



Russian Federation - recent amendments of the official list of terrorist organisations

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On the 28 July 2006 the Russian Federal authorities updated their official list of entities which are officially proscribed by the Russian government as terrorists organisations. It contained several organizations, including Jamaah al Islamiya, the Pakistan based Lashar-e Toba, Hizb u Jahar, and the Muslim Brotherhood. It was noted that, despite the current conflict in Lebanon and Gaza, the Russian list omitted to proscribe HAMAS and Hezbollah. Some commentators took this omission as a riposte to the EU and the USA. The day before the list was issued, the European Court of Human Rights gave judgment against the Russian government in the case of a Chechen male suspect who six years ago, was murdered in the custody of the Russian armed forces. His widow had pursued her claim in the European Court of Human Rights and now gained a favourable judgment and compensation.

However, the judgment in the European Court was foreseen and the exact date of the judgment was known for some time. It is suggested that the true significance of the Russian list of proscribed terrorist organisations is not concerning the omission of HAMAS and Hezbollah, or the recent European Court of Human rights judgment, but is due to more long term events.

Between 28 and 31 March 2004 42 individuals died as a result of terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in Tashkent and Bukhara. 19 of the casualties were as a result of bomb attacks in Tashkent. For the first time in this Central Asia, women suicide bombers were used in the terrorist attacks, detonating themselves in the Chorsu bazaar area of Taskhkent. Uzbek Law government investigators openly linked the attacks to Islamic extremism with some form of Al Qaeda support. The main suspect organisation was the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (I.M.U.) This organisation was formed in 1999, with the objective of overthrowing the government, and replacing the governing regime with an Islamic fundamentalist movement. It is based in southern Kazakhstan, near to the Uzbek border, and within less than a days travel to the Uzbek capital Tashkent

Just over a year later, in May 2005, riots and prison break outs occurred in the city of Andijan, and were ruthlessly suppressed by the authorities who called in military support to civilian police. 187 people died as a result of this intervention. The government claimed the civil unrest was caused by the Islamic extremists, particularly the I.M.U. The repression was unequivocally condemned by the EU and USA, effectively isolating Uzbekistan.

As a result, Uzbekistan has turned to, and is receiving support from, Russia and China, both of whom view the Uzbek regime as subject to the common threat that they too feel, from central Asian Islamic terrorist groups. Before 2004 Uzbekistan regarded Russia with intense suspicion, as part of its dual policies of jealously guarding its independence since the break up of the Soviet Union, as part of its regional policy of being the dominant economic power amongst the central Asian republics of Tajikstan, Turkmenistan Kazakhstan and Kyrzhistan. Since 2005 this policy of hostility to Russia has been reversed, and Russia has gained an ally.

If the Russian list of proscribed terrorist organisations of 28 July 2006 is re-examined, it will be noted that it contains the organisation Hizb u Tahar. This organisation is radical Muslim group which aims for a Caliphate across central Asia. It is specifically targeted by the Uzbek authorities.

The full significance of the Russian terrorist financing list and the link to events in central Asia can be seen in the final recent event. On 3 August 2006 Russia extradited 12 Uzbek nationals involved in the Andijan disturbances. Human rights organisations and the US

State Dept denounced this, pointing to the possibility of an unfair trial and the possibilities of the individuals facing the death penalty at the hands of the Uzbek authorities. Russia nonetheless carried out the extraditions.

The latest Russian list of officially proscribed organisations must not be viewed in the context of the present (July-August 2006) armed conflict in Lebanon and Gaza. The true significance lies in the fact that, whilst Russia is fully committed to international cooperation against terrorism, it has policy priority on regional issues. And the regional issues are not only those of the Chechen conflict, but potential terrorism in central Asia.