uncovered. Fourthly, just at the moment when arrangements were in hand to arrest the terrorists, the order came from Moscow not to arrest them, because the terrorist attack in Ryazan was only an FSB “exercise.”

In order to remove any doubts that the UFSB statement was both deliberate and accurate, the leadership of the Ryazan UFSB repeated it almost word-for-word in an interview. On May 21, 2000, just five days before the presidential election, when the failed explosion in Ryazan had been put back on the public agenda for political reasons by the parties competing for power, the head of the investigative section of the UFSB for the Ryazan Region, Lieutenant Colonel Yuri Maximov, stated as follows: “We can only feel sympathy for these people and offer our apologies. We also find the situation difficult. We took all the events of that night seriously, regarding the situation as genuinely dangerous. The announcement about exercises held by the FSB of the Russian Federation came as a complete surprise to us and appeared at a moment when the department of the FSB had identified the places of residence in Ryazan of those involved in planting the dummy (as it subsequently emerged) device and was preparing to detain them. This had been made possible due to the vigilance and assistance of the inhabitants of Ryazan, collaboration with the agencies of the ministry of the interior, and the professionalism of our own staff.”

It was thus, twice confirmed in documentary form that the terrorists who had mined the building in Ryazan were employees of the FSB, that at the time of the operation they were living in Ryazan, and that the places where they lived had been identified by employees of the UFSB for the Ryazan Region. This being so, we can catch Patrushev out in an obvious lie. On September 25, in an interview with one of the television companies, he stated that “those people who should in principle have been found immediately were among the residents who left the building, in which an explosive device was supposedly planted. They took part in the process of producing their own sketches, and held conversations with employees of the agencies of law enforcement.”

The real facts were quite different. The terrorists scattered to different safe apartments.

No sooner had the leadership of the Ryazan UFSB reported in the line of duty by phone to Patrushev in Moscow, that the arrest of the terrorists was imminent than

Patrushev gave the order not to arrest the terrorists and announced that the foiled terrorist attack in Ryazan was only an “exercise.” One can imagine the expression on the face of the

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Ryazan UFSB officer concerned: most likely Major-General Sergeiev was reporting to Patrushev in person when he was ordered to let the terrorists go.

Immediately after he put down the phone, Patrushev gave his first interview in those days to the NTV television company: “The incident in Ryazan was not a bombing, nor was it a foiled bombing. It was an exercise. It was sugar; there was no explosive substance there.

Such exercises do not only take place in Ryazan. But to the honor of the agencies of law enforcement and the public in Ryazan, they responded promptly. I believe that exercises must be made as close as possible to what happens in real life, because otherwise we won’t learn anything and won’t be able to respond to anything anywhere.” A day later, Patrushev added that the “exercise” in Ryazan was prompted by information about terrorist attacks planned to take place in Russia. In Chechnya several groups of terrorists had already been prepared and were “due to be advanced into Russian territory and carry out a series of terrorist attacks... It was this information which led us to conclude that we needed to carry out training exercises, and not like the ones we’d had before, and to make them hard and strict... Our personnel must be prepared; we must identify the shortcomings in the organization of our work and make corrections to its organization.”

The Moscow Komsomolets newspaper managed to joke about it: “On September 24, 1999, the head of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, made the sensational announcement that the attempted bombing in Ryazan was nothing of the sort. It was an exercise... The same day, Minister of the Interior Vladimir Rushailo congratulated his men on saving the building in Ryazan from certain destruction.”

But in Ryazan, of course, no one was laughing. Obviously, even though Patrushev had forbidden it, the Ryazan UFSB went ahead and arrested the terrorists, considerably roughing them up in the process. Who was arrested where, how many there were of them, and what else the Ryazan UFSB officers found in those flats we shall probably never know. When they were arrested, the terrorists presented their “cover documents” and were detained, until the arrival from Moscow of an officer of the central administration with documents which permitted him to take the FSB operatives, who had been tracked down so rapidly, back to Moscow with him.

Beyond this point our investigation runs up against the old familiar “top secret” classification. The criminal proceedings instigated by the UFSB for the Ryazan Region in connection with the discovery of an explosive substance under article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (terrorism) was classified, and the case materials are not available to the public. The names of the terrorists (FSB operatives) have been concealed.

We don’t even know if they were interrogated and what they said under interrogation.

Patrushev certainly had something to hide. “There’s nothing I can do, guys. The analysis shows explosive materials, I’m obliged to initiate criminal proceedings”-such was the stubborn reply made by the local FSB investigator to his Moscow colleagues,

when they tried putting pressure on him. So then, people from the FSB's central administration were sent down and simply confiscated the results of the analysis.

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On September 29, 1999, the newspapers Cheliabinsky Rabochy and Krasnoyarsky Rabochy, and on October 1, the Volzhskaya Kommuna of Samara carried identical articles; "We have learned from well-informed sources in the MVD of Russia that none of the MVD operatives and their colleagues in the UFSB of Ryazan believes in any "training" involving the planting of explosive in the town... In the opinion of highly placed employees of the MVD of Russia, the apartment building in Ryazan actually was mined by persons unknown using genuine explosives and the same detonators as in Moscow... This theory is indirectly confirmed by the fact that the criminal proceedings under the article on terrorism have still not been closed. Furthermore, the results of the original analysis of the contents of the sacks, carried out at the first stage by local MVD experts, were confiscated by FSB personnel who arrived from Moscow, and immediately declared secret. Policemen who have been in contact with their colleagues in criminalistics, who carried out the first investigation of the sacks, continue to claim that they really did contain hexogene, and there is no possibility of any error."

Trying to put pressure on the investigation and declaring a criminal case classified were illegal acts. According to article 7 of the law of the Russian Federation, "On state secrecy," adopted on July 21, 1993, "information... concerning emergencies and catastrophes which threaten the safety and health of members of the public and their consequences;... concerning instances of the violation of human and civil rights and freedoms;... concerning instances of the violation of legality by the agencies of state power and their officials... shall not be declared a matter of state secrecy and classified as secret." The same law goes on to state: "officials who have made a decision to classify as secret the information listed, or to include it for this purpose in media which contain information that constitutes a matter of state secrecy, shall be subject to criminal, administrative, or disciplinary sanction, in accordance with the material and moral harm inflicted upon society, the state, and the public. Members of the public shall be entitled to appeal such decisions to a court of law."

Unfortunately, it looks as though those responsible for classifying a criminal case will not be held to account under the progressive and democratic law of 1993. As one of the residents of the ill-fated (or fortunate) building in Ryazan put it, they have "pulled the wool down hard over our eyes."

Certainly, in March 2000 (just before the presidential election), the voters were shown one of the three terrorists (a "member of the FSB special center"), who said that all three members of the group had left Moscow for Ryazan on the evening of September 22, that they had found a basement which happened by chance not to be locked; they had bought sacks of sugar at the market and a cartridge at the Kolchuga gun shop, from which they had constructed "mock-ups of an explosive device" on the spot, and "the whole business was concentrated together to implement the measure concerned... It was not sabotage, but an exercise. We didn't even really try to hide."

On March 22 (with four days left to the election), The Association of Veterans of the Alpha Group came to the defense of the story about FSB exercises in Ryazan, in the person of lieutenant-general of the reserve and former commander of the Vympel

division of the FSB of Russia, Dmitry Gerasimov, and retired Major-General Gennady Zaitsev, the former commander of the Alpha group and a “Hero of the Soviet Union.”

Gerasimov declared that live detonating devices were not used in the exercises in Ryazan, and what was used instead was “a cartridge containing round shot,” which was meant to produce “a shock effect.” Since the impression produced by the detonating device really was shocking, from that point of view the “exercise” had been a success.

In Zaitsev’s opinion, the story that live detonating devices had been involved in the exercise came about because the instruments used by the UFSB for the Ryazan Region were faulty. He announced that members of Vypmel had also been involved in the exercise in Ryazan, and that a special group had left for Ryazan in a private car on the eve of the events concerned, and had actually deliberately drawn attention to itself. A cartridge containing round shot was bought in the Kolchuga shop; “The ill-fated sugar, which some later called hexogene, was bought by the special group at the local bazaar.

And, therefore, it could not possibly have been explosive. The experts simply ignored basic rules and used dirty instruments on which there were traces of explosives from previous analyses. The experts concerned have already been punished for their negligence. Criminal proceedings have been initiated in connection with this instance.”

The naiveté of the interview given by the “member of the special center” and the simplemindedness of the statements made by Gerasimov and Zaitsev are genuinely astounding.

First and foremost, it could well be true that three Vypmel officers did set out for Ryazan in a private car on the evening of September 22, that they did buy three sacks of sugar and a cartridge from the Kolchuga shop. But exactly how did they try to attract attention to themselves? After all, it was sugar they were sold at the market, not hexogene. What was there to attract attention? A single shotgun cartridge bought in a shop?

Patrushev evidently also believed that in a country where sensational murders take place every day and houses with hundreds of inhabitants are blown up, suspicion should be aroused by people buying sugar at the market and a shotgun cartridge in a shop.

“Everything that the supposed terrorists planted was bought in Ryazan, the sacks of sugar and the cartridges, which they bought without anyone asking them whether they had any right to do so.” A minor point, of course, but now we have a mystery: just how many cartridges did the FSB operatives buy, one or several? (The purchases could have been an operation to cover for the real terrorists, who planted quite different sacks containing explosives in the basement of the building in Ryazan, sacks that had nothing to do with the Vypmel group. In that case, the Vypmel operatives themselves might not have known the purpose of the task they had been assigned of buying one cartridge and three bags of sugar.) Finally, Zaitsev deliberately misled his readers by claiming that criminal proceedings had been initiated against Senior Lieutenant Yury Tkachenko, the explosives technician at the engineering and technical section, for conducting the analysis incorrectly, when they had actually been initiated against the terrorists who had turned out to be FSB operatives. On September 30, Tkachenko and another Ryazan police explosives specialist, Pyotr Zhitnikov, had, in fact, been awarded a bonus for their

courage in disarming the

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explosive device. Incidentally, Nadezhda Yukhanova, the telephone operator who intercepted the terrorists' telephone conversation with Moscow, was also paid a bonus for her assistance in capturing them.

The only thing that can be said in Zaitsev's defense is that a technical expert does bear criminal responsibility for the quality and objectivity of the results of his analysis, and if Tkachenko had carried out a flawed analysis and issued an incorrect result, then criminal proceedings would, indeed, have been taken against him. But as we know, this was not done, precisely because the result provided by the analysis was accurate: the sacks contained an explosive substance.

The testimony of the "member of the special center" and Zaitsev also suffers from serious inconsistencies of time-scale. The terrorists were spotted near the building in Ryazan only shortly after 9 p.m. On a weekday, they could not possibly have covered the 180 kilometers from Moscow to Ryazan in less than three hours, and then they still had to select a building in an unfamiliar town, buy the sacks of sugar, buy the cartridge at the Kolchuga shop, and put together the mock-up. On a weekday, the market in Ryazan closes at 6 p.m. at the latest. The Kolchuga shop closes at 7 p.m. So just when and how was the sugar bought? When was the cartridge bought? When did the terrorists leave Moscow? How long did the journey take? When did they arrive in Ryazan?

It is obvious that the entire story about the evening trip from Moscow by Vympel operatives is an invention from start to finish. Zaitsev himself provided legally valid proof of this. On September 28, 1999, a press conference was held by members of the departments of law enforcement and the armed forces in the office of the Kolomna security firm Oskord, at which the representative of the Alpha Group veterans' association, G.N. Zaitsev explained his position with regard to the "incident" in Ryazan: "Training exercises of this kind make me really angry. It's not right to practice on real people!" On October 7, a report on the press conference was published by the local Kolomna newspaper Yat. The only conclusion which can be drawn from Zaitsev's statement is that he had taken no part in the Ryazan escapade. But with only four days to go to the presidential election, when all forces were mobilized for Putin's victory, and the end justified any means, Zaitsev was forced to appear at a press conference and acknowledge his own blame and the involvement of Vympel operatives in the Ryazan "exercise." Naturally, those who involved Zaitsev in this propaganda show were not aware of his press conference in Kolomna.

Zaitsev's false testimony of March 22, 2000, served to emphasize an extremely important point: the employees of the secret services will lie if it is required by the interests of the agencies of state security, if they have been ordered to lie.

Half of the criminals in Russia make themselves out to be lunatics or total idiots. It's better that way; you get a shorter sentence or even simply get off ("What can you expect from a fool?" as the Russian saying has it). Patrushev calculated correctly that for terrorism against the citizens of one's own country, you could get life, but in Russia, you wouldn't even get sacked for being an idiot. (In any case, just who could have sacked

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Patrushev? No one but Putin!) Not a single employee of the FSB was sacked as a result of the Ryazan escapade. Indeed, according to Shchekochikhin, Patrushev was made a “Hero of Russia,” and he has recently been promoted to four-star general!

Patrushev’s psychological calculations proved correct. It was more convenient for the political elite of Russia to regard Patrushev as an idiot than as a villain. Commenting on Patrushev’s statement about “exercises” in a live broadcast on the radio station Ekho Moskvyy, chairman of the State Duma deputies’ grouping “The Russian Regions,” Oleg Morozov, said: “It seems monstrous to me. I understand that the secret services have the right to check up on what’s being done, but not so much by us as by themselves.” In addition, he said it was “difficult to imagine yourself in these people’s places” (in Ryazan) and, therefore, “it wasn’t worth it, there was no way such a price should have been paid for a check” on the activities of the FSB and the vigilance of the public.

Morozov declared that it might be possible to forgive the actions of the FSB, if the FSB promised there would be no more terrorist attacks. That was, in fact, the main point which he made: Russians had to be saved from the FSB terror. The subtle diplomat Morozov offered the terrorist Patrushev a deal: we don’t punish you, and we close our eyes to all the explosions that have taken place in Russia, and you halt all operations in Russia for blowing up people’s homes. Patrushev heard what Morozov was saying, and the explosions ceased. Patrushev was branded an idiot and allowed to remain at his desk.

Perhaps the question of just who turned out to be the idiot in this situation should be regarded as undecided.

There were some people who were of the opinion that Patrushev was not an idiot but insane. On September 25, 1999, the newspaper *Novye Izvestiya* carried an article by Sergei Agafonov which, in view of the circumstances, failed even to offend Patrushev: “I wonder just how accurate an idea the head of the FSB actually has of what is going on?”

Does the head of the secret services have an adequate perception of surrounding reality?

Does he not perhaps confuse colors, does he recognize his relatives? My soul is tormented by these alarming questions, since there seems to be no possible rational explanation for the FSB’s all-Russian special training exercise using real people.”

Agafonov assumed that “General Patrushev is seriously unwell” and “he should be released from the excessive burdens of duty and given urgent treatment.”

Of course, the FSB itself could not be unanimous in its attitude to Patrushev’s operation.

After the fiasco in Ryazan, even his own subordinates were prepared to criticize the head of the FSB (and Patrushev was prepared to tolerate this criticism abjectly). For instance, the press secretary of the UFSB for Moscow and the Moscow Region, Sergei Bogdanov, called the “exercise” in Ryazan “crude and poorly planned work” (if they were caught, their work must have been crude). The head of the UFSB for the Yaroslavl Region, Major-General A.A. Kotelnikov, replied as follows to a question about the “exercise”: “I have my own point of view concerning the Ryazan exercises, but I would not wish to comment on the actions of my colleagues” (as if there were any way that he could!).

Note that not a single acting or retired senior member of the FSB made any attempt at a serious analysis of the actions of his “colleagues.” The professionals of the armed services departments left that honorable task to the journalists, who did the best they could in the face of the attacks made on them by the FSB. They began, naturally enough, with the sugar.

The three sacks of sugar bothered everybody. Supposedly, the terrorists from the FSB (but probably it was a quite different group of FSB operatives) bought the sugar at the local market. They said that it was produced by the Kolpyansk Sugar Plant in the Orlov Region. But if it was just plain ordinary sugar from the Orlov Region, why was it sent off to Moscow for analysis? More importantly, why did the laboratory accept it for analysis?

Not just one laboratory, but two in different state departments (the MVD and the FSB).

And why was an additional analysis carried out later? Surely it should have been possible to recognize sugar the first time around? Further, why did it all take several months? It only made sense for Patrushev to have the sugar brought to Moscow for analysis, if he wanted to take the material evidence away from his colleagues in Ryazan, and only if the sacks did contain explosives. Why would Patrushev insist on sacks of sugar being sent to Moscow? His own men would have made him a laughing stock.

In the meantime, the FSB press office issued a statement saying that in order for the contents of the sacks from Ryazan to be checked, they were taken to an artillery range, where attempts were made to explode them. The detonation failed because it was ordinary sugar, the FSB reported triumphantly. “One wonders what sort of idiot would try to explode three sacks of ordinary sugar at an artillery range,” the newspaper *Versiya* commented ironically. Why, indeed, did the FSB send the sacks to the artillery range if it knew that “exercises” were being conducted in Ryazan, and the sacks contained sugar bought at the local bazaar by Vympel operatives?

Then other sacks which did contain hexogene were discovered not far from Ryazan.

There were a lot of them, and there was just a hint of a connection with the GRU. In the military depot of the 137th Ryazan regiment of the VDV, located on the territory of a special base for training intelligence and sabotage units close to Ryazan, hexogene was stored, packed in fifty-kilogram sugar sacks like those discovered on Novosyolov Street.

In the fall of 1999, airborne assault forces (military unit 59236) Private Alexei Pinyaev and his fellow soldiers from Moscow were assigned to this very regiment. While they were guarding “a storehouse with weapons and ammunition,” Pinyaev and a friend went inside, most probably out of simple curiosity, and saw sacks with the word “Sugar” on them.

The two paratroopers cut a hole in one of the sacks with a bayonet and tipped some of the state’s sugar into a plastic bag. Unfortunately, the tea made with the stolen sugar had a strange taste and wasn’t sweet at all. The frightened soldiers took their bag to their platoon commander. He suspected something wasn’t right, since everyone was talking about the story of the explosions, and he decided to have the “sugar” checked out by an explosives specialist. The substance proved to be hexogene. The officer reported to his superiors. Members of the FSB from Moscow and Tula (where an airborne assault

division was stationed, just like in Ryazan) descended on the unit. The regimental secret services were excluded from the investigation. The paratroopers who had discovered the hexogene were interrogated “for revealing a state secret.” “You guys can’t even imagine what serious business you’ve got tangled up in,” one officer told them. The press was informed that there was no soldier in the unit with the name of Pinyaev and that information about sacks containing hexogene being found in the military depot had simply been invented by Pavel Voloshin, a journalist from Novaya Gazeta. The matter of the explosives was successfully hushed up, and Pinyaev’s commander and fellow soldiers were sent off to serve in Chechnya.

For Pinyaev himself, they devised a more painful punishment. First, he was forced to retract what he had said (it’s not too hard to imagine the kind of pressure the FSB could bring to bear on him). Then the head of the Investigative Department of the FSB announced that “the soldier will be questioned in the course of the criminal proceedings initiated against him.” A female employee of TsOS FSB summed it all up: “The kid’s had it...” In March 2000, criminal proceedings were initiated against Pinyaev for the theft of army property from a military warehouse containing ammunition...the theft of a bagful of sugar! One must at least grant the FSB a sense of humor. But even so, it’s hard to understand why the Investigative Department of the FSB of Russia should have been concerned with the petty theft of food products.

According to the engineers in Ryazan, explosives are not packed, stored, or transported in fifty-kilogram sacks, it’s just too dangerous. Five hundred grams of mixture is sufficient to blow up a small building. Fifty-kilogram sacks, disguised as sugar, could only be required for acts of terrorism. Evidently this was the warehouse which provided the three sacks, which were later planted under the loadbearing support of the building in Ryazan.

The instruments of the Ryazan experts had not lied.

There was a sequel to the story of the 137th regiment of the VDV. In March 2000, just before the election, the paratroop regiment sued Novaya Gazeta, the newspaper had published the interview with Pinyaev. The writ, which dealt with “the protection of honor, dignity and business reputation” was submitted to the Basmansky Intermunicipal Court by the regimental command. The commander himself, Oleg Churilov, declared that the article in question had insulted the honor not only of the regiment, but of the entire Russian army, since in September 1999, there had not been any such private in the regiment. “And it is not true that a soldier can gain entry to a warehouse where weapons and explosives are stored, because he has no right to enter it, while he is on guard duty.”

So Pinyaev did not exist, but he was still handed over for trial. The sacks contained sugar, but “a state secret had been breached.” And the 137th regiment had not taken Novaya Gazeta to court over the article about hexogene, but because a private on guard duty has no right to enter the warehouse he is guarding, and any claims to the contrary were an insult to the Russian army.

The question of the detonating devices wasn’t handled so smoothly, either. Despite all of Zdanovich’s efforts to persuade people to the contrary, the device was genuine and live,

as the chairman of the Ryazan regional Duma, Vladimir Fedotkin, firmly asserted in

an interview with the Interfax news agency on September 24: “It was an absolutely genuine explosive device, nothing to do with any exercises.”

The detonating device is a very important formal point. Instructions forbid the use of a live detonating device for exercises involving civilian structures and the civilian population. The device might obviously be stolen (and somebody would have to be held responsible), or it might be triggered by children or tramps, if they found it in the sack of sugar. If the detonating device was not live, then no criminal case could have been brought under article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (terrorism), the case would have been based on the discovery of the explosive and turned over to the MVD, not the FSB. In the final analysis, if we are talking about an “exercise,” then the vigilance of the people of Ryazan was checked to see how promptly they would discover sacks containing explosives, not what they would do with a detonating device. The FSB could not have carried out such a check using a live device.

In order to find out whether this was really true, Novaya Gazeta turned for assistance to one of its military specialists, a colonel, and asked him the questions: “Are exercises conducted using real explosive substances,” and “Are there any instructions and regulations which govern this kind of activity?” Here is the colonel’s answer: “Powerful explosive devices are not used even in exercises involving live shelling. Only blanks are used. If it is required to check the ability to locate and disarm an explosive device, a mine for instance, models are used which contain no detonator and no TNT.

Exercises on the use of explosives, of course, involve the real detonation of quite powerful explosive devices (the specialists have to know how to disarm them). But...such exercises are conducted in restricted areas without any outsiders. Only trained personnel are present. There is no question of involving civilians. The whole business is strictly regulated. There are instructions covering the equipment required, instructions for clearing mines, appropriate instructions and orders. Undoubtedly, these are similar for the army and the secret services.”

It is difficult for the uninitiated to appreciate the significance of the innocent phrase: “the initiation of criminal proceedings under article 205.” Most importantly of all, it means that the investigation will not be conducted by the MVD, but by the FSB, since terrorist activity falls into the FSB’s area of investigative competence. The FSB has more than enough cases to deal with, and it won’t take on any unnecessary ones. In order to take on a case, it has to have very cogent reasons, indeed (in this case the cogent reasons were provided by the results of the analysis). The FSB investigation is supervised by the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and the search for the perpetrators is conducted by the FSB jointly with the MVD. A crime for which criminal proceedings have been initiated is reported within twenty-four hours to the FSB of Russia duty officer at phone numbers (095) 224-3858 or 224-1869; or at the emergency line numbers 890-726 and 890-818; or by high-frequency phone at 52816. Every morning, the duty officer submits a report on all messages received to the director of the FSB himself. If something serious is going on, such as the foiling of a terrorist attack in Ryazan, the duty officer is entitled to phone the

director of the FSB at home, even at night. Reports in the media about the FSB and its members are also presented every day in a separate report.

Within a few days of the instigation of criminal proceedings requiring investigation

by the FSB, an analytical note is compiled on possible lines of action. For instance, the head of the section for combating terrorism at the Ryazan UFSB draws up a note for the head of the Department for Combating Terrorism of the FSB of Russia. This note is then submitted via the secretariat of the deputy director of the FSB with responsibility for monitoring the corresponding department, and from there the note goes to the director of the FSB. All of which means that Patrushev knew about the discovery in the basement of a building in Ryazan of sacks containing explosives and a live detonating device no later than seven o'clock on the morning of September 23. When there are explosions happening everywhere, for a subordinate not to report to the top that a terrorist attack has been thwarted would be tantamount to suicide. The foiling of a terrorist attack is an occasion for rejoicing. It means medals and promotion and bonuses. And also, of course, public recognition.

This time, the apparent cause for celebration created a tricky situation. In connection with the incident in Ryazan, Zdanovich announced on September 24 that the FSB offered its apologies to the people of the city for the inconvenience and psychological stress they had suffered as a result of anti-terrorist exercises. Note that a day earlier, in his interview with NTV, Zdanovich had not apologized, which means that on September 24, Patrushev must have sent Zdanovich the directive to write everything off to sheer stupidity in order to avoid being accused of terrorism.

“General Alexander Zdanovich today apologized to the inhabitants of Ryazan on behalf of the Federal Security Service of Russia for the inconvenience they had suffered in the course of antiterrorist exercises and also for the psychological stress caused to them. He emphasized that ‘the secret services thank the people of Ryazan for the vigilance, restraint, and patience they have shown.’ At the same time, Zdanovich called on Russians to take a tolerant view of the need to hold ‘hard-line’ checks on the preparedness, in the first instance, of the agencies of law enforcement to ensure public safety, and also on the vigilance of the public in conditions of heightened terrorist activity. The general told us that this week, as part of the Whirlwind Anti-Terror operation, the FSB had implemented measures in several Russian cities designed to check the response of the agencies of law enforcement, including the territorial divisions of the FSB itself, and of the population to ‘modeled’ terrorist activity, involving the planting of explosive devices. The representative of the secret services observed that ‘serious shortcomings had been uncovered.’ ‘Unfortunately, in some of the cities tested, there was no response at all from the agencies of law enforcement to the potential planting of bombs.’ According to Zdanovich, the FSB conducted its operation in conditions as close as possible to a real terrorist threat, otherwise there would have been no point to these checks. Naturally neither the local authorities nor the local law enforcement agencies were informed.

Precisely for this reason, the results of the check provide an accurate picture of the degree to which the security of the Russian public is guaranteed in various cities in the country.

The general emphasized that the last of these cities to be checked, Ryazan, proved to be

by no means the last in terms of the vigilance of the public, but was, unfortunately,

less successful in terms of the actions of the agencies of law enforcement. The FSB RF is currently analyzing the results of the checks carried out in order urgently to introduce the necessary correctives to the work of the agencies of law enforcement in ensuring the safety of the Russian public. Alexander Zdanovich assured us that once the results had been summed up and the reasons for the 'failures' in the operation itself explained, appropriate measures would be taken immediately."

In this way, the FSB issued an unambiguous statement that Ryazan was the last city in which exercises had been conducted. In actual fact, September 23 marked the beginning of the urgent organization by the FSB (despite Zdanovich's assurances) of an absolutely idiotically conceived exercise to check the vigilance of the public and the agencies of coercion. The press was full of reports of "practice bombings," which were quite impossible to distinguish from the hooligan escapades of telephone terrorists: mock-ups of bombs were planted in one crowded place after another, in post offices, in public institutions, in shops, and the following day, the media reported in graphic detail how the exhausted public had failed to pay any attention to them. This was Patrushev providing himself with an alibi, attempting to prove that the Ryazan "exercises" had been only one episode in a series of checks organized across the whole of Russia by the idiotic FSB.

The journalists had a field day, showering colorful epithets on the dimwitted FSB operatives who hadn't caught a single real terrorist, but kept thinking up stupid war games in a country where real terrorism was rampant. Headlines such as "FSB baseness and stupidity," "The Federal Sabotage Service," "Land of frightened idiots," "Man is Pavlov's dog to man. Let them hold these exercises in the Kremlin," or "The secret services have screwed the people of Ryazan," hardly even stood out against the general background. But the "base and stupid" leadership of the FSB demonstrated remarkable stubbornness, carrying out more and more "practice bombings" and for some reason failed to take serious offense at the journalists' new-found boldness-with only one exception, which was when they wrote about Ryazan.

Here are a few typical "training exercises" from late September and October 1999.

In Moscow, FSB operatives checking on police readiness arrived at a police station with a box on which the word 'bomb' was written. They were allowed inside, where they left their package in one of the offices and then left. The box was only discovered two days later. A mock-up of an explosive device was planted in a pizzeria on Volkhonka Street in Moscow (it was not discovered).

In Balashikha outside Moscow, an abandoned building was selected, and exercises were conducted in and around it on rescuing the victims of an explosion that had supposedly already taken place in the building, with the involvement of the police, the FSB, and the MChS.

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In Tula and Chelyabinsk, there were repeated instances of mock bombs being planted, perhaps as an exercise, perhaps out of simple hooliganism.

In late October in Omsk employees of the Omsk Region department of the FSB for counterfeit documents drove a vehicle on to the grounds of the Omskvodokanal Company without encountering any obstacles, broke through the company's triple-level defenses, and "exploded" containers of liquid chlorine.

In Ivanovo, FSB operatives planted sacks containing sugar in the basement of a

five-story apartment building (they were not discovered).

Also in Ivanovo, a mock-up of an explosive device was left in a trolley. Vigilant passengers immediately spotted the box with wires and handed it over to the driver, who put it in his compartment and drove around with it all night. Afterwards, he took the box to the terminus and dismantled it himself.

On another occasion in Ivanovo, a box containing a mock-up of a bomb was left in a taxi.

The driver rode around with it all day long and then threw it out on to the edge of the road, where it lay for several more hours unnoticed by passing pedestrians.

On September 22, an explosive device was discovered in the toilet at the Central Market in Ivanovo. The market was cordoned off, and all the sales personnel and customers urgently evacuated. The military personnel who arrived at the market took an hour to work out what kind of bomb they were supposed to be dealing with. It turned out to be a mock-up. The law enforcement agencies began trying to identify who was responsible for such a professional “joke,” especially since the bomb was located in a locked toilet reserved for the use of a small number of people working at the market. The entire personnel of the Ivanovo police was thrown into the search for the culprits. At the height of the operation, spokesmen for the FSB of Moscow officially announced that an exercise had been conducted at the market. The mock-up had been planted by Moscow FSB operatives.

In Toliatti, the Volga Automobile Plant (VAZ) was “mined.” A mock-up of an explosive device was discovered and disarmed. Also in Toliatti, one of the hotels with about fifty people inside was “blown up.” One-and-a-half hours was allowed for the “rescue.” The exercise involved policemen, firemen, the MChS, the emergency ambulance service, and the gas company. A practice bombing was also held at the Chapaev Meat Combine. The employee who found the “explosive device” took it apart and kept the timing mechanism used in the mock-up for himself.

In Novomoskovsk in the Tula Region an FSB operative disguised as a saboteur gained entry to the Azot Chemical Combine, wrote the word “mined” on a tank of ammonia, and left without being observed. Two weeks before the exercise, a spokesman for Azot had told a session of the regional anti-terrorist commission that Azot did not have the capability required to guard the plant and also had no money for external security provision.

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Exercises conducted in St. Petersburg entailed consequences. A truck with a number from another town, filled with sacks of supposed explosive, was parked in the special parking lot on Zakharevskaya Street in front of the premises of the investigative department of the GUV D and UFSB of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region. The “terrorist” vehicle stood there for days without attracting any attention, although no one had ever seen a truck in the official parking lot before. The outcome of the exercise was the sacking of the head of the GUV D of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region majorgeneral of the police, Victor Vlasov (which was, in fact, the real reason for leaving the truck in the GUV D parking lot).

Any abortive terrorist attack or straightforward incident of banditry could now easily be written off to possible FSB exercises. In early October, the residents were

hastily evacuated from a nine-story house at number 4, Third Grazhdanskaya Street in Moscow.

Someone had found four crates containing 288 mine detonators on the stone steps leading down into the basement. That was enough explosive to blow up the building.

According to the residents, two Zhiguli automobiles had stopped in the yard of their house, and several hefty men had taken four massive iron-bound wooden crates out of the trunks of the cars, and left them on the basement steps before leaving again. Less than two minutes later, the first police units were already working at the scene. Another fifteen minutes later, the crates were being examined by explosives specialists from the FSB, and an “exclusion zone” had been established around the building.

The police were unable to establish who owned the cars from which the munitions had been unloaded, and they were not able to create sketches of the sturdy, fit-looking terrorists, either. In addition to the traditional explanation of the “Chechen connection,” the police officers conducting the investigation came up with the alternative of a test of vigilance conducted by the secret services.

The work-rate of the law enforcement agencies in Ryazan was truly impressive during the days when Patrushev decided to hold his “exercises” there. From September 13 to September 22, the Ryazan special units responded to more than forty reports from local residents of sightings of explosive devices. On September 13, all the inhabitants of house number 18 on Kostiuskko Street and the houses adjacent to it were evacuated in only twenty minutes. In only one-and-a-half hours, the building was searched from the basements to the attics. The operation involved VDV cadets, police units, ambulance brigades, employees of the MChS, and OMON engineers. A similar evacuation also took place from a house on Internatsionalnaya Street. During this period the editorial staff of the newspaper Vechernyaya Ryazan and the pupils of school No. 45 had to be evacuated.

Every case proved to be a false alarm. School children tossed a live RGD-22 shell into one of the entranceways of house No. 32 on Stankozavodskaya Street out of sheer mischief. There was also a bomb-clearance operation in the center of the city, on Victory Square. The suspicious object there proved to be a gas cylinder half-buried in the ground.

In addition to all this, the “Dynamite” and “Foreigner” stages of the Whirlwind Anti71 Terror operation were taking place in the city, with special detachments checking 3,812 city basements and 4,430 attics three times every day.

In the afternoon of September 22, Ryazan received a message from the Moscow FSB that, according to information received in Moscow, one of the houses on Biriuzov Street was mined, but which one was not known. In Ryazan, they immediately began checking all the houses along the street. Thousands of people were temporarily evacuated, and all the apartments were checked. Nothing was found. It was later established that it had been a false alarm from a telephone terrorist. Then at this point, Patrushev decided to check the vigilance of the people of Ryazan during the night hours.

For a number of formal reasons, the planting of the sacks in the apartment building in Ryazan could not have been an exercise. When a training exercise is held, there has to be a previously determined plan to work to. The plan must specify the manager of the exercise, his deputy, the observers, and the parties being tested (the inhabitants of Ryazan, the employees of the UFSB for the Ryazan Region, and so on). The plan must list the items which are to be checked. The plan must have a so-called “plot,” a specific scenario for the performance to be given. In the Ryazan incident, the scenario was the planting of sacks of sugar in the basement of an apartment building. The plan must define

the material requirements of the exercise: vehicles, money (for instance, to buy three fifty-kilogram sacks of sugar), food (if a large number of people are taking part in the exercise), weapons, communications equipment, and coding systems (code tables), etc.

After all this has been included, the plan is approved by senior command and only then, on the basis of the approved plan, is a written instruction (it must be written) issued for the exercise, to be held. Immediately before the start of the exercise the individual who approved the plan for the exercise and issued the order for it to be held reports that it is beginning. After the completion of the exercise, he reports that it is over. Then a compulsory report is drawn up on the results of the exercise, identifying the positive outcomes and the shortcomings, individuals who have distinguished themselves are praised, and miscreants are identified. This same order lists the material resources consumed or destroyed in the course of the exercise (in the case of the Ryazan incident, at least three sacks of sugar and a cartridge for the detonator).

It is compulsory for the head of the local UFSB to be notified of a planned exercise. He is directly subordinate to the director of the FSB, and no one has the right, for instance, to check on Sergeiev's performance without Patrushev's permission. Likewise, no one has the right to check up on Sergeiev's subordinates, the employees of the Ryazan UFSB, without Sergeiev's permission. This means that Patrushev and Sergeiev must already have known on September 22 about any "exercises" which were due to be conducted. But Patrushev did not issue a statement to that effect until September 24, and Sergeiev has never issued one, because he knew nothing at all about the "exercises."

Under the terms of its statute, the FSB is only entitled to check on itself. It is not allowed to check the performance of other organizations or of private individuals. If the FSB carries out a check on the MVD (the Ryazan police, for instance), it has to be a joint

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exercise with the MVD, and the appropriate officials of the MVD in the center and the provinces have to be notified. If the exercise affects the civilian population (as was the case in Ryazan), then the civil defense service and the MChS are also involved. In all cases, a joint plan of the exercise has to be drawn up and signed by the heads of all the relevant departments. The plan is approved by the individual who coordinates all the various agencies of coercion which are involved in the exercise. Exercises may be made as close as possible to real situations, such as exercises involving live shelling. However, it is absolutely forbidden to conduct exercises in which people might be hurt, or which might pose a threat of damage to the environment. There is a specific prohibition on holding exercises that involve members of the armed forces and military units on active service, or ships standing at battle station. If a frontier guard is on duty at his post, it is forbidden to imitate a breach of the frontier in order to test his vigilance. If a facility is under guard, it is forbidden to attack that facility as part of an exercise.

Active service differs from an exercise in that during periods of duty military goals are pursued with the use of live weapons. Each branch of the forces (and the police) has an active service charter which lays everything out in detail. On September 22-23 1999, the police patrols on the streets of Ryazan were on active service, carrying weapons and special equipment, which they were entitled to use to detain FSB operatives planting mysterious sacks in the basement of an apartment building. Following the series of explosions in Ryazan, the entire police force of the city was operating in an intensive

regime in response to the real threat of terrorist attacks, which meant that unfortunate FSB operatives involved in unannounced exercises could quite simply have been shot.

That brings us to the initiation of criminal proceedings under article 205, which means that an investigator had issued a warrant for the location and arrest of the suspects, and that they could have been killed in the process of arrest. The basis for the instigation of criminal proceedings is clearly defined in the Criminal Procedural Code of the Russian Federation, which does not contain any points concerning the instigation of criminal proceedings during exercises or in connection with exercises. The unfounded or illegal instigation of criminal proceedings is in itself a criminal offense, as is their illegal termination.

And finally, exercises cannot be held without observers, who objectively assess the results of an exercise and then draw up reports on its successes and failures, apportion praise and blame, and draw conclusions. There were no observers in Ryazan.

If Patrushev were to have defied the existing regulations, charters and statutes and dared to order secret exercises, his action would have had to be regarded as a crime. Let us start from the fact that Patrushev would have violated the Federal Law on the agencies of the Federal Security Service in the Russian Federation as adopted by the State Duma on February 22, 1995, and ratified by the president. Article No. 8 of this law states that “the activities of the agencies of the Federal Security Service and the methods and the means they employ must not cause harm to people’s lives and health or cause damage to the environment.” Article No. 6 of the law describes the responsibilities of the FSB and the rights of private individuals at length:

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“The state guarantees the observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the performance of their duty by the agencies of the Federal Security Service. No limitation of human and civil rights and freedoms shall be permitted with the exception of those cases specified by federal constitutional laws and federal laws.

“An individual who believes that the agencies of the Federal Security Service or their officers have infringed his rights and freedoms shall be entitled to make appeal against the actions of the aforementioned agencies and their officers to a superior agency of the Federal Security Service, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, or a court.

“Agencies of the state, enterprises, institutions, and organizations, regardless of their form of ownership, and also public organizations and individuals shall be entitled in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation to receive an explanation and information from the agencies of the Federal Security Service in cases where their rights and freedoms have been restricted...

“In a case of the infringement of human and civil rights by employees of the agencies of the Federal Security Service, the head of the respective agency of the Federal Security Service, public prosecutor, or judge is obliged to take measures to restore such rights and freedoms, make good any damage caused, and call the guilty parties to account as specified under the legislation of the Russian Federation.

“Officers of the agencies of the Federal Security Service who have committed an abuse of power or exceeded the bounds of their official authority shall be held responsible as specified under the legislation of the Russian Federation.”

The criminal acts described in article 6 of the Federal Law on the FSB fall under the

following articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation:

Article 286. Exceeding the bounds of official authority.

Acts committed by an officer which clearly exceed the bounds of his authority and have resulted in violation of the rights and legitimate interests of individuals or organizations...

The same action committed by an individual occupying an official state post of the Russian Federation...with the use of force or threat of its use; with the use of a weapon or special means; resulting in grave consequences...shall be punishable by a term of imprisonment of from three to ten years and deprivation of the right to hold specified posts or engage in specified forms of activity for a period of up to three years.

Article 207. Deliberate provision of false information concerning an act of terrorism.

The deliberate provision of false information concerning a planned explosion, act of arson, or other actions which constitute a threat to the lives of individuals and a danger of substantial damage to property...shall be punishable by a fine...or by imprisonment for a term of up to three years.

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And finally, article 213. "Hooliganism, a gross violation of public order clearly expressive of disrespect for society...shall be punishable...by imprisonment for a term of up to two years."

An officer occupying an official state post, FSB director Patrushev, issued orders for the use of special means (sacks with unidentified contents and a shotgun cartridge) for the forcible exclusion of residents from a building in Ryazan for the entire night. This absolutely illegal action, which has no basis in any military or civil charters or statutes, and certainly not in any laws, entailed grave consequences in the form of damage to health and severe psychological stress suffered by individuals, specifically the serious cold contracted by one child whose mother was ordered by the police to take him outside straight from his bath without any chance to dress him properly, as well as heart attacks and hypertensive crises suffered by several of the residents.

At least two medical experts provided opinions concerning the psychological consequences of the "exercise" for the people who were driven out of their homes. In the opinion of Nikolai Kyrov, head of administration of the psychotherapeutical support service of the Moscow Public Health Committee, the residents of the building in Ryazan were subjected to serious psychological trauma: "It is comparable with what people would have suffered during a genuine terrorist attack. And people who have survived an explosion are changed forever; they've been taken right up to the boundary between life and death. The mind never lets go of such significant moments. At least some time in the middle of the experiment, the inhabitants of the house should have been informed that it was not a real emergency, but only an exercise." Yury Boiko, Moscow's senior psychotherapist, drew an even gloomier picture: "The result of uncertainty and fear will be a sharp increase in the consumption of nicotine, alcohol, and simply food. Part of the public is already turning for help to non-professionals: people's interest in all sorts of sects, magicians, and fortune-tellers is on the increase." (The penalty on this charge is from three to ten years, with exclusion from holding office for three years.) Although supposedly aware that an exercise was being conducted in Ryazan, Patrushev failed to

inform the public and the inhabitants of the building in Ryazan for one and a half days, which is tantamount to deliberately providing false information concerning an act of terrorism. (We can settle for the fine on this charge -and then, under the terms of article 213, add two years for flagrant disrespect for society.) Let us also note that, under the terms of part IV of the Statute on the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation of July 6, 1998, “the director of the FSB of Russia bears personal responsibility for the achievement of the objectives set for the FSB of Russia and the agencies of the Federal Security Service.” Perhaps the General Public Prosecutor of Russia will take up the case? He has already rejected the instigation of criminal proceedings for terrorism.

An exercise could not legally have been conducted using a stolen car. According to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation the theft of an automobile is a crime, and a person who has committed such a crime bears criminal responsibility. Under the terms of

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the law on the FSB, the service’s operatives have no right to commit a crime, even when in pursuit of military objectives. Only the FSB’s own vehicles are used in operational exercises involving agents (including operational passenger automobiles, of which the FSB has two full parking lots for its central administration alone). If one of these cars is stopped by the GAI, for instance, for speeding on the Moscow-Ryazan highway, or detained by the Ryazan police because paper has been pasted over the Moscow license plate, obscuring it in a suspicious manner, the car can immediately be identified as one that is specially registered. Any policeman will recognize this as indicating that the car is one of the operational vehicles belonging to the agencies of law enforcement or the secret services.

Exercises would have been conducted using operational vehicles. However, the FSB could not use operational vehicles to commit an act of terrorism. The car might be noticed (as it was) and identified (as it was). It would look really bad if terrorists blew up a building in Ryazan using a car registered to the FSB transport fleet, but if terrorists blew up the building using a stolen car that would only be normal and natural. On the other hand, if FSB operatives driving in a stolen car by day (not by night) were stopped for a routine check or for speeding, they would simply present their official identity cards or “cover documents” and after that, no policeman would bother to check the documents for the car, so he would never know it was wanted by the police.

FSB agents on operational duty often carry a MUR identity card, printed in the special FSB laboratory as a “cover document.” On the occasion of his arrest, Khinshtein, a Moscow Komsomolets journalist, famed for his remarkable and far from accidental knowledge concerning cases residing in the safes of the secret services, presented MUR identity card No. 03726 of a certain Alexander Yevgenievich Matveiev, a captain in the criminal investigation department, issued by the Moscow GUVB. In addition Khinshtein was carrying a special pass forbidding the police to search his car. When the police asked him where the documents came from, he replied honestly that they belonged to him and were his “cover documents.”

If official identity cards of that kind were found on someone like Khinshtein, one can imagine what an array of “cover documents” was carried by the FSB operatives setting out to blow up the building in Ryazan. And if the car’s documents were checked, and it was discovered to be stolen, they could always say they’d just found it and were

returning it to its owner.

The car in which the terrorists arrived was the only clue left after the attempt to blow up the apartment building, the beginning of the only trail that might lead back to the perpetrators. The car is the weakest link in the planning and implementation of any act of terrorism. It was only possible to blow up the building in Ryazan if a stolen car was used.

In conclusion, we would like to quote the opinion expressed by former Public Prosecutor General of Russia, Yu.I. Skuratov in an interview with the Russian-language Paris newspaper *Russkaya Mysl* for October 29, 1999: "I was very much disturbed and alarmed by what happened in Ryazan. In this case, it certainly is possible to construct a scenario

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with the secret services themselves involved in planning an explosion in Ryazan, and making very clumsy excuses when they were caught out. I am amazed that the public prosecutor's office never did get to the bottom of the business. That's its job."

So we are left with no indication that an exercise was being carried out in Ryazan, except the oral statements of FSB chief Patrushev, his subordinate Zdanovich, who is bound in the line of duty to support everything Patrushev says, and several other FSB officers. All the facts, however, indicate that a terrorist attack was, indeed, thwarted in Ryazan. Those who commissioned, planned, carried out, and abetted this crime have yet to be tried and convicted. But since we know the suspects' names, positions, work and home addresses, and even their telephone numbers, arresting them should not be too difficult.

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Chapter 6

The FSB resorts to mass terror: Buinaksk, Moscow, Volgodonsk The perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Buinaksk, Moscow, and Volgodonsk were never found, and we can only guess at who was behind the attacks by analogy with the events in Ryazan. In these three towns, the Ryazan-style "exercises" were carried through to their intended conclusion, and the lives of several hundred people were abruptly cut short or totally ruined.

In August 1999, all the members of Lazovsky's group were at large in society, including even Vorobyov. At that time, yet another military operation was just approaching its conclusion in Dagestan, into which the Chechen separatists had made an incursion. A lot has been said and written since that time about this Chechen encroachment into Dagestan territory. It has been claimed that the invasion was planned in the Kremlin and deliberately provoked by the Russian secret services. The Russian media were full of articles about a conspiratorial meeting in France, between Shamil Basaev and the head of the president's office, Alexander Voloshin, organized by the Russian intelligence agent, A. Surikov, in France. We are not in possession of enough facts to draw absolutely definite conclusions. Let us begin with Surikov's interview.

On 24 August 1999 the newspaper *Versiya*-a part of the holding company