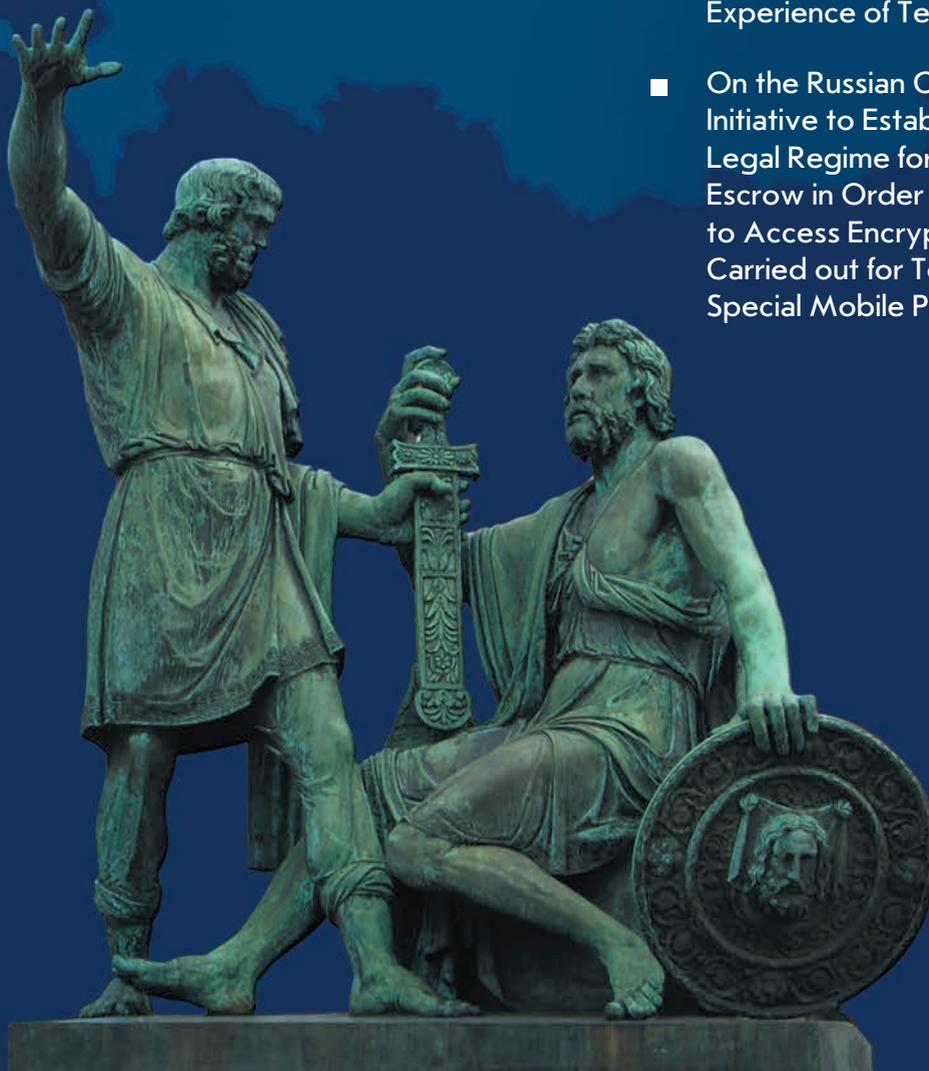


# Herald of the National Antiterrorism Committee



- Fighting Terror for Fifteen Years, Interview by A. V. Bortnikov, Chairman of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia, to the Editor-in-Chief of Rossiyskaya Gazeta
- On the Russian Federation National Experience of Terrorism Prevention
- On the Russian Counter-Terrorism Initiative to Establish an International Legal Regime for the Encryption Key Escrow in Order for Intelligence Agencies to Access Encrypted Correspondence Carried out for Terrorist Purposes Using Special Mobile Phone Applications



# Herald of the National Antiterrorism Committee

SPECIAL ISSUE



[www.nac.gov.ru](http://www.nac.gov.ru)

Moscow

# Herald of the National Antiterrorism Committee

## CONTENTS

- Foreword by I. G. Sirotkin, Deputy Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia — Head of the National Antiterrorism Committee Central Office 5
- Fighting Terror for Fifteen Years, Interview by A. V. Bortnikov, Chairman of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia, to the Editor-in-Chief of Rossiyskaya Gazeta (10 March 2021) 6
- On the Russian Federation National Experience of Terrorism Prevention 14
- Speech by A. V. Bortnikov, Chairman of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia, at the Conference on Countering International Terrorism (Tauride Palace, Saint Petersburg, 18 April 2019) 18
- On the Outcome of the XVIII Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations and Current Russian Counter-Terrorism Initiatives Proposed for Discussion at International Platforms (Sochi, 16 October 2019) 22



On the Russian Counter-Terrorism Initiative to Establish an International Legal Regime for the Encryption Key Escrow in Order for Intelligence Agencies to Access Encrypted Correspondence Carried out for Terrorist Purposes Using Special Mobile Phone Applications 26

Speech by A. V. Bortnikov, Chairman of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia, at the International Conference on “Global Challenges and Threats in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Terrorism and Violent Extremism” (Saint Petersburg, 15 April 2021) 28

Speech by I. G. Sirotkin, Deputy Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia — Head of the National Antiterrorism Committee Central Office at the Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States (28 June 2021) 33

The International Counterterrorism Database as an Efficient Tool to Build a Unified Counter-Terrorism Information Space 35



## Dear readers,

This issue coincides with the 15th Anniversary of the Russian Federation National Antiterrorism Committee.

In 2006, the Federal Law “On Counteracting Terrorism” and the Decree of the President of Russia “On Measures to Counter Terrorism” established a qualitatively new national system to combat the said danger, involving federal, regional and local authorities, as well as civic institutions.

The system was formed based on the principle of comprehensively combining the military style suppression of terrorism hotbeds with the arrangement of systematic efforts to prevent terrorist manifestations and preclude the spread of radical ideologies in our society.

Due to those measures, the number of terrorism-related crimes in our country has been reduced manifold. While 2010 saw 779 such crimes in Russia, in 2020 there were only 3. Over the last ten years, our integrated work has prevented almost 700 various terrorism-related crimes, including over 150 terrorist attacks.

The Russian nationwide counter-terrorism system provides for routine monitoring of urgent terrorist threats in order to early develop adequate measures to contain and eliminate the same, both nationally and internationally.

In this issue, our Herald includes materials covering current activities as part of the Russian nationwide counter-terrorism system, including modern day approaches of the National Antiterrorism Committee to organising the efficient work to address the challenges posed by international terrorism.

It also presents Russian initiatives to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation between and among competent national agencies and intergovernmental structures. Some of them were presented by the Russian party at various international counter-terrorism events, including at the United Nations and also at inter-parliamentary platforms.

Respectfully yours,

I. Sirotkin  
Deputy Director of FSB of Russia —  
Head of the National Antiterrorism Committee Central Office



# FIGHTING TERROR FOR FIFTEEN YEARS

INTERVIEW BY A. V. BORTNIKOV, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ANTITERRORISM COMMITTEE, DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE OF RUSSIA, TO THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA (10 MARCH 2021)

---



On the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Vladislav Aleksandrovich Fronin, Editor-in-Chief of Rossiyskaya Gazeta, met with Aleksandr Vasilyevich Bortnikov, Chairman of the NAC and Director of FSB of Russia.

***Dear Alexander Vasilyevich, the National Antiterrorism Committee is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. What prompted the need for such a strong inter-agency structure?***

Here it is worth recalling our recent past. Terrorism had already reared its head in the final years of the Soviet Union, but back then we saw only certain

isolated manifestations. It was precisely to neutralise these threats that the KGB had the legendary Alpha Group for — that was quite sufficient at the time. However, centrifugal tendencies accelerated within the Union and radical political trends were formed, fostered with narrative and resource support from outside, while the extremist sentiments were growing in the society. All this, followed by the subsequent collapse of the State, virtual paralysis of law enforcement, and widespread crime epidemic, led to the emergence of large gangs that laid claims to power in the regions. For them, terror and political blackmail became primary means of achieving their intended objectives. Transparency of new borders made it possible for bandits to engage with international

terrorist structures and organisations, often linked to foreign intelligence services. It has long been an open secret who, how and when created conditions for the emergence of Al-Qaida (proscribed in the Russian Federation) in Afghanistan. Foreign fighters, experienced with military and sabotage practices, migrated en masse to Russian regions, especially the North Caucasus; arms and drugs smuggling increased sharply, and the flow of “shadow” money poured into the country. As a result, by the 2000s, the Russian Federation was one of the first countries in the world to face the phenomenon of international terrorism. Between 1990 and 2006, our country suffered more than 70 of the bloodiest terrorist attacks: bombings of houses, planes and trains, massive hostage-taking, bandit raids on the country’s regions. More than 1,600 civilians were killed, as well as around 400 security and law enforcement officers. Meanwhile, terrorist activity was still expanding and intensifying. It is no exaggeration to say that Russia’s future was in jeopardy. Public demand for a strengthened fight against the criminal underworld and, in general, for new approaches to counter-terrorism activities was very high. The State had to take exhaustive measures to remedy the situation, not only by increasing performance of law enforcement agencies, but also by involving other government agencies, as well as social organisations and the wider civil society, thereby “cutting off” terrorism from its social roots. This is exactly what President V. V. Putin said in his address to the nation in September 2004, after the Beslan school tragedy: countering terrorism must become a national cause. In early 2006, the law enshrined new approaches to the task, stating the importance of arranging a comprehensive work to combine the very fight against terrorism and the prevention, minimisation and elimination of consequences of terrorist activities, instead of merely suppressing terrorism by force. All this ensured the formation of a fundamentally new nationwide counter-terrorism system, in many ways unique in the modern day world. In this system, the National Antiterrorism Committee has a key role to play, as it coordinates and organises inter-agency cooperation in this focus area. Under the NAC, the Federal Operational Coordination Centre operates to ensure the coordinated work of security, defence and law enforcement agencies in suppressing terrorist attacks and counter-terrorist operations<sup>1</sup> controlling. Both collegiate bodies comprise the heads of 21 government agencies, including the Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), Federal National Guard Troops Service (Rosgvardiya), Federal Protection Service

---

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter – the CTO.

(FSO), Ministry of Defence, EMERCOM, Investigative Committee, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health, and several other federal agencies. All these heads are senior officials, empowered to make decisions within their jurisdictions independently, but still guided by a common action plan. In addition, the NAC and FOCC comprise senior members of both chambers of the Federal Assembly, the Presidential Administration, and the Security Council of Russia. At the beginning of our conversation, you have been right to point out that this is indeed a powerful system, which allows us to concentrate all the necessary powers in one body — the NAC — and thus coordinate actions of relevant ministries and agencies across all stages of counter-terrorist activity.

***That is it for the state level, I guess. Now, as I understand it, this system has a regional dimension as well, right?***

Quite right, there are two top-down collegiate structures in place too. In each constituent entity of our Federation, relevant counter-terrorism commissions headed by the highest-ranking officials — governors, heads of republics or administrations, or mayors of cities — coordinate activities of government authorities and local authorities in preventing terrorism. At the municipal level, there are similar CTCs. Organisation of the fight against terrorism is the responsibility of the regional operational coordination centres, directed by the heads of security agencies in respective regions. Municipalities also have their operational teams set up.

***It appears that terrorism prevention and military style activities against terrorists are divided among different structures: counter-terrorism commissions and operational coordination centres, are not they?***

No, they are not. I stress that this is an integrated system, each of its elements being responsible for solving specific tasks within relevant competence at the top-down governance level held thereby. The overall work is precisely and logically structured.

***What are the tasks of the NAC?***

The priorities identified over 15 years include organising the fight against active gangs and sleeper cells, countering the spread of terrorist ideologies, ensuring counter-terrorist protection of industrial, transport and critical public infrastructure, and improving performance of federal executive authorities in detecting and suppressing financing channels and those for delivering other resources for terrorist activities. Also, over the said period,

the necessary legal framework has been established. Some 90 federal laws, 30 presidential decrees and over 200 resolutions and directives of the Russian Government have been drafted and issued. This work does not stand still, our law is constantly being updated. By now, the binding nature of the NAC's and regional CTCs' decisions has been enshrined, and the liability for violating that requirement has been introduced for officials responsible. The powers of local authorities in terms of participating in the prevention of terrorism and minimising its consequences have been specified. Under the NAC auspices, five-year comprehensive action plans to counter terrorist ideologies are developed, subject to approval by the President. The Russia's Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Enlightenment, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Digital Development, *Roskomnadzor* (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media), *Rosmolodezh* (Federal Agency for Youth Affairs) and other agencies are involved in this work. These plans, as implemented by now, have resulted in a many-fold — more than 200-fold! — reduction in the number of bandit assaults. Just have a look at the North Caucasus: only 5 to 10 years ago it used to scare away visitors with its aggressive criminal underworld, while now it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Russia.

***I could not agree more. By the way, good friends of mine have travelled around Dagestan by car this summer. Their impressions are extremely positive!***

In addition, comprehensive measures are being taken to strengthen the counter-terrorist protection of economic and life-support infrastructure of strategic importance. As you can imagine, sabotage or terrorist acts at nuclear, chemical or biological hazard facilities, for example, or at places where explosives are stored, transported, used or disposed of, can be truly devastating. The methodology for countering such threats is constantly being improved. Under the NAC auspices, counter-terrorism and anti-sabotage drills are regularly conducted, and gaps in the protection of those facilities are identified and addressed in a timely manner. The state-of-the-art technical systems for online monitoring of the situation both at the sites and facilities themselves and in their surroundings are being put on "combat alert". Intelligence and law enforcement agencies closely monitor all changes in terrorist tactics and, accordingly, quickly develop and apply new methods and techniques to counter them.

***If I understand correctly, terrorists are focused mainly on inflicting mass casualties. What is being done to ensure safety of people in public places?***

Let me start by saying that safety of our citizens and the protection of their lives and health is a top priority for the state. We therefore take every necessary care in preparation for, and support of any public event. For example, by implementing the solutions developed by the NAC, counter-terrorist security was ensured prior to and during major socio-political and sporting events, including federal and regional elections, the nationwide vote on draft amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, summits of international organisations, the Sochi Olympics, and the FIFA World Cup. The list goes on and on. I recall, for example, the situation in 2014, when just an hour before the opening of the Olympic Games a plane bound from Kharkiv to Istanbul was hijacked. Due to an aggressive passenger demanding that the plane be diverted to Sochi, the demand being supplemented with a mid-flight bombing threat. Lives of not only the crew and passengers of the liner, but also heads of foreign delegations, guests and athletes taking part in the Opening Ceremony were in danger. At that time, units from various FOCC-coordinated agencies took over control of the plane movements, enabling the situation to be rapidly assessed, the necessary decisions taken and the threat contained.

***Can I ask you for details?***

The complexity of the situation was perfectly outlined by the President in a movie presented by VGTRK (*All-Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company*) a few years ago. I cannot say more than that, unfortunately... However, the fact remains that the ceremony was held as planned.

***But how is safety of citizens at various rallies and marches ensured? More recently, this has been quite a hot topic.***

When it comes to the rallies that are duly authorised, the law enforcement authorities, in cooperation with the event organisers, take all measures to ensure the participants' and visitors' safety. Prior to the rally, the venue is thoroughly checked for possible explosive devices planted or weapons hidden, with metal detector walk-through frames being installed and suspicious items being inspected throughout the course of the event. Operational activities are carried out as well. It is a long and painstaking job, but we have the methodology well established already. Unauthorised events are more difficult to deal with. Any incidents may take place during their conduct. Both unscrupulous organisers thereof and participants therein should bear this in mind. If you are irresponsible about your security, fail to

calculate the risks, fail to understand that committing a terrorist attack at just such a rally is what our adversary craves for, no amount of law enforcement or intelligence agencies will be able to help you keep your life and health. Hardly this is a “scare story”, as certain people will no doubt try to interpret my words. This is a fact! Nevertheless, we are taking all protective measures as necessary.

***I would not want to get into a situation like that. In my opinion, punishment for terrorism should be toughened!***

We are working on this issue. By the way, a decrease in terrorism-related crimes<sup>2</sup> has been due to stricter liability for a number of such crimes. Whereas previously they were either punishable administratively or not punishable at all, they now entail criminal liability. Its establishment has made it possible to bring to light such crimes as terrorist training and the organisation of terrorist cells. Similar liability has been introduced for facilitating and abetting terrorist acts, organising terrorist networks, justifying and propagating terrorism, and failing to report the preparation for or commission of such crimes. As you can see, all these changes are aimed at preempting terrorist plots at the stage of involving citizens in those criminal activities. It is worth noting that these measures have also significantly limited possibilities for spreading terrorist and extremist content on the Internet and have made it possible to early identify and block recruiters of international terrorist organisations<sup>3</sup>.

***I see you are paying increased attention to countering terrorist ideologies.***

Indeed, we are. This is, so to speak, the starting point, the “core” of terrorism. Some people, due to a variety of reasons, succumb to the manipulation of the ITO mind hunters and recruiters and choose the wrong path, destroying the lives of their own and their loved ones and, in the long run, taking the lives of innocent civilians. Such activity should be nipped in the bud, before there are any new attacks. However, we are well aware that any attempts to find any reasonable motives in the actions of terrorists invariably end up in justifying their criminal activities and encouraging others to take the wrong path in the name of certain pseudo-ideals. The stance of the state and society, which has entrusted its security to the state, is now united and unequivocal: no cause may serve as a pretext for terror! We — both the

intelligence and law enforcement agencies — have always been standing sentinel, and will continue to do so, over the lives and health of Russian citizens.

***The counter-terrorism system in Russia is already in place, the work is underway, and there are results. Have we beaten terrorism as a phenomenon yet?***

In the era of globalisation, terrorism is extremely difficult to defeat in any single country, be it Russia, France, the United States, or any other state. Criminal underworld and insurgency must be suppressed not only within one’s own territory, but also, as they say, in the far reaches. That is why the President decided to send units of the Russian Armed Forces to Syria and launch a military operation there, which made it possible to destroy the largest ISIL’s foothold in the Middle East. One should keep in mind that this region saw thousands of natives of our country and post-Soviet states standing in the ranks of the militants. Had we not inflicted a crushing defeat on ISIL fighters in Syria, all these bandits would have ended up in the Russian territory. In a single country such as Russia, reducing terrorist attacks to sporadic occurrences while preventing large-scale, mass-casualty attacks and suppressing the vast majority of such crimes at the preparatory stage is an achievable goal that we are successfully pursuing. Thus, over the last 10 years, some 200 terrorist attacks have been prevented! Apparently, we are talking about thousands of lives saved. While in 2010 only 10 % of such attacks were prevented, in 2018 this figure was around 80 %, and 2020 saw the same indicator as high as 96 %. During the same period, the number of violent TRCs — i. e. bombing attacks, hostage-taking, or murders — committed in our country has decreased 260-fold! (from 779 in 2010 to 3 in 2020). The NAC-coordinated activities of security and law enforcement authorities have stabilised the situation in the North Caucasus. To date, the main hotbeds of terrorist activity and all gang leaders have been eliminated. Last January, the set of FOCC-led special and combat activities culminated in wiping out the remnants of the Byutukaev gang. Through the concerted action of federal and republican law enforcement agencies, terrorists involved in the Domodedovo airport bombing, the attack on the House of the Press in Grozny, and a number of other terrorist attacks and other crimes against Russian citizens, have been eliminated or neutralised. A great deal of work has been done under the NAC’s interagency comprehensive plans to combat illicit trafficking in weapons of mass destruction as well as terrorist financing, significantly diminishing the resource base for terrorism. Let me read it out: in 2020 alone, some 600 firearms, 134 improvised explosive devices, over 100,000 cartridges, and over 3,000 landmines, hand

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter — the TRC.

<sup>3</sup> Hereinafter — the ITO.

grenades and other ammunition were seized from illegal circulation. The *Rosfinmonitoring* has blocked financial assets of more than 1,200 persons suspected of involvement in terrorism, totalling over 57 million roubles. A total of 184 channels for financing this criminal activity were suppressed.

***The figures are really impressive and even staggering!***

This is the first time I have voiced them. They are, you might say, an exclusive for your readers. However, even being unaware of the pallid statistics and generally not giving much attention to the NAC's and the FSB's media resources in everyday life, a large part of society feels protected from terrorist attacks and appreciates our activities. Referring to sociological data, almost two thirds of the country's population recognise the efforts of state agencies in countering terrorism to be effective. At the same time, the number of people who believe a terrorist attack to be "highly probable" to occur in their place of residence has almost halved in 8 years (from 9.9 % in 2012 to 5.5 % in 2020).

***Please explain to our readers what is being done on the counter-terrorism battlefield right now.***

The existing system allows for the early detection and suppression of terrorist aspirations. In Russia, they are practically equated to war criminals. All fighters, including those returning to Russia from "hot spots", recruiters, as well as those who establish channels for bandits' relocation and terrorist financing are being traced-down, with inevitable punishment ensured, without exceptions. Some 4,500 Russians have already been identified after having travelled abroad to take part in combat operations, fighting with the ITOs. Measures taken in recent years have prevented over 200 additional individuals from travelling to the areas where terrorist activity is highly intensive. Operational activities to filter migration flows are also in place. Over 8 years, more than 1,000 people have been convicted for organising illegal migration channels.

I would like to point out that a significant proportion of the criminal cases currently under investigation involve crimes from previous years or committed outside Russia. Terrorists, as well as instigators of terrorist activity, should know that punishment will be meted out to every single one of them, no matter where they are and regardless of any statute of limitations.

Our priorities include uncovering sleeper cells of terrorist and extremist organisations, as well as countering lone wolf fighters, whose attacks have recently taken place in many countries around the

world. On the whole, systematic and targeted daily prevention work has been organised to prevent recreation of an insurgency gangs network and facilitation environment, and to combat terrorist ideologies.

***How is the terrorism prevention activity organised today?***

We can see that the adversary — here I am collectively referring both to the ITOs as such and foreign ideological, financial and intelligence centres — is also trying hard to draw in new adherents into illegal activities, with a view to using them as proxies at the cost of their own lives. In particular, Russia's FSB regularly identifies and eliminates terrorist cells in various regions of the country. In 2020, there were 71 of them. However, this is a measure of last resort. The key task of ours — and this is something the President has repeatedly stated — is to be proactive in preventing new people, especially youth, from becoming involved in terrorist activities. The NAC is working hard to address the challenge. A wide range of activities are in place: from general prevention aimed at cultivating an anti-terrorism legal awareness in our society, to targeted, tailored work with individuals who have already fallen (or are at risk of falling) under the influence of terrorist mind hunters. Since 2008, those activities have been carried out as part of the comprehensive plans addressing political, social, ideological, informational and other aspects, rather than mere law enforcement, of preventing the spread of terrorist ideas. Legislative and organisational mechanisms for the said activities are in place. Human resource, methodological and scientific support thereof has been organised. The above plans are implemented with the help of local authorities and civil society institutions, namely various voluntary associations, veteran, patriotic, youth and sports organisations. Opinion leaders, respected religious figures, and creative intellectuals are actively involved as well. This allows for a comprehensive coverage of the population. Every year, hundreds of thousands of awareness-raising events are conducted throughout the country for various categories of Russian citizens and foreigners (1.2 million events in 2020, including 470,000 for student youth, with a total coverage of over 22 million people, more than 356,000 anti-terrorist materials distributed across the media landscape).

***Who should be given priority consideration in this regard?***

Above all, we are talking about repentant bandits and supporters of terrorist organisations. Commissions for their repatriation and adaptation to peaceful life

are running smoothly in a number of federal entities of the Russian Federation. This helped over 500 people give up criminal activity in recent years.

***As far as I remember, this practice has been existing for several years. Does it work? First of all, is it even possible to persuade people who have been on the bloody path of terrorism to turn back to peaceful life?***

Let me stress: this practice only applies to those whose hands are not stained with blood. It was first tried out by the Committee in its early years. In 2006—2007, following a number of successful CTOs, coupled with the elimination of a number of notorious gang leaders, the NAC appealed to members of armed gangs to stop their criminal activities and voluntarily surrender to the authorities. The State Duma has declared an amnesty. A scope of outreach activities and operational measures were carried out, resulting in the voluntary surrender and subsequent amnesty of about 800 former fighters not implicated in serious crimes over a period of 2 years. Many of them have subsequently been able to return to peaceful life, and some are currently involved in counter-terrorism.

***Is such work also being done in prisons?***

Of course, it is. It is important for us to get everyone back on the right track, if the person is ready to do so. Under the NAC auspices, special targeted activities are applied to those serving, or having already served, sentences in penitentiary institutions. These efforts intensively involve representatives of public and religious organisations, as each of them explains to the inmates the criminal nature and societal risks of terrorism. This has enabled to almost halve radicalisation of those convicted under the Articles referring to common crime. (According to the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service, the first half of 2019 saw 43 cases of inmate radicalisation, while there were only 23 cases recorded a year later).

***Much has been written recently about the adaptation to peaceful life of close relatives of active terrorists and those eliminated. Do you have anything to say in this regard?***

Indeed, such work is being done, and quite effectively. Particular attention is paid to their family members, including those who have returned from the countries with a high rate of terrorism. For this category of persons, preventive efforts are aimed at re-socialising them and precluding them from returning to crime. They are provided with social, psychological and legal assistance; if necessary, basic necessities such as clothing, food, one-off

cash allowance and temporary accommodation are organised. The most heartbreaking in this respect is the situation with the children of militants, who were taken at a young age by the wives of terrorists to Syria and Iraq, or were already born there. The vast majority of those children are virtually orphaned, their mothers either being in captivity or living a miserable existence abroad. Scary it is to imagine what these kids have been through and what they have seen! Their adaptation to normal, peaceful life is what we give our utmost attention. Currently, in 23 regions of Russia — notably in the North Caucasus Federal District and the Volga Federal District there are more than 200 of those children, either living with close relatives' families or being subject to institutional care. Their ID papers have been restored, with benefits being paid. They go to kindergartens and schools, monitored by doctors and psychologists. I hope very much that they will be able to forget the troubles and hardships they have suffered. At least the state does everything necessary, on its part, to help them in this regard.

***Indeed, we sincerely hope they are doing well now... But back to the main topic of our conversation. Are there any other categories of persons within the NAC's "prevention scope"?***

First, the Committee's comprehensive plan covers a number of measures to prevent radicalisation of migrant workers and foreign students arriving in Russia from the states with high rate of terrorist activity. Basically, the same methods I have mentioned earlier apply to them. Second — and perhaps the most important thing — is our systematic and painstaking work to prevent the spread of terrorist and extremist ideologies among Russian youth. Our adversary understands that they form the most active and mobile part of the society, while also being the most vulnerable to the propaganda of radical ideas due to a youthful maximalist approach and the lack of life experience. Quite understandable, their energy is abundant, they are willing to move heaven and earth, their desire is to change the world right here right now. And in this environment, simple solutions are spread that do not require deep thought or any prediction of consequences... By saying this, I do not want to hurt young people and teenagers. My point is just that as you grow older, you will understand what I am talking about now. And I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to parents: be attentive to your children, keep an eye on their moods and sentiments, and never lose sight of their social milieu. After all, in the age of mass "digitalisation", as the communications world expands, the Internet has become much more than merely an important aid to life, but also a source of various threats, including

from terrorists and extremists. Illegal content is actively disseminated via social networks and messengers. Fusing political and marketing techniques to promote it similar to advertising campaigns, an ITO can become a “brand” in the shortest possible time, thus attracting new supporters, as well as educate and coordinate members of its “private” network communities. Young people, being the main users of all innovative technologies, are extremely important to be protected from any destructive influence.

***What is being done to stop this threat?***

Above all, the protection of Russia’s information space is constantly being improved. This narrows the scope for any content promoting or justifying terrorism to enter the Internet. For example, fruitful cooperation between the *Roskomnadzor* and law enforcement agencies has already enabling restricting access to hundreds of thousands of pieces of terrorist content (around 65,000 materials blocked annually). The Russian Federal List of Extremist Materials includes more than 5,000 printed publications, movies, videos and music clips. In addition, we hold regional youth forums and roundtables, and organise online platforms on terrorism issues, involving civil society members. All this is aimed at building the young generation’s immunity to the detrimental influence of terrorist masterminds. Domestic mass media also play an important role in such preventive work. The NAC praises your colleagues’ documentaries and series of reports on counter-terrorism. Such good work by the journalistic community is essential and, most importantly, effective. I am confident that the media will continue to strongly contribute to the fight against terrorist ideologies. Likewise, we are active in providing information support for, and coverage of anti-terrorist activities. Press offices of law enforcement agencies and their intelligence colleagues, under the coordination of the NAC Information Centre established in 2010, are working systematically to inform the public about the results of fighting against and preventing terrorism. Hundreds of reports have been published over the last 10 years, with video commentaries and CTO footage. For the same purpose, the most relevant results are posted on the NAC’s web resources, primarily on its official portal, as well as on its VKontakte and YouTube pages.

***Earlier, you have said that the general public is not particularly interested in such information...***

We are well aware of masses of citizens getting interested in any information on terrorism only after any high visibility events. And the surge subsides. On the one hand, it is good that there are fewer

and fewer such occasions. On the other hand, we also have room to grow in terms of information activities. We are working on this issue. In particular, the problem we see is that mainstream media show little demand for the so-called “public service announcements”, including those of anti-terrorist nature, because, frankly, the same are far from bringing in much profits or does not fit into the media “formats”. Mechanisms are needed to deal with this problem. Another vital aspect is that in the context of the propaganda war unfolding against Russia, the terrorism issue is widely exploited by the adversary. There is a lot of related manipulation and, what they call “fakes”. I urge our readers not to succumb to various speculations and rumours and to independently verify the credibility of any content published. Please remember that you can always refer to the fully verified official information posted on the NAC’s media resources, to defuse any issues you may face in this regard.

***Does the Committee build on international experience in countering the threat of terrorism? How versatile are our domestic developments?***

Each state has its own unique context and, consequently, each one has developed its own approach to counter terrorism. However, according to many foreign experts, no other country in the world has such experience as we do. As I have said, our experience is unique. In this regard, Russian developments are in demand internationally.

For example, following the invitation by the UN Security Council’s Counter-Terrorism Committee, the NAC senior members give briefings almost annually at the CTC. Successful practices of the Russian Federation in countering terrorism and improving counter-terrorist legislation is shared with the member countries. The emphasis is placed on the results of prevention activities carried out with the involvement of civil society institutions. I would point out that even this year, despite the coronavirus pandemic, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism initiated such a briefing as well, this time remotely, as a webinar. Furthermore, the NAC, since its establishment, has organised a number of joint events with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure<sup>4</sup>, the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (formerly known as the Committee of Experts on Terrorism or Codexter), the NATO-Russia Council’s Counter-Terrorism Working Group, and the Council of Heads of National Security Enforcement Agencies and

<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter – the SCO RATS.

Special Services of the CIS Member States<sup>5</sup>. Counter-terrorism issues invariably arouse heightened interest among the participants of the annual Meetings of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations annually hosted by Russia's FSB. The event has taken the form of a permanent "platform" to host conferences regularly in the Russian Federation since 2002. This enables us to share experiences with foreign colleagues and learn from their counter-terrorism practices adopted in respective countries. In 2008, as agreed at previous meetings and as part of the implementation of UN resolution 1373 (2001), the International Counterterrorism Database<sup>6</sup> has been established, which is operating smoothly under the NAC auspices. The scope of such cooperation activities has been enlarged steadily. Whereas in 2009, 19 intelligence agencies from 17 states and 1 specialised body of an international organisation were part of the ICD, 57 intelligence agencies from 43 countries and 8 specialised bodies of international organisations from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas are now making part of it. A total of more than 90,000 pieces of counter-terrorism information are available to users of the Database (the ICD contains information on 50,000 individuals, including 9,000 'financiers' of terrorism; around 11,000 terrorism-related crimes committed worldwide; more than 190 terrorist organisations; about 30,000 photos and videos, 500 information documents, including about 180 those focused on countering terrorist ideologies). In the light of the UN resolutions implementation, the ICD has developed a specialized data array on foreign terrorist fighters containing more than 15,000 files on this category of individuals. Our partners point out that effective cooperation and information exchange within the ICD framework contributes to timely dealing with the tasks faced by all counter-terrorism actors, enabling efficient and prompt responses to the threats posed by the ITOs.

***To sum up our conversation, let me ask you: has the NAC been successful as a project?***

There is no doubt that the National Antiterrorism Committee has become an efficient tool in comprehensively addressing the relevant tasks set by the President. Time has shown appropriateness of the benchmarks chosen. I would reiterate that over the recent 15 years, a gradual decrease in terrorist activity has been indicated, an organisational and administrative structure of the nationwide counter-terrorism system has been formed, and measures have

been taken to legally regulate and govern the powers of the agencies and entities involved in these efforts. At the same time, the NAC has reserves to further improve the efficiency and quality of its activities.

***What do you specifically mean?***

Maintaining operational coordination centres in the Russian Federation constituent entities in high alert to neutralise threats as they emerge, ensuring security of major international and socio-political events, remains a high priority. We will keep improving the ways to organise and co-ordinate the work of all the agencies and units involved, primarily in terms of preventing terrorism and building a reliable barrier against the infiltration of ITO bandits into our country.

At the same time, we will further intensify the implementation checks with respect to the Committee's decisions and toughen the personal responsibility pertaining to its officials. The fight against terrorist propaganda and attempts to recruit our citizens through social networks and messengers is to be stepped up as well. There is already an urgent need for new high-quality information and promotion content, relevant to the current realities and comprehensible to the population, especially young people. In this field, we intend to use to the full extent the capabilities of the authorities, the media, and community structures. There is also a great demand for professionals capable of carrying out effective terrorism prevention work in both public and municipal services. In this regard, providing them with special training becomes a priority. In this context, I would point out that in accordance with the NAC decision of April 2018, training and methodological centres for terrorism prevention have been established and are currently functioning in 10 federal universities, as well as in the RANEPА (Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration) and 11 of its branch offices. The Committee now has to further systematise this work and organise the accumulation and sharing of successful practices in human resource development in related field. In general, we will step up our counter-terrorism offensive in all areas in order to achieve the main goal, which is ensuring security of citizens, Russian society and the State against terrorist threats. In conclusion, I appeal to our readers to contribute more actively to counter-terrorist activities, as it is only a united front of society and the state that can only succeed in fighting terrorism which is the "plague of the 21st century".

<sup>5</sup> Hereinafter – the SORB Council.

<sup>6</sup> Hereinafter – the ICD, Database.



# ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN TERRORISM PREVENTION

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, Russia was exposed to massive attacks by international terrorism. In order to repel the terrorist aggression, the country needed, in the short term, to form a fundamentally new system for counteraction to terrorism to include — in addition to intensified suppression of acts of terrorism by force and elimination of their impact — certain large-scale prevention work intended to stop the spread of terrorist ideologies, prevent its facilitators from raising in numbers, and preclude the involvement of young people in criminal activities.

A number of legislative acts and the Concept of Countering Terrorism in the Russian Federation, approved by the President of Russia, have provided the framework for our terrorism prevention activities. Counter-terrorism preventive activities are coordinated by inter-agency collegiate bodies as follows: federally, by the National Antiterrorism Committee; regionally, by the counter-terrorism commissions in the Russian Federation constituent

entities; and locally, by municipal counter-terrorism commissions.

A driver to ensure the effectiveness of preventive measures is that decisions of the National Antiterrorism Committee and counter-terrorism commissions at all levels are legally binding on institutions and organisations. The officials ignorant of these decisions are to be held administratively liable under the law.

Terrorism threats, causes and preconditions are monitored in order to identify priority areas for prevention activities. Thus, we reveal the groups of the population and individuals most vulnerable to the influence exerted by international terrorist organisations; disclose the ways and methods of indoctrinating them; and the conditions conducive to the formation of terrorist intentions.

The Russian experience in terrorism prevention is based on proven measures that have reduced terrorist threats and allowed us to focus on selected relevant areas of activity: from general prevention aimed at



building counter-terrorist awareness to targeted work with individual people.

Targeted prevention is the most efficient one, where the activities are aimed at achieving tangible results at every stage of a person's development, from a child to an adult.

Given that children are the most open-minded in terms of shaping perceptions of reality, counter-terrorism commissions believe this category of people to be one of the priority groups that need to be protected from detrimental influences. It is important to prevent early exposure of children to radicalised individuals in their environment, including those who have previously been involved in, or served sentences for terrorist activity. Such children are constantly on the radar of local counter-terrorism commissions in order to involve them in practical and constructive activities and to keep a child in the group, in the focus of the teachers' and caretakers' attention.

As a result of the government's set of measures for the return of children from the conflict zone in the Middle East, the counter-terrorism commissions have been actively addressing problems of their adaptation to a peaceful life in their home country: assisting with education and summer holidays, providing for a child to attend various cultural and sporting events, and organising proper medical treatment and psychological support.

Special attention is paid to teenage students in schools, colleges, and gymnasiums. Bearing in mind that this age is associated with the search for one's path of life, while the ability to perceive things

analytically is merely nascent, the task of those involved in prevention work is to ensure adequate resistance to the propaganda from international terrorist organisations that post videos attractive to teenagers on the Internet, with the ultimate goal of luring them into criminal activity.

In order to identify the indicators of radicalisation among students, local authorities study the situation in educational institutions, including by testing students to identify those in the so-called "special risk groups" and then organising preventive influence upon them. As an example, the counter-terrorism commission in the Republic of Tatarstan has had notable success in this area, by initiating a workable mechanism for early identification of troubled groups of teenagers and individual students who are interested in radical ideologies. The Interdepartmental Expert Council and the Psychological Coordination Resource Centre, as well as the network of psychoeducational centres, make it possible to prevent adolescent criminal intents at an early stage.

In their work with young people, the counter-terrorism commissions make active use of the capacities of civil society institutions: social movements, veteran, patriotic, youth and sports organisations, and also involve respected spiritual figures. The latter's engagement in preventive work has proven to be effective, particularly in the regions where religion has traditionally played a prominent role in shaping the residents' worldview and attitudes.

In their preventive activities with young people, the counter-terrorism commissions actively involve





those who have already served their sentences for the crimes committed or those who have been successfully deterred from committing an offence. Their testimonies, usually coloured by personal experiences, are compelling means of educating and cautioning others. The messages of parents to their children who have gone to the Middle East and joined international terrorist organisations are no less powerful in dissuading people from terrorist activities.

The analysis of reactions to posting of such content in social networks shows its being in demand among Internet users. As an example, the number of viewings of just two videos produced by the Republic of Dagestan's Counter-Terrorism Commission and Ministry of Press ("Syria: The Territory of Lost Sons" (Rus.: "*Siriya: territoriya poteryannykh synovey*"), and "One Can Lose Everything" (Rus.: "*Poteryat mozžno vse*")) exceeded 2.5 million people within four months of the posting.

Disseminating compelling examples and hard evidence discrediting terrorism on the Internet is a critical area of terrorism prevention, along with restrictive measures to block and remove terrorist propaganda content.

The National Antiterrorism Committee focuses the attention of the counter-terrorism commissions on studying and disseminating successful practices of organising informal prevention work among young people, especially using innovative forms of preventing terrorist ideologies, such as a direct dialogue with young people by a respected representative of the clergy in Dagestan. Supported

by the regional authorities, he has set up an online studio where, in addition to sermons, readings or interpretations of texts from holy books, he discusses with young people the topics of their concern and gives answers to important questions about the shaping of the human personality, designed to prevent moral degradation.

Striving to destabilise any given region, terrorists and their ideologues have repeatedly attempted to provoke ethnic conflicts. In the multi-ethnic state of ours, maintaining inter-ethnic harmony is therefore also an essential part of the prevention efforts by the counter-terrorism commissions.

This focus area of preventive activities by counter-terrorism entities is in line with the state's national policy, the essence of which was clearly defined by the Russian President Putin in his speech at the Forum of the Southern Russia Peoples as follows: "Everyone living in our country should not forget their faith, their ethnicity. But they must, above all, be citizens of the great country Russia. Unity in diversity is the key to the strength and success... of our state and its standing in the international arena".

In the system of targeted terrorism prevention, migrant workers, who are increasingly targeted by international terrorist organisations for recruitment, take an important part in the activities of the government authorities and counter-terrorism commissions.

In dealing with labour migrants, the emphasis is being placed on the implementation of programmes to adapt them to life in the Russian Federation. The main

task of their social adaptation is not only to provide them with practical assistance, but also to identify the unresolved problems that can lead to ethnic and religious conflicts, violations of the law as well as the spread of extremist sentiments and terrorist narratives among them.

Individuals who have fought in various terrorist groups in the Middle East, currently returning to their countries of origin, pose a significant risk in terms of increased terrorist activity. Conscious and systematic prevention work with such persons is led by local authorities, it directly involves representatives of law-enforcement agencies and various public associations.

In a number of regions of our country, commissions for adapting former illegal armed group members to peaceful life have been set up, effectively dealing in detail with applications from former fighters requesting assistance in finding employment or other matters of vital importance.

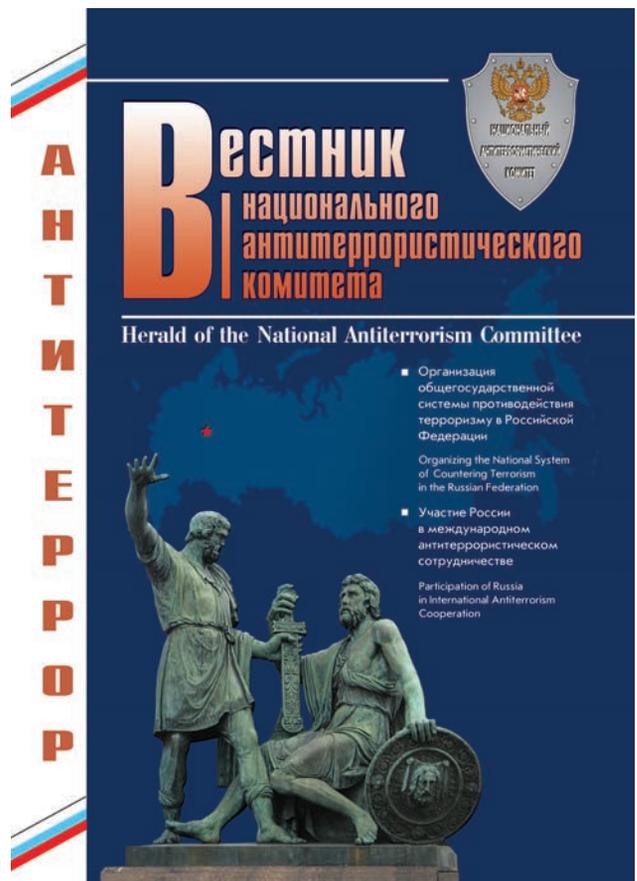
The counter-terrorism commissions also keep within their scope of view those serving sentences for terrorism-related crimes. When addressing prisons, the way to enhance performance significantly is to involve representatives of social and religious organisations, as well as qualified psychologists who explain the criminal nature and social danger of terrorism, thus helping prevent the spread of radical ideas among inmates.

One of the essential yet challenging prevention areas is approaching those who have served a sentence for involvement in terrorist activities. This can be achieved through regular preventive interviews with them, by the heads of municipalities and representatives of counter-terrorism commissions, to find out what problems those people are facing and what needs to be done to help them. Such informal communication allows for early detection of possible changes in the behaviour of the interviewee and any emerging signs of criminal intentions.

Experience shows that systematic and persistent efforts to help former criminals restore social contacts and to ensure their conscious labour engagement often yield positive results.

The above-mentioned areas of terrorism prevention are multifaceted and require the organisers to possess a combination of experience, accumulated over the years, and reasonable creativity to adapt quickly to a changing environment.

The effectiveness of prevention efforts also depends on the qualifications and competence of the stakeholders. This necessitated a system to improve the human resource involved in terrorism prevention in the country. At the initiative of the National Antiterrorism Committee, 22 training and methodological centres for terrorism prevention are in operation at 10 leading Russian universities and



at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, where relevant specialists are being trained.

Disseminating successful practices of preventive work across various regions of the country is facilitated by the NAC's Herald, published by the Central Office of the National Antiterrorism Committee, the official NAC website ([nac.gov.ru](http://nac.gov.ru), [nac.gov.ru](http://nac.gov.ru)) and VKontakte page (@nakgov), as well as annual scientific and practical conferences and briefings for Russian and foreign journalists.

The national experience of the Russian Federation in preventing terrorism shows that the emergence of terrorist threats and the circumstances conducive to the spread thereof require an adequate response from the state and society, as well as that the prevention forms, methods and techniques are constantly adjusted and improved. One thing that remains unchanged in this work is that it is systematic and well-defined, with an ultimate focus on the final result: preventing Russian citizens from getting involved in terrorist activities and generally increasing the "anti-terrorist immunity" in our society, primarily by building an efficient system to prevent the spread of terrorist narratives.

# **SPEECH BY A. V. BORTNIKOV, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ANTITERRORISM COMMITTEE, DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE OF RUSSIA, AT THE CONFERENCE ON COUNTERING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

**(SAINT PETERSBURG, TAURIDE PALACE, 18 APRIL 2019)<sup>1</sup>**

Dear participants of the Conference,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our today's event. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my views on the most pressing issues in countering the terrorist threat.

This meeting is a good sign, demonstrating the interest of our countries and international organisations to join forces in the fight against terrorism.

The role of parliamentarians in dealing with such challenges is indeed very high. You have considerable legal, political and informational leverage to create the conditions necessary for national intelligence and law enforcement agencies to operate efficiently and effectively. This will most undoubtedly contribute to further strengthening international cooperation on counter-terrorism.

Despite the everyday work of the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of our countries, modern terrorism remains one of the most dangerous global threats in terms of its consequences and scope. Unfortunately, we get reminders of this all too often — bloody terrorist attacks claiming lives of civilians on an almost weekly basis.

Last year alone witnessed 683 terrorist attacks, killing 4,708 people and wounding 7,120.

In some regions, terrorist attacks have become a monstrous daily occurrence. Hardly there are any states in the world that have not been affected by acts of terrorism.

Despite heavy losses in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and related armed terrorist groups continue to pose a severe threat, having managed to organise their forces as networks. Interconnected and autonomous cells are creeping beyond the Middle East, into Europe, Central and South-East Asia.

Large bandit formations are infiltrating deep into the African continent, particularly into Libya.

Of particular note is the situation in Afghanistan, where the ITO ranks are being replenished by terrorists from Syria, posing a threat to Central Asian states.

Foreign terrorist fighters are the main vehicle of international terrorist expansion. In large numbers, they return to their countries of origin or settle in other states after receiving training in Islamist camps and gaining military experience.

For example, experts estimate that some 1,500 terrorists out of the 5,000 who previously departed for the Middle East have already arrived in the European Union. A large proportion of them are bandits sent by their ringleaders to Europe to continue their terrorist

<sup>1</sup> Co-organised by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member States, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, the event witnessed discussions of the role of international institutions in countering terrorism, preventing the use of online technologies to spread extremist ideas, improving laws and regulations to prosecute terrorists and suppress terrorist financing, as well as the topic of foreign terrorist mercenaries and their return to their countries of origin.

activities. They set up highly clandestine cells and strengthen combat capabilities of existing terrorist groups.

At the same time, the command and coordination of terrorists are being reorganised. Greater emphasis is given to specialisation of fighters. Some of them are focused on promoting extremist ideology or recruiting new adherents, with the others being responsible for fundraising or other logistic support. The groups directly tasked to prepare and carry out attacks are established as well.

The threat posed by militant wives and widows involved in terrorist activities is escalating. Many of them have been trained in the use of weapons and directly engaged in combat operations. Increasingly, widows are becoming suicide bombers.

The Islamists are also preparing children for this role, who are brought up from an early age amidst hatred against those espousing other cultures and faiths.

A significant concern is that foreign terrorist fighters have little difficulty finding ways to infiltrate countries to stay in. Labour and humanitarian migration channels remain the main ones, as we have seen with the movement of hundreds of thousands of refugees into the EU, including from regions showing high rates of terrorism.

The number of illegal migrants is increasing. The situation is exacerbating in places where migrants congregate. These areas become breeding grounds for extremism, organised crime and drug addiction that are strongly resented by the native population.

In order to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies, militants acquire new documents with false identification data. In this regard, they heavily rely on assistance from local organised crime networks.

A reliable cover story of in-country stay enables terrorists to infiltrate certain labour areas where an act of terrorism would have the most devastating consequences.

At the same time, changing tactics of the militants, who are developing increasingly sophisticated methods to commit high-profile and large-scale attacks, pose a significant threat. Specific actions have already been identified in Syria with regard to the use and application of chemical agents against civilians.

Do-it-yourself manuals, based on commercially available components, are distributed in various ways. Guidelines are being developed for the manufacturing of explosives and explosive devices, as well as methodologies for IED delivery, including by unmanned aerial vehicles.

Such weapons, if used by terrorists in water against supply systems, transport, catering or public places are likely to cause a large number of casualties. The brutality of the attack combined with the difficulty of locating its source would have very grave consequences.

The threat of attacks by lone wolf terrorists remains relevant. They are difficult to detect in time. In most

cases, such individuals do not come to the scope of view of law enforcement agencies before a crime is committed, while getting increasingly radicalised by means of global jihadist propaganda. Such propaganda makes it possible to raise new terrorists without having to recruit and indoctrinate each of them individually.

In this regard, ITOs have the relevant outreach activities performed professionally. Terrorist media structures create and massively disseminate propaganda content.

The Internet, as an information environment, free of systematic regulation, full of communication features providing for user anonymity, offers great opportunities to this end.

Currently, there are over 10,000 websites, representing virtually every active international terrorist structure. They have created hundreds of thousands of social media accounts with content posted in more than 40 languages, most notably Arabic, English, and Russian.

Terrorists customise their propaganda and seek to reach all possible target audiences as much as possible. For example, video clips featuring deaf-mute militants have been uncovered. The Islamist doctrine is also conveyed through short cartoons and comics with religious content.

Under the influence of aggressive Islamist propaganda, radicalism is gradually becoming a fashionable behavioural benchmark among young people, much of whom lack any fundamental knowledge of the Islam basics.

In social networks, private groups provide training in combat tactics against security and law enforcement forces, and on how to prepare for and carry out acts of sabotage and terrorist attacks. Investigations of militant crimes in Russia and a number of European countries show that their perpetrators followed the instructions of their Internet mentors.

The information and telecommunications capabilities are also widely used by criminals when establishing communication and control channels, namely Internet messengers are exploited, providing a high-level cryptographic protection for data transmitted.

Terrorists make extensive use of the so-called DarkNet, as well as the communication possibilities offered by online games, to ensure the secrecy and anonymity of their contacts.

The ability to conceal personal data using modern IP-telephony and foreign email servers to conceal personal data is increasingly being employed to disseminate hoax terrorist threats to destabilise the situation.

There is an increasing trend of illegal transactions involving weapons, ammunition and explosives, trafficking in which is significantly conducive to terrorism-related crimes, transferring to the online space.

In addition, terrorist strive for subversive activities in cyberspace is becoming dangerous. To this end, bandits

are expanding their links in the hacker community, while at the same time creating their own structures. There is a growing threat of cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure facilities, including in order to provoke accidents as may be the cause of man-made disasters.

Overall, despite heavy losses, international terrorist organisations remain a powerful force to threaten most of the world. Terrorism has become a lucrative business, attracting multi-billion cash flows. And the variety of funding mechanisms used gives terrorists an additional chance of survival.

Recently, the phenomenon of anti-Islamic terrorism has become another serious problem. The aforementioned adverse effects of migration processes, primarily in Western countries, along with striking cultural and religious differences between refugees and natives, and deliberately aggressive behaviour of, and crimes committed by migrants provoke a rise in nationalist sentiments and make the problem of far-right and racially motivated terrorism more acute.

As a result, the emergence of cold-blooded homicidal psychopaths plotting the acts of revenge against Muslims is becoming a worrying trend not only for Europe but, as the recent tragedy in New Zealand has shown, for the whole world.

Russia was among the first countries to face the manifestations of modern day international terrorism. Our country has suffered terrible losses through inhumane bombings of apartment blocks and planes, bloody terrorist attacks in the subway, and deliberate killings of ordinary people in Budennovsk, Moscow, Beslan, Saint Petersburg and other cities, unprecedented in their cruelty.

In our country, the formation of a nationwide system for countering terrorism has been an adequate response to new challenges and threats. The National Antiterrorism Committee has a key role to play in this respect, organising and coordinating activities of all competent authorities and organisations.

The scope of organisational, preventive, and suppressive measures taken has made it possible to reduce the number of terrorism-related crimes by almost 100 times, namely from 779 in 2010 to 9 in 2018.

Another significant result for us has been achieved through targeted preventive work. Over the last 5 years, more than 320 terrorists and their accomplices have been persuaded to renounce their unlawful activities.

In the information space, automated media monitoring systems, once introduced, made it possible — last year alone — to block more than 47,000 web resources with terrorist content.

The Russian experience of multifaceted, comprehensive counter-terrorism efforts can now be definitely called a success. At the same time, the relevant legal framework continues to improve.

For example, criminal liability has been introduced for terrorist propaganda, as well as for a failure to report the preparation for or commission of terrorism-related crimes.

Harsher penalties have been imposed for certain terrorism-related crimes, including making a knowingly false report of an act of terrorism.

Legal grounds have been established for prosecuting the who have committed their crimes outside Russia. This applies above all to foreign nationals and stateless persons.

A procedure has been introduced to revoke the decision to grant the Russian citizenship to a person where that person has committed, or been preparing for, a terrorism- or extremism-related crime.

As regards information and telecommunications, a package of counter-terrorism laws has been adopted, including the obligation for telecom operators and Internet traffic controllers to store subscriber data and keys for decrypting Internet communications, and make them available to security authorities.

Our legislative experience is not unique; many states follow a similar path. Australia, for example, has enacted a law setting standards for telecommunications companies to voluntarily and mandatorily assist law enforcement and intelligence agencies with encryption technologies.

A global trend in recent years has been incorporating in national legislation of the provisions on revoking the previously granted citizenship of the persons convicted of terrorism-related crimes. This mechanism has been provided for in the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, and Australia.

Japan has introduced criminal liability of up to 5 years of imprisonment for orchestrating a terrorist attack.

In a number of countries, options are being debated for preventing persons trained to carry out terrorist activities from staying on their territory.

In today's environment, it is clear that no state, despite improving its legislation or enhancing intelligence and law enforcement capabilities, could be able, when acting alone, to protect its citizens from the threat of international terrorism. And now the global community faces a very important task of consolidating its counter-terrorism efforts.

To deal with the task successfully, our country has taken the initiative to form a united front of the intelligence and law enforcement community. The year 2002 witnessed the first Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations. Year after year, a high demand for the format is demonstrated by the numbers of participants in the forum. In 2018, it hosted 125 delegations from 80 countries, as well as international organisations such as the UN, SCO, CIS, EU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Russia advocates the creation of a single counter-terrorism information space. To this end, Russia's FSB has established an International Counterterrorism Database to collect, store and process information on the activities of ITOs and their members. Today, its users are 46 intelligence agencies from 35 foreign states, and 7 international organisations<sup>2</sup>. Our partners make extensive use of its capabilities and share the information available on terrorists and their plots.

Traditionally, good partnering relations have developed between the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Over the long history of our cooperation, a set of effective mechanisms to counter the terrorist threat has been established.

One of its most important components is the Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Intelligence Services of the CIS Member States, which has been functioning since 1997.

The comprehensive steps taken so far as part of our multilateral international cooperation, as well as other formats of information exchange and operational collaboration with our colleagues from other states, are yielding tangible results in the form of bandits being identified and apprehended, as well as terrorist attacks being prevented.

Such cooperation should be expanded further. A worldwide common stance on counter-terrorism issues should prevent attempts to impose double standards in defining terrorists and their facilitators, and expedite a joint work to formulate effective measures through which we can all make a substantial progress.

We are convinced that the United Nations and its specialised bodies with their international legal status making them unmatched with any other entities in this field, should remain at the head of the global counter-terrorism association of our states.

We believe that under the UN auspices:

— our efforts should be combined to neutralise terrorist structures and their clandestine cells all around the world;

— shaping the common information environment to ensure the rapid exchange of all necessary information should be continued;

— the international community efforts to break the ties between terrorist organisations and international criminal underworld should be intensified;

— consolidated measures should be taken to suppress the financing of terrorist activities as well as any relevant channels for trafficking in arms and ammunition;

— a common approach to operational regulations and technical specifications pertaining to UAVs should be developed in order to minimise the related risks of terrorist attacks.

One of the most pressing issues that needs to be tackled jointly is the suppression of illegal migration, extensively used by foreign terrorist fighters to move across national borders.

The timely disruption of foreign terrorist fighters is often impeded by the laws of some states, which provide for the readmission of known bandits to a third country instead of extraditing them to the law enforcement authorities of respective country of origin. This practice needs to be abandoned. This will allow eliminating the risk of crimes being committed in transit or expelling countries.

The long-awaited time has come to develop international rules of conduct in the field of information. After all, terrorist resources currently hosted on foreign servers are essentially "elusive". Propaganda, recruitment, financing, communications, and command — just to name a few opportunities that terrorists would virtually be denied should the international community be able to reach a consensus on the issue and act in a coordinated manner under common legal standards.

Strong encryption features in communications software has become a problem of special concern in the current environment, as they reduce the effectiveness of counter-terrorist operational and technical measures everywhere. In order to meet this challenge, the Russian Federation has drafted a concept of an initiative concept aimed at creating a trusted and transparent system to escrow the encryption keys generated by mobile applications. The implementation thereof by the international community would create a legal and technological capacity to gain lawful access to operationally sensitive encrypted information transmitted by terrorists from mobile devices. Certainly, it remains an indisputable condition that every state respects and upholds its system of safeguarding rights and freedoms of its citizens.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that the growing terrorist threats in the world require us to build trust and boost free-of-politics cooperation.

I am confident that during the Conference we will be able to reconcile our stances on the most acute and controversial issues of counter-terrorism.

I wish all the Forum participants a successful and fruitful work.

<sup>2</sup> As of April 18, 2019.

# ON THE OUTCOME OF THE XVIII MEETING OF HEADS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, SECURITY AGENCIES AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT ORGANISATIONS OF FOREIGN STATES PARTNERS OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE OF RUSSIA, AND CURRENT RUSSIAN COUNTER-TERRORISM INITIATIVES PROPOSED FOR DISCUSSION AT INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

(SOCHI, 16 OCTOBER 2019)

Since 2002, the Russian Federation has been carrying out systematic work to bring together intelligence and law-enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism in implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2354 (2017), 2462 (2019), and 2482 (2019) and in implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006)<sup>1</sup>.

Eighteen years of experience with the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law-Enforcement Organisations (the Meeting) has proven that the trajectory preferred is right, which is confirmed, among other things, by the growth in the number of forum participants. While the first Meeting in Saint Petersburg in 2002 was attended by 49 delegations from 37 countries, the XVIII Meeting in Sochi in 2019 saw 123 delegations from competent

agencies from 79 states, as well as delegations from the UN, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. We view this as the evidence of the desire on the part of healthy forces in the international community to establish trustworthy relations and create effective mechanisms for counter-terrorist cooperation.

The successful work of the Meeting is greatly facilitated by the dialogue launched in 2005 with the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate, Sanctions Committees, and, since its inception, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

In the work of the Meeting, the Russian party proceeds from the postulate of politics-free counter-terrorist cooperation when addressing issues

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 1373 (2001) calls on the states to work together urgently to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, including through enhanced cooperation and full implementation of international conventions. Calls on the states to make all lawful efforts to prevent terrorist acts in their territory. Establishes the CTC under the UNSC.

Resolution 1624 (2005) calls for statutory prohibition of incitement to commit terrorist acts.

Resolution 2178 (2014) calls for increased information sharing on terrorist activities and movements, especially by their states of residence or citizenship.

Resolution 2354 (2017) notes positively the CTC's Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives and sets out a number of guidelines for the member states to implement the said Framework.

of ensuring security of citizens of various states. Differences of opinion on particular items of the international agenda do not become an insurmountable obstacle to finding common ground for an effective response to international terrorism.

The sharing of national experience among the participants in the Meeting is becoming more systematic, thus creating favourable conditions for law-enforcement agencies to employ best practices in countering terrorism, and making it possible to comprehensively assess the dynamics of terrorist threats, promptly respond to changes in the tactics of bandits, and take preemptive actions.

In his speech at the XVIII Meeting, A. V. Bortnikov, Director of the Federal Security Service of Russia (Russia's FSB), focused the participants' attention on enhancing coordination and intensifying joint work in the information environment.

When exchanging their opinions on current terrorist threats, participants of the XVIII Meeting noted that, despite a major defeat suffered by the main terrorist forces in Syria and Iraq, the international terrorist syndicate has largely retained its capabilities: they keep relocating foreign terrorist fighters to other countries and setting up sleeper cells in their countries of origin and settlement, combined with the transition to network tactics.

Attempts of international terrorist organisations to acquire new types of weapons of mass destruction, means of geolocation and satellite communications have intensified in recent years. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) by terrorists is becoming a real challenge. Also, there is a growing threat

of malware infiltrating critical infrastructure facilities to cause major accidents. The availability of artificial intelligence technologies could expand the reach of terrorists. Terrorists actively use online messengers to plan and organise their activities, ensuring a high level of security by encrypting messages and anonymising personal data.

The Meeting agenda particularly focuses on countering international terrorist organisations (ITOs) and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).

The FTFs returning to their countries of origin, after having taken part in hostilities on the side of ITOs, pose a significant threat to both national and regional security. In addition to carrying out terrorist acts, the fighters create clandestine cells, extensively recruit and indoctrinate new supporters, primarily from among socially disadvantaged youth and migrants, train them in terrorist activities, and provide financial support for ITOs.

The incitement of xenophobic sentiments and spread of far-right extremist ideas among the local population, caused by the migrants' disregard, often spectacular, for the social norms of the host country and their widespread involvement in criminal activities, is an increasingly severe problem. This situation calls for effective cooperation among national law enforcement agencies. In this regard, in order to intensify the exchange of information on those involved in terrorist activities, all possible mechanisms, one of which is the International Counterterrorism Database (ICD), being developed by the Russia's National Antiterrorism Committee, should be used as part of the implementation of





UN Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2462 (2019)<sup>2</sup>. As a versatile depoliticised tool, the ICD fully enables the implementation of the relevant Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters<sup>3</sup>.

A number of terrorism-related criminal cases have been initiated, members of ITOs identified and persons involved in terrorist activities deported using the ICD resources.

Today, the ICD is a unified information system based on a flexible technological platform, bringing together information on individuals involved in terrorist activities, including FTFs, international terrorist organisations, terrorism-related crimes, analysis and information materials. The range of the parties involved has been expanding: 57 intelligence agencies from 43 states and 8 specialised bodies of international organisations are now the ICD subscribers<sup>4</sup>.

The Russian party provides methodological and technical support to the ICD parties. It actively trains officers of respective national security agencies in the use of the ICD resources.

A growing concern in the intelligence community is the terrorist use of the capabilities offered by information and communications technologies. Although the approaches to solving this problem may differ, the substantive discussion at the XVIII Meeting demonstrated that mutual trust in protecting national cyberspaces and responding to computer incidents is prerequisite for information

<sup>2</sup> UNSC Resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2462 (2019) call on the UN member states to ensure timely sharing of information on persons involved in terrorist activities and that all such persons are brought to justice.

<sup>3</sup> The Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters were developed in 2015 by the CTC together with the UN Security Council's CTED at a special meeting on stemming the flow of FTFs (Madrid). The document is based on existing best practices of states and international and regional organisations in stemming the flow of FTFs. The document was updated in 2018 at a special meeting of the UNSC CTC.

<sup>4</sup> As of June 26, 2020.

space security. In the concluding document of the Meeting, the participants reflected their willingness to establish partnerships to create global legal mechanisms for detection of unlawful acts in the information space, guided by the universally recognised norms of international law.

Terrorist threats cannot be effectively countered as long as private communication channels within the global network remain unobstructed for terrorists. The topic was further developed at the XVIII Meeting. The problem of access to terrorist correspondence through private communication channels could be solved by a Russian counter-terrorism initiative aimed at creating an international legal regime for the escrow of encryption keys.

According to a wide range of the Meeting participants, this initiative, once implemented, would legislatively enable law enforcement agencies to monitor information exchanges between and among terrorists, while fully safeguarding the citizens right to privacy of correspondence by precluding access to it by third parties. The United Nations could become a highly reputed platform for further extensive promotion of Russia's counter-terrorism initiative.

The focus of the Meeting is also made on major international events anti-terrorist security. A coordination scheme for intelligence agencies to share information on terrorist threats is in place during the Olympics on a regular basis and has repeatedly proven its effectiveness. Significant positive experience was gained in organising cooperation prior to and during the 2013 World Summer Universiade in Kazan, the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2019 UEFA European Championship.

When organising the Meeting, we envisaged discussing the ways to prevent and suppress the spread of terrorist and extremist manifestations on the Internet, as well as countering radicalisation of the population and efforts to get our citizens involved into extremist and terrorist activities, including in the information sphere.

As practice shows, it is impossible to defeat terrorism in principle without organising systematic preventive work in society to prevent the re-establishment of a terrorist support and facilitation base and the spread of terrorist ideas. The interest of foreign partners in the issues pertaining to organising preventive activities in the Russian Federation, coordinated by the National Antiterrorism Committee, provided the basis for the inclusion of issues related to terrorism prevention on the agenda of the Meetings.

Since 2008, Russia has had some positive experience in countering the spread of terrorist ideas in society, based on a consistent government policy backed by an appropriate legal framework and the primary



role of competent authorities, with the involvement of civil society institutions. The work has resulted in persuading more than 500 persons to disengage from terrorist activity.

Building meaningful cooperation has become increasingly important, aimed at countering the nexus between terrorism and transnational organised crime.

The financial base of international terrorism is strengthened through close alignment with transnational organised crime. The main sources of ITOs' income are trafficking in drugs, weapons, natural resources and cultural property, extortion, illegal migration channels, slave trade, and production and sale of counterfeit money. Terrorism has become a lucrative business attracting multi-billion financial flows. More work is needed to

identify and disrupt suspicious transactions, and to respond quickly to requests for assistance in investigating and providing information on terrorism cases.

An important outcome of the XVIII Meeting is the adoption of a Joint Statement, in support of United Nations Security Council resolutions 2462 (2019) and 2482 (2019) on strengthening international efforts to counter terrorist financing and to promptly respond to threats posed by the nexus of terrorism and organised crime.

Summing up the results of the XVIII Meeting, it should be noted once again that the Russian Federation's stance for an uncompromising fight against terrorism remains unchanged. Clearly, its efficiency and effectiveness depend directly on the willingness of states to act in a coordinated manner and to reject double standards, which in practice create conditions for interference with internal affairs of other states and for terrorists to escape criminal liability. The UN, which has proven to have no alternative and is endowed with international legitimacy, should remain the centre of regulation of international relations and international cooperation, including in countering terrorism-related challenges and threats.



# ON THE RUSSIAN COUNTER-TERRORISM INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH AN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL REGIME FOR THE ENCRYPTION KEY ESCROW IN ORDER FOR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES TO ACCESS ENCRYPTED CORRESPONDENCE CARRIED OUT FOR TERRORIST PURPOSES WITH THE USE OF SPECIAL MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS

In today's world, an extensive — and quite effective — use by international terrorist organisations of state-of-the-art ICT capabilities to provide clandestine “remote” guidance to fighters and their facilitators, to organise fundraising, and to train adepts in subversive and terrorist attacks tactics is a major security threat.

These include popular messengers, email services and other mobile applications using strong cryptographic algorithms to ensure that messages are encrypted each time a conversation occurs between subscribers.

In all countries, law enforcement and intelligence agencies find themselves in a situation where the scope of measures built up over the years for lawful interception of information in order to stop or investigate terrorist or other criminal activity may no longer be effective.

This situation requires national governments and their competent authorities to develop adequate legal and organisational solutions to create the appropriate tools to counter terrorism and crime.

The problem of gaining access to terrorist correspondence through private communication channels could be solved by a Russian counter-terrorism initiative aimed at creating an international legal regime for the escrow of encryption keys, to ensure lawful access to cryptographically secured information exchanges carried out for terrorist and other illegal purposes.

The initiative was first announced in 2018 by A. V. Bortnikov, Chairman of the National Antiterrorism Committee, Director of the Federal

Security Service of Russia, during the XVII Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations.

The main idea behind the initiative is to design uniform requirements and approaches to the implementation of key encryption and generation algorithms, which currently differ significantly from one manufacturer to another. These requirements and approaches are expected to become mandatory for all mobile applications with cryptographic features.

All mobile applications, every time they are used, will send encryption keys to the national competent authority for safekeeping. Each country will designate the relevant authority independently.

Lawful access to information exchanges between terrorists shall be available on the basis of a judicial decision, in the manner prescribed for such cases by national legislation.

When a law enforcement agency (or an intelligence agency) has reasonable grounds for lawful access to a particular suspect's encrypted information, procedures similar to those already in use shall be initiated. A request shall be prepared, providing a rationale for the need of gaining access to the information of a certain person. The judicial authority shall make a decision to the effect and issue an appropriate order, based whereon the law enforcement agency is to obtain first, the necessary data from the telecom operator, and second, the key from the competent authority.

After that those two “secrets” are combined to de-encrypt the amount of traffic as needed.

Thus, ensuring security of data in storage and transmission, as well as compliance with all necessary legal procedures for access to the data, will be safeguarded by the national legislation. All law-abiding users will be guaranteed privacy of their correspondence.

Each country should ensure information security of the keying information, once it is received by the national competent authority. The initiative proposed would not govern the selection of specific measures or modalities, but this could also be a subject of international discussion if necessary. Each country would be free to develop specific solutions independently, based on the peculiarities of its domestic law, yet subject to the unconditional guarantee of information security.

The information exchange mechanisms used in the escrow system should be country-independent to ensure interoperability as well as to make the overall system cheaper.

This requires agreeable composition and format of the keying information, a technological basis for the escrow mechanism, and a procedure for interaction between competent authorities. Given that most popular applications are based on standardised cryptographic procedures, a unified key escrow mechanism should not be too difficult to develop.

The proposed approach would enable all countries to work together to counter the terrorist threat, both nationally and internationally, on the basis of inclusiveness and equitability.

The initiative is proposed to be implemented through the widest possible international cooperation, based on a conventional document. The document can be developed under the auspices of the United Nations. Ensuring the principles of transparency as well as equitable and non-discriminatory access for all States and other partners to the process of development and operating, the proposed system should provide the basis for its effective dissemination and use worldwide.

Over two years, the Russian party has widely publicised the initiative in various international forums, including the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, as well as in the bilateral cooperation format. It has been supported by a number of countries that have expressed their intention to participate in the procedures to harmonise the uniform requirements and technical solutions.

In 2019, at the XVIII Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations, discussions on Russia's project continued. The outcome document of the forum highlighted the terrorist extensive use of information and telecommunication networks and modern encryption technologies, by terrorists reflected willingness of 123 delegations from 79 states to promote the development of international legal instruments aimed at reducing anonymity in the global information space and to expedite the creation of mechanisms to preclude or significantly



reduce any use of information and communication technology for terrorist and other criminal purposes.

The results of the initial discussions on this project are indicative of its relevance and importance to building an international information security system and introducing a unified format of the fight against terrorism.

Further promotion of the Russian counter-terrorism initiative on encryption key escrow procedures is currently underway.

# SPEECH BY A. V. BORTNIKOV, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ANTITERRORISM COMMITTEE, DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE OF RUSSIA, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND THREATS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

(SAINT PETERSBURG, 15 APRIL 2021)

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Inter-Parliamentary Conference once again.

I am sincerely pleased that, despite the challenging conditions associated with the coronavirus pandemic, the international community has been able to maintain a positive momentum of engagement and continue

working together to find solutions to the pressing challenges of countering terrorism and extremism.

Today's event, I am confident, will serve the common cause of strengthening mutual trust and will enhance the effectiveness of joint counter-terrorism efforts of our countries and international organisations.

Since our last meeting, preconditions for the aggravation of existing threats and emergence of new ones have developed.

It is already abundantly clear that enforced quarantine restrictions have exacerbated the economic crisis and dramatically reduced the standard of living of the vast majority of the world's population. Moreover, social inequalities are increasing not only in specific countries, but also globally. All this fuels the spread of radical sentiments, and consequently extremist and terrorist ideas.

At the same time, international coalition forces and national security agencies in many states have reduced the scope of their counter-terrorism operations.

The ITO leaders see the current conditions as their advantage and are trying to use the growing instability to regain lost ground and influence around the world.



Particularly, terrorists have focused on the countries where legitimate authorities have previously been significantly weakened or virtually destroyed, including through direct foreign intervention.

In Syria, with Russian support, ISIL's combat capability has been significantly undermined, with its organisational structure destroyed and resourcing channels stemmed. Therefore, the bandits were forced to switch from open confrontation to sabotage warfare. Attacks on government installations occur almost daily. Former Islamists who have surrendered to the authorities as well as their family members are increasingly being targeted.

The situation is similar in Iraq, where terrorist groups, joined by the fighters forced out of Syria, are employing guerrilla tactics and carrying out large-scale terrorist attacks.

Due to significant loss of ground for ISIL and Al-Qaida in the Middle Eastern region, their ringleaders have their focus gradually shifting to South East and Central Asian states.

Particular attention is paid to Africa. The ITOs are using Libya as a foothold for the accumulation of fighters arriving from the Middle East and their further expansion on the continent. Intensified terrorist activity, as well as the ongoing civil war, is evidently fuelling mass the transit of refugees through our country to Europe at the expense of the fleeing civilians.

Despite NATO's military presence, Afghanistan continues to rank at the top in terms of terrorist activities, according to international experts. The high level of terrorist concentration in that country poses a direct threat to neighbouring states.

To date, virtually all regions across the world have been included in the ITO ringleaders' plans to create new hotbeds of terrorist activity.

Humanitarian, labour and illegal migration channels are still being mostly used by fighters to infiltrate into other countries. In order to legalise their members, terrorist outfits rely on the help of transnational criminal groups specialising in refugee trafficking and issuing bogus IDs.

Due to an unwillingness to assimilate in a new environment, migrants form enclaves and build further lives according to the norms of the countries of origin, often closely associated with intolerance and violence. The rigid code of silence and mutual cover-up adopted by these ethnic groups ensure greater secrecy of operations for newly arriving terrorists.

Their further narrative and recruitment work disconnects migrants from local religious communities practising traditional Islam. As a result, isolated Muslim groups and unofficial praying houses are set up, where Islamists promote extremist and terrorist ideologies and recruit new supporters in a targeted individually tailored manner.

Terrorist tactics are constantly being refined and adapted to certain specific conditions.

In Russia and Europe, ringleaders primarily strive to create sleeper cells oriented towards autonomous terrorist operations, targeted attacks and "individual jihad" acts. The focus is also on the lone wolf terrorist actors, who are predominantly the Islamist-influenced natives of Muslim countries. Of particular concern are attempts to exploit family members of terrorists, especially wives, widows and children. Many of them have been trained in the use of weapons and have received instruction as suicide bombers at Middle Eastern training camps.

Under the direction of ITO ringleaders, the bandits are becoming increasingly meticulous in their preparations for terrorist attacks, they conduct covert surveillance of public places and examine vulnerabilities in the security guarding of potential targets. There is an increased risk of double terrorist attacks, with terrorists waiting for law-enforcement officers to arrive after the first bombing and then carrying out a new attack. In December 2020, an attempt to implement such a scenario was made in Russia's Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

The pandemic demonstrated high vulnerability of populations to potential use of hazardous biological and chemical materials, thus arousing the interest on the part of terrorists. ITOs conduct targeted recruitment of industry professionals, including university professors and students specialising in chemical and biological sciences. Senior gang leaders are seeking opportunities to gain access to, and establish their own production of, chemical weapons and dangerous pathogens at industrial sites located in a number of countries in North Africa and the Sahara-Sahel zone. In other parts of the world, attempts are being made to manufacture various poisons using commercially available components.

Improvised drones, manufactured with the application of inexpensive and affordable engineering solutions, are also used for terrorist attacks. Using them can enable criminals to stealthily and safely deliver hazardous chemical and biological materials and explosive devices to heavily protected sites.

An increased risk is posed by coordinated, massive drone attacks, which can greatly increase their lethality and circumvent the defences available. In Syria, there have already been attempts to mount such aerial attacks, even if unsuccessful, against a Russian airbase.

As in the past, bandits continue to focus on low-cost terrorist attacks. In particular, attacks on people with knives or vehicles are on the rise.

Terrorist narratives aimed at radicalising Muslim communities in different parts of the world have been upscaled markedly. With the technical capacity provided by "sponsors" from certain Middle Eastern

countries, ITOs are able to use satellite and streaming television resources, along with the Internet, to expand the geography of Islamist ideology.

Virtually all major extremist and terrorist outfits have their own websites and affiliated “mirrors” in popular social networks as well as in the DarkNet.

By adopting advanced psychological and marketing techniques, Islamists create high-quality and enticing content, with consumers thereof often unaware of their being exposed to extremist narratives.

This is how a wide section of the population, including members of the “middle class” and people with higher education, are drawn into terrorist activities. They set a trend for Islamic radicalism to which Muslim youths are most exposed.

However, the youth are not alone. The ideas of “jihadism”, which offer extremely “simple” solutions to complex problems, are increasingly being embraced by individuals who have no connection to Islamic civilisation and who are disillusioned with traditional cultural and religious values.

As a rule, neophytes become the most consistent supporters of Islamism. To prove their loyalty to the new faith, many of them take the path of terrorism, even to the point of willing to become suicide bombers.

Terrorist groups make significant efforts to diversify their sources of funding. This allows them to respond flexibly to changes in their environment, shifting from one way of generating income to another.

Over the past year, there has been a noticeable increase in the production of various types of drugs, primarily synthetic substances, as well as an increase in drug trafficking directly linked to ITOs.

Illegal trade in arms and cultural property continues to be among the main sources of financing. Profits are also made from organising illegal migration channels, slave trade, piracy, extortion and kidnapping.

At the same time, terrorists have increased their use of modern financial instruments. They already have a history of fraudulent currency transactions involving bank cards through online banking.

The problem of financing terrorist activities under the guise of humanitarian aid remains acute. ITOs have been active in setting up various charities to raise money under the guise of donations. In the vast majority of cases, the “donators” are unaware of the true purpose of their contributions.

The coronavirus pandemic has also provided further impetus for terrorists to move towards wider use of various modern software and hardware tools.

Cryptocurrencies ensure complete privacy of financial transactions. E-wallets and payment systems that keep transactions and parties thereto anonymous are extensively used.

With a view to shaping a closed information space, maintaining secret contacts, as well as preparing and directing attacks, militants make wide use of

cryptographically protected messengers. There is also an emerging trend for terrorists to exploit the power of decentralised networks, as well as specialised applications and browsers incorporating encryption and anonymisation technologies to easily bypass web content filtering systems.

To ensure their security, ITOs keep a close eye on technological innovations, allowing bandits to promptly switch to new software tools from those compromised somehow, as well as develop their own applications.

As a separate method of covert correspondence, the use of communication tools implemented in online computer games should be singled out, allowing the true meaning of information exchange to be concealed.

In the context of growing tensions, panic and protests in society in view of the current pandemics, ITOs have stepped up efforts to further inflame the situation through the mass dissemination of anonymous terrorist threat reports. Criminals intensively use anonymization tools, telephone number spoofing, network address conversion, as well as foreign email services.

The proliferation of hacker groups specialising in illegal cyber-attacks for monetary reward increases the risks of computer attacks against critical information infrastructure for the benefit of ITOs. The capabilities of terrorist cyber units, set up to provoke man-made and environmental disasters, are growing as well.

Upsurge of violence across the world has given an additional impetus for growth not only to Islamism. In Europe, the mass influx and radicalisation of migrants have been an increasing antagonism between locals and refugees. In the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement has led to a wave of riots and lootings, triggering a surge in racist sentiments. As a result, supporters of far-right organisations have increasingly carried out armed attacks, believing that they are defending the national identity of their countries.

Of particular concern is the spread of neo-Nazi ideology, which is becoming quite literally a global phenomenon. There are a growing number of organised and interconnected groups of its supporters all around the world, attempts to rehabilitate Fascism are multiplying, and organisations set up by the former SS members are being encouraged. The problem is most acute in Ukraine, where state-level glorification of Nazi Germany’s collaborators is taking place, coupled with support for paramilitary formations systematically resorting to political violence.

With xenophobic sentiments spreading, the economic crisis expanding, and globalisation leading to the redistribution of the world’s wealth in favour of transnational corporations, as well as job losses and downgrading living standards, far-left ideas are

gaining popularity. Their proponents are primarily young people, who are quick to accumulate and materialize their protest potential, often through violent methods.

Virtually all regions of the world are currently engulfed by terrorist activity. In the past two years alone, according to the Global Terrorism Index, there have been more than 13,000 deadly terrorist attacks around the world, killing some 20,000 people.

ITOs' aspirations for the Russian Federation are still in place. We have also been detecting much of the aforementioned trends related to rearrangement of the forms and transformation of the methods ITOs employ in their activities.

In this context, the Russian intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies, acting under the auspices of the National Antiterrorism Committee, have been implementing a set of measures to build a reliable barrier against the terrorist threat.

Activities are being carried out to develop a nationwide system for countering terrorism. The ways to organise and coordinate the activities of the federal executive authorities, counter-terrorism commissions and operational coordination centres in the constituent entities of our Federation as well as in maritime areas are being improved.

Measures to diminish terrorist activity are being developed and implemented, whereas terrorism prevention efforts are being stepped up.

Priority is given to targeted work with young students. Last year alone, some 500,000 awareness-raising and prevention events were carried out in educational institutions, with a total coverage of more than 20 million people.

The return to normal life with respect to the Russian children removed from war zones in Iraq and Syria is a fundamental part of our work.

With a view to early identifying radicalised individuals, a migrant testing model is being introduced. A comprehensive, multi-layered system for adaptation and integration of foreigners is being put in place to protect them from the impact of terrorist narratives.

Protection of the information space is being strengthened. As a result of the measures taken, access to hundreds of thousands of materials with terrorist content has been restricted. Thousands of online campaigners, fundraisers and fighter recruiters are identified.

Approaches to creation of counter-terrorism content have been adjusted. Particular attention is paid to its target segmentation, especially with a focus on young people.

Legislative framework is being further improved. Recent years saw the adoption of a number of important regulatory legal acts that take into account international best practices and are aimed



at preempting and early suppressing new challenges and threats to security of society and the State.

In particular, the Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation until 2025 has been approved, which aims to confront both radical narratives and penetration thereof into the public consciousness in a much more effective way.

Criminal liability has been introduced not only for public calls to terrorist activity but also for propaganda aimed at spreading terrorist ideologies.

Penalties for engaging others in terrorist activity, and/or arming and training them to commit terrorism-related crimes, have in some cases been increased to life imprisonment.

Measures to prevent terrorism and to minimise and eliminate the effects of its manifestations have been strengthened, and the relevant powers vested in the heads of the Russian Federation constituent entities have been expanded.

A number of laws have been adopted to counter extremist and terrorist manifestations in places of detention. Particular attention has been paid to minimising the possibility of radicalisation among inmates.

The arsenal to combat terrorist financing, including that involving modern technology, has been significantly expanded.

Work is continued to consolidate the legislative framework for measures to counter dissemination of false reports of terrorist acts in the Internet. Additional requirements for telecom operators are established.

Overall, improvements in the activities of counter-terrorism entities in our country, as well as in the relevant regulatory framework, have made it possible to provide a preemptive response to emerging threats, including disrupting activities of a number of cells planning terrorist attacks.

A downward trend in the number of terrorism-related crimes in Russia has been consolidated. Over the past two years, the Russian intelligence, security,

and law enforcement agencies have prevented 129 crimes of this type, including 78 terrorist attacks.

The North Caucasus insurgency has been wiped out, and the remaining supporters of illegal armed groups and radical Islam in our country have been disorganised.

The results prove the efficiency of Russia's nationwide counter-terrorism system. We are willing and ready to share lessons learned and operational information available to us with our foreign partners.

In this regard, we pay special attention in our work to the development of international cooperation, one of the tasks of which is to consolidate the counter-terrorism efforts of the competent authorities of different countries.

The Council of Heads of National Security Enforcement Agencies and Special Services of the CIS Member States, the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations, the Council of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and other multilateral and bilateral formats have proven to be of use as platforms for dialogue.

For the improved information exchange purposes, we keep developing the International Counterterrorism Database. New technological solutions and modern software are being introduced, and individualised cooperation is built with each partner to ensure that their information requirements are met within a short time frame.

Organising and holding joint operational activities and counter-terrorist drills is a crucial area of our work.

This structured collaboration has brought a number of practical implementations. In particular, thanks to timely information from our foreign partners, a number of violent attacks on civilians were thwarted.

Clearly, in the face of the global terrorist threat, there is a need for greater unity of effort across the international community. A truly effective counter-terrorism coalition can only be built when all its members, without any exception, are guided by unified, jointly developed positions in their fight against terrorism.

Today, however, certain geopolitical players, while condemning terrorism as a phenomenon, are at the same time trying to use ITOs or their structural units to such players' opportunistic benefits.

New terrorist groups are created with direct assistance of intelligence services of several countries.

Attempts are made to rehabilitate the outfits tarnished by their involvement in terrorist activities and to give them the status of opposition militias.

ITOs are directly assisted through provision of personnel, financial, inventory, logistical, information, medical and other support.

There have also been instances of interference in the affairs of other states under the pretext of combating terrorism.

The patronage given to neo-Nazi and terrorist groups is becoming a dangerous trend as well.

Perniciousness of this practice is obvious. Coddling with terrorists, trying to divide them into "good ones" and "bad ones", are fatal moves, as groups that have felt their strength are impossible to ensure even short-term control over. Historically, bandits always get out of control and commit bloody crimes, including in the countries having created and supported them in the past.

Absolutely no double standards or compromises of any kind are acceptable here. They lead to nothing but discredit of the international community's efforts to neutralise the threat, create conditions for legitimisation of terrorism and Nazism, erode cultural and moral foundations of an enduring aversion to terror and, as a result, reduce the resilience of society to radical narratives.

The current contradictions must be resolved first and foremost on the basis of unconditional respect for the norms and principles of international law, along with ruling out the use of terrorist and extremist groups in political interests, stating the primary role of states in combating terrorism both nationally and within the framework of multilateral cooperation.

We are convinced that the United Nations and its specialised bodies should play a central coordinating role in bringing together states from around the world to counter terrorism.

I would assure you that Russia is open to further development of constructive cooperation with foreign intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies, as well as international organisations, on all topical security issues.

This cooperation is particularly important on the eve of the European Football Championship. We are confident that the wealth of experience we have gained in organising and securing such events prior to and during the 2018 FIFA World Cup will be useful to all stakeholders.

I am confident that our common work today will culminate in another step towards a convergence of stances to make a tangible contribution to building broad international cooperation in countering the terrorist threat.

In conclusion, I wish all the forum participants a successful and fruitful work.



# **SPEECH BY I. G. SIROTKIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE OF RUSSIA — HEAD OF THE NATIONAL ANTITERRORISM COMMITTEE CENTRAL OFFICE AT THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF COUNTER-TERRORISM AGENCIES OF MEMBER STATES**

**(28 JUNE 2021)**

---

Dear Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Chair,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Having the opportunity in such a representative international forum to share our assessments of the current situation with regard to counter-terrorism, I have to note that the preconditions for the aggravation of existing threats and emergence of new ones have been formed since the First High-Level Conference.

Although the plans of international terrorism to establish its own state entity, a caliphate, on the Syrian and Iraqi lands have by now been finally thwarted, terrorists there have switched to guerrilla warfare methods. At the same time, given their significant loss of ground in the Middle East region, ISIL and Al-Qaida have been making efforts to spread their influence in South-East Asia, Central Asia and Africa.

Adapting to dynamic conditions, ITO ringleaders make their supporters in European countries, including Russia, oriented towards the creation of sleeper cells, tasking them with committing autonomous terrorist activities, involving the family members of active and eliminated terrorists as well.

There are alarming reports of intensified attempts by international terrorist organisations to acquire new

types of weapons. Bandits are interested in gaining access to hazardous biological and chemical substances, and using unmanned aerial vehicles.

Terrorist propaganda involving advanced telecommunications capabilities is currently on the rise, this being partly helped by pandemic-related restrictions. By creating quality content that appeals to a range of target audiences, they aim to maximise the geography of terrorist ideologies and recruitment in various parts of the world.

Through the use of cryptography to maintain secret communications, terrorists seek to create a self-contained information space, a kind of “cyber caliphate”.

The aforementioned quarantine restrictions have exacerbated economic problems and social conflicts and, as a consequence, have contributed to the spread of protest sentiments among the population.

National and racial divisions, previously dormant in societies, have led to a surge of aggression on the part of far-right organisations.

Of particular concern is the spread of neo-Nazi ideology and attempts to rehabilitate Fascism and its accomplices.

In the context of globalisation and the spread of xenophobic sentiments, far-left ideologies are getting increasingly popular, especially among young people.

The basis for countering the above-mentioned terrorist aspirations in the Russian Federation is a nationwide system legislatively established 15 years ago, which, under the coordinating role of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, combines at the federal and regional level the organisation of both the forcible suppression of terrorism and a preventive response to emerging terrorist threats.

The key role in organising counter-terrorism activities is assigned to the competent State bodies, which involve representatives of non-governmental structures, public associations and spiritual organisations in prevention work as part of the implementation of the federal Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism and the Strategy for Countering Extremism.

Young people are those who need priority attention. We strive to ensure that anti-terrorism content targeting them is incorporated into individually tailored awareness-raising materials with due account for the age and psychological traits of the youth audience.

We believe that apart from legislating restrictive measures to block and remove terrorist propaganda from the Internet, filling social media with visible counter-narrative content that is in demand among the younger generation helps to protect the information space from terrorist ideologies.

Serious efforts are being made to create a comprehensive multi-level system for the adaptation and integration of migrants in their new social and economic environment.

In terms of return to peaceful life of persons who have previously fallen under the influence of terrorist ideas and already served their sentences, positive results are achieved through individually targeted systematic work with them by special commissions for their adaptation and re-socialisation, established on a municipal level.

The most important task is to decontaminate the minds of children brought up in terrorist families, who are being returned home from Syria and Iraq, of the bacilli of terrorism.

The steady downward trend in the number of terrorist crimes committed in Russia confirms the effectiveness of our approaches.

We believe that the United Nations' solution to the task of mutual exchange of successful national practices of countering terrorist threats and coordinating the efforts of competent authorities in various countries provides broad opportunities for consolidating the global community in that field.

We attach particular importance to combining intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2354 (2017), 2462 (2019), and 2482 (2019),

and the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006).

The Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations, the Council of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, and the Council of Heads of National Security Agencies and Special Services of the CIS Member States have proven to be efficient platforms.

In the work of the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organisations, we proceed from the postulate of making counter-terrorist cooperation free of politics.

Twenty years of experience with the Meeting have proven the appropriateness of its development. Successful work of the Meeting is greatly contributed by the dialogue with the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate, Sanctions Committees, and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Security of major international sporting events has constantly been in the focus of the Meeting.

We consider the adoption of the Joint Statement, agreed by all participants, in support of United Nations Security Council resolutions 2462 (2019) and 2482 (2019) on stepping up joint efforts to counter financing of terrorism and promptly respond to threats posed by the nexus between terrorism and organised crime, to be an achievement of the Meeting.

It is impossible to counter international terrorism effectively without creating a common counter-terrorism information space. In order to address the challenge, there is the International Counterterrorism Database (ICD), a versatile tool fully enabling the implementation of the Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters<sup>1</sup>.

The results of our fight against terrorist threats depend directly on united efforts of all members of the international community, guided by collectively elaborated stances.

Today, however, we witness the attempts to exploit ITOs for opportunistic purposes. No double standards should be acceptable in this respect. They have the effects of discrediting the international community efforts to combat terrorism and legitimising terrorism.

We reaffirm our openness to developing constructive cooperation. And we stand ready and willing to share the lessons learned.



<sup>1</sup> The Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters were developed in 2015 by the CTC together with the UN Security Council's CTED at a special meeting on stemming the flow of FTFs (Madrid). The document is based on existing best practices of states and international and regional organisations in stemming the flow of FTFs. In 2018, the document was updated at a special meeting of the UNSC CTC.

# THE INTERNATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM DATABASE AS AN EFFICIENT TOOL TO BUILD A UNIFIED COUNTER-TERRORISM INFORMATION SPACE

The effective information exchange using modern technology solutions contributes to the timely resolution of tasks faced by counter-terrorism entities, including the ability to actively counter threats posed by members of international terrorist organisations.

In 2008, pursuant to the agreements on the exchange of information on terrorist threats, as reached at the III, IV, and V Meetings of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies, and Law Enforcement Organisations, the Russia's FSB established the International Counterterrorism Database (ICD, Database). Technological development, organisational and other support of the Database are coordinated by the National Antiterrorism Committee Central Office.

Twenty security agencies from sixteen foreign countries were the original ICD participants. Currently, 58 intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as nine specialised bodies of international organisations (United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee; Collective Security Treaty Organisation Secretariat; INTERPOL General Secretariat; National Central Bureau of INTERPOL at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO RATS); Anti-Terrorism Centre of Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS ATC); CIS ATC Representative Office in the Central Asian Region; Advisory Service to the Council of Commanders-in-Chief of National Border Guard of Member States of the CIS; and African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism), have round-the-clock access to the ICD resources, regularly using the Database as a practical tool for information exchange.

More than 90,000 information pieces on counter-terrorism issues are available to users of the Database, in Russian and English, including:

information on more than 50,000 individuals involved in terrorist activities, of which 16,000 are foreign terrorist fighters;



information on 12,000 terrorism-related crimes;  
data on the activities of 76 terrorist organisations;  
40 thousand photos and videos;  
more than 1,000 information materials, including  
190 on issues related to countering terrorist ideologies.

Structurally, the ICD consists of the Unclassified and Restricted Information Segments, which differ in terms of content, technological capabilities and access procedures.

Thus, both types of the segments contain summarised information with regard to:

persons placed on national, inter-State (through CIS Member States) and international watch-lists, as well as those included in the Common Watch-List of CIS Member States and the United Nations Security Council sanctions lists for terrorism-related crimes;  
persons having missed in the areas of intense terrorist activity;

terrorist acts and other terrorism-related events (location, time, number of victims, photo and video footage, and other information);

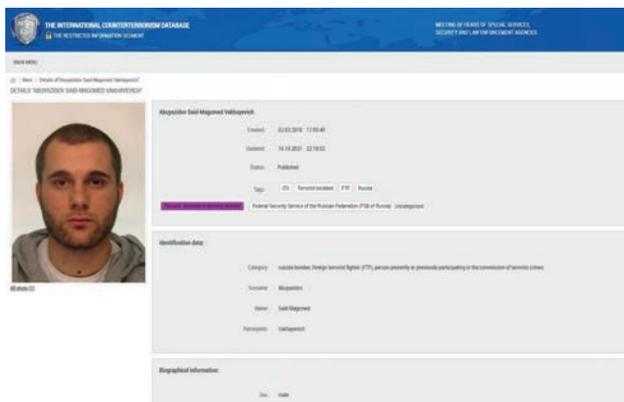
organisations officially banned in the member states.

The users of these segments of the Database are also able to access:

counter-terrorism regulatory and legislative acts of the ICD parties;

information and analytical articles and pieces on counter-terrorism issues;

official statements and reports by officials;



assets used to carry out terrorist acts and forms and methods of operation of various international terrorist organisations.

Unlike the Unclassified Information Segment, whose users have equal rights of access to the content therein, functionality of the ICD's Restricted Information Segment allows for restricted access to any information available therein, if so requested by the contributing partner.

In addition, the Restricted Information Segment of the Database has a built-in email client that allows participants to receive specialised technical and methodological advice from relevant professionals.

Wide variety of resources available on a single flexible information platform, timely posting of relevant information in the ICD, and real-time accessibility of its resources make it possible to provide impactful information support for and coverage of a vast range of measures to combat and prevent terrorism, including international ones.

The Database is now a ready-to-use tool for creating a common information space on counter-terrorism issues and promoting dialogue between intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies of different states.

An important advantage of the ICD is that new partners are free to join regardless of their membership in international organisations. Access to the Database can be granted pursuant to agreements between senior officials of the Russian Federation and the states concerned, as well as official requests from intelligence, security or law enforcement agencies of the states concerned to the Russia's FSB.

materials on the range of issues as to terrorism financing;

materials on countering terrorist ideologies, including psycholinguistic expertise of extremist content and prevention of manifestations of terrorism and extremism in educational organisations and correctional institutions.

These ICD segments offer an advanced search engine for meaningful selection of relevant information according to specified criteria, including: information on persons with certain depth of complicity in terrorism-related crimes, their ties with other persons, terrorist organisations or events; on terrorist offences committed in a certain period or location; as well as other information and references of interest to the user.

In the Restricted Information Segment of the ICD, the participants are able to obtain additional information with regard to:

- foreign terrorist fighters, indicating relevant fingerprint details thereof;
- persons involved in terrorism financing;
- terrorism- and extremism-related web resources blocked;

proceedings of the Meetings of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law-Enforcement Organisations of Foreign States Partners of the Russia's FSB, as well as assessments and forecasts for terrorist threats;

intelligence and security agencies' assets and tactics for countering activities of international terrorist organisations, including records of international drills;

