

## **The System of the Terrorism-Supportive Ideology Counteraction in the Context of Russia's All-National Counterterrorism System**

Distinguished Chair,  
Dear participants of the briefing,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity of addressing the audience of this high representation to share Russia's experience in countering such an evil as the terrorism-supportive ideology is. Our today's report is a follow-on to the discussion of the broad variety of counterterrorism-related matters we had started this July at the XV-th Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law-Enforcement Organizations in St. Petersburg. It was "on the margins" of that highly recognized international forum where a tentative agreement on holding this briefing event was reached, and the range of the issues, I am going to make a point of today, was outlined.

The terrorist manifestations recorded over the past several years had clearly highlighted the inadequacy of existent counteraction mechanisms against the level and the nature of modern-day terrorist threats. There is a growing worldwide trend towards a strategic shift from locally staged attacks to subversive activities on an increasingly larger scale taking the form of an all-out terrorist warfare. This massive campaign involves producing an informational and psychological impact on the public psyche so, as to bring about the permanent sensation of fear and to provoke anti-government attitudes within society.

By the turn of the last century, Russia was among the first Member States to face the unmatched challenges from terrorist organizations, having sustained so considerable human losses as a consequence, that the very existence of our state had been in jeopardy. The situation had necessitated some exigent and decisive actions to be taken so, as to give an adequate response to terrorism-related challenges and threats.

In the aftermath of the September 2004 Beslan school hostage-taking, which had been one of the most spectacular terrorist attacks in terms of both its scale and cynicism, with the number of hostages totaling 1,128, including 800 children, and with the death toll of 333, the President of Russia took a decision to cardinaly review national counterterrorism policies and formulated the task "...to create a much more efficient security system..., as would have been adequate to the actual level and scope of the newly-emerging threats. The most important thing, however, is our nation's mobilization in the face of the common menace. As we have seen from other countries experiences, the most effective response to terrorists is based on the state's might combined with well-organized and cohesive civil society".

As soon as in 2006, the Federal Law "On Counteraction to Terrorism" and the corresponding Presidential Decree were adopted, stipulating these principles in the form of outlining a new all-national system of counterterrorism. This system is based on the three principal components, specifically: measures of terrorism prevention (to include proactive prevention with respect to terrorist ideology, which is the central point of today's discussion); minimization and elimination of terrorism-related consequences; as well as the suppression of terrorism by force. These three pillars altogether make up the all-national system of terrorism counteraction in Russia. The principal efforts made by different actors within the system have in recent years been focused specifically on the first component in which the entire potential of civil society has been employed most vigorously. The main rationale behind setting up the National Antiterrorism Committee was to provide for the interaction of Russia's ministries and

agencies, while the tasks of suppressing terrorist attacks military style and providing direction in the course of related counterterrorist operations were assigned to the Federal Operational Coordination Center.

The decisions taken by the National Antiterrorism Committee and the Federal Operational Coordination Center are legally binding to all the federal and local level government authorities, establishments, officials and individual citizens countrywide. These bodies comprise the heads of 23 governmental entities to include vice-speakers of both chambers within Russia's bicameral Parliament, as well as deputy heads of both the President's Office (Administration) and the Cabinet (Government of Russia). The Director of Russia's FSB has been presiding at the Committee by virtue of his official status. This particular composition, reflecting a symbiosis of civic agencies and those with military and law-enforcement functions, enables a productive work in dealing with our present subject matter by way of concentrating primary efforts notably on terrorism prevention, to include an ideological aspect. The Federal Law enacted in July 2016 provides additionally for the legally binding effect of the decisions taken by the dedicated antiterrorist commissions as were duly set up in all the regions (constituent territories) of the Russian Federation and have been similarly presided by top-level officials of respective regions and republics. According to the federal legislation, all legal entities and natural persons have been subject to liability for non-compliance with the directives of the National Antiterrorism Committee, while the federal territories have been empowered to impose sanctions for a failure to meet the requirements set by regional antiterrorist commissions. The novelties of this Federal Law have expanded the area of responsibility on the part of local level authorities (as you may see on the slide).

On municipalities level antiterrorist commissions are being set up subject to regulations by a higher regional level commissions.

Therefore, Russia was the first country in the world to introduce the legal framework of counterterrorist activities providing for the preemptive build-up of relevant antiterrorist resources as well as for the detection and suppression of terrorists, foreign nationals included, through all successive stages of terrorist crimes' preparation and commission, namely, the recruitment, training, operational deployment in world's "hot spots" and subsequent return of terrorist fighters to Russia with a view to orchestrating and perpetrating acts of terrorism and sabotage. The enforcement of relevant legal provisions enables the successful detection of the individuals who take part in local armed conflicts. We ensure the continuity of tracking down and irreversibility of punishment with respect to all the militants coming back to Russia along with their recruiters, travel facilitators and sponsors. In terms of their legal status, terrorists in Russia are treated on equal terms with war criminals. The scope of the criminal law application was expanded with respect to the foreign nationals and stateless persons who committed their crimes outside Russia. Individuals of this type should be culpable under the Russian penal code in all cases where it is provided for in any internationally applicable instrument setting obligations pertaining to criminal law matters to which Russia is a party.

Russia has its own Comprehensive List of Organizations, to include the foreign and international outfits, officially designated as "terrorist entities" by our country's judicial authorities.

The taking of such an integrated approach to counterterrorism was helpful in making a number of advances in this field.

Over the past five years, we had practically decimated Russia's all-national statistical record of terrorism-related crimes (36 incidents recorded in 2015 versus 365 in 2011). In particular, no large-scale terrorist attacks had occurred in the Russian Federation over the past three years. According to some experts, the overall change in the situation across the North Caucasus has to date been a rare example of the successful elimination of a major focal point of terrorism as well as of the de-radicalisation on the part of so many people known of their terrorist involvements in the past.

As it was previously noted, these achievements were made possible not exclusively due to a military crackdown, but mainly owing to terrorism-supportive ideology counteraction, as this aspect has been prioritized in the context of Russia's national system of antiterrorist measures. This principle has been enshrined in the Russian legislation, which defines terrorism as not merely the practice of exerting pressure on national governments or international bodies so, as to influence their decision-making, but rather as the general philosophy of violence terrorists typically try to instill to the same effect.

The crucial point of our approach to counterterrorism is that Russia has been actively supporting the leading role of the United Nations, as well as of the Security Council and its Counter-Terrorism Committee in this field. We have been making our relevant efforts in a way transparent to the entire global community. Specifically, in October 2012, experts of the U.N. Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate visiting Russia had an opportunity to get familiarized with our system of terrorism counteraction to the fullest extent possible. Based on their assessment of the system as being "a fairly efficient tool which practically enabled the reduction in the scope of the terrorist activity within the country", members of the U.N. evaluation team recommended Russia "to share available expertise with other Member States", which, in fact, is what we are constantly doing.

The counteraction to international terrorism will never be successful without an introduction of a universal antiterrorist information environment and also without an appropriate informational support of the efforts to counter the spread of terrorist ideology. These are exactly the goals Russia has been pursuing in the form of continuously improving the International Counterterrorism Database (ICD) created pursuant to the decisions made at the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law-Enforcement Organizations. Moreover, our goal is to integrate the ICD into the context of the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy implementation. The content of the Database is in conformity with the key objectives of the Strategy, to include the promoting of an interethnic and interreligious dialogue. The practical importance of the ICD was also stressed by members of the UNSC CTED.

Inputs into the ICD depository are not limited to information on the individuals comprising the international terrorist milieu. The work is underway to compile within the Database a dedicated section focused on the ideological (counterpropaganda) aspect of counterterrorism. It consists of several sub-sections dealing with the causes and preconditions of the general public radicalization, related techniques, activities of terrorist ideologists, terrorist organizations waging aggressive ideological campaigns, testimonies by repentant terrorists, assessments made by politicians, scholars and practitioners as well as best practices in countering terrorist narratives.

Our partners within the ICD Project are 33 special services of 27 European, Asian and African states, as well as 4 dedicated counterterrorism bodies of international organizations, to include the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Anti-Terrorism Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States. All the parties to the Project have the right of access to the Unclassified Segment of the ICD. As regards the Restricted Segment, there are certain limitations in terms of gaining access to materials deposited therein, based on the requirements as might be set by originator countries. Russia, in principle, has no objections as to providing unclassified information to non-governmental clients being part of civil society, with a reservation that governmental authorities of the requesting state party should guarantee the handling of the information in a legally-appropriate manner.

Distinguished Chair,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Over recent years, terrorism has been experiencing a profound and rapid transformation in terms of its organizational principles and ideology. The new characteristics of terrorism are the networked structure, high level of operational autonomy and anonymity, resilience as well as integration, both technical and technological, into modern-day civilization. Analysts have more often been pointing at “virtual terror” as a new phenomenon presupposed by the wide use of the social networks being instrumental in terms of ideological expansion, promotion of terrorist weapons production technologies and terrorist recruitment. Definitely, terrorists have found and taken advantage of the cheapest social support multiplier ever!

It is important to understand, that terrorism as a philosophy and a modus operandi may not come out of nowhere, as its inception takes place in the heart and mind of a human, above all. It is a must to start countering the phenomenon before the point after which the development of a terrorist thinking is deemed complete. We do have relevant expertise applied in Russia not only with respect to the citizens actually brainwashed by terrorists, but also to those largely responsive to their criminal narratives.

Notably, in September 2006 the State Duma, acting on the recommendation of the National Antiterrorism Committee, declared the amnesty in order to bring about civic peace to the Southern Federal District of Russia which at that time had been known as the region with one of the poorest counterterrorism records due to the international terrorist groups’ involvement. The amnesty encompassed the individuals who quit membership in illegal paramilitary formations or stable armed groups (gangs), also having given up their weapons and any military hardware. Totally, around 800 former bandit-insurgents had taken their chances on the amnesty within a year.

Having capitalized on these positive developments, we were able to move further from the general terrorism prevention to the individually-targeted preventive outreach efforts focusing on specific persons affected by terrorist propaganda. The guidelines had been incorporated in the Concept of Counterterrorism approved by the President of Russia. The Comprehensive Plans of Terrorism-Supportive Ideology Counteraction (for the periods of 2008-12 and 2013-18), also being subject to the presidential approval, provided even clearer and more systemic outlines of preventive measures.

The work of improving the efficiency of regional and municipal preventive outreach efforts is being done in accordance with relevant regional and municipal programs that are drafted in furtherance of the federal Comprehensive Plan and should be endorsed by the top level officials in the Russian Federation constituent territories who preside at respective antiterrorist commissions. At the same levels the work is being done to address the categories of citizens which are most susceptible to terrorism-supportive ideology. In 13 Russian regions special "commissions for the reconciliation, social reintegration and adaptation to peaceful life of repentant bandit-insurgents and their abettors" were set up under the directives issued by respective governors. These commissions are comprised of regional level executive government and law-enforcement officials along with members of public and religious associations. Starting from 2010, around 300 individuals, either active members or facilitators of illegal paramilitary groups, have been persuaded into disengagement. Members of "reconciliatory commissions" practice private sessions with relatives of those who serve their sentences in relation with terrorist activities, as well as with the close associates of the individuals located in the conflict zones abroad.

Meanwhile, the commissions have stepped up their outreach efforts pertaining to the orphans, whose parents were killed fighting within the ranks of bandit-insurgency groups, with a view to precluding the possible antisocial impact on their personal development and subsequent involvement in the terrorist activity. The principal functions of prevention with respect to individuals of this category are incumbent upon republican and regional police authorities. Juvenile crime inspectors are engaged in the individual preventive work with these children in educational institutions, also interviewing them at home in order to either protect them against possible negative influence from outside or to minimize their possible influence upon other minors. The best results are achieved in concert with the municipal commissions for the reconciliation, social reintegration and adaptation to peaceful life. The ultimate goal of the individually-oriented educational outreach is to engage individuals of this type in socially-important activities (sports, cultural projects, charity etc.) facilitating their personal development free of any unwanted external influence and effective socialization.

The genuine Islam is, in essence, a religion of peace and constructive endeavor. Its congregation totals nearly a billion and a half worshippers worldwide. Muslims constitute the biggest portion of the population in more than 40 countries. The same demographic ratio is typical of quite a few Russia's constituent republics. However, Russia had an unhappy experience of being confronted by the adherents to some militant Islamist teachings who had been using the banner of Islam as their front cover while bombing apartment blocks, capturing hospitals and schools and even killing the Muslim spiritual leaders, some prominent imams who had professed peace, goodness, and the worthiness of life of every human being before dying with the holy book of Quran in hands.

When assessing the tendency towards Russian citizens' traveling abroad for the purpose or under the pretext of religious education we have to admit, that some of those travelers upon their return to the motherland display clear indications of having radical viewpoints and thinking, as well as of being involved in propagating terrorism-supportive ideology under the disguise of religious tenets. Several spiritual administrations of Russian Muslims concluded the corresponding agreements with the Islamic educational institutions based overseas, specifically, in Tunisia, Turkey, Syria and Jordan, on taking appropriate measures against the radicalization of those who

undergo training in these countries. The work to that effect has been initiated by religious congregations; at the same time Russia's current legislation stipulated the participation of religious, youth, trade union and other public associations in measures to counter terrorism, thus providing legal grounds for such engagement. On the local level this work is being done in coordination with republican and municipal authorities.

In a number of regions with the predominance of Muslims the refresher training and professional certification programs have been in place for the individuals who had stated an intention to start preaching practices in Russia after being trained abroad. Specifically, in the Republic of Tatarstan candidate preachers must undergo an advanced training course at the Center of Excellence for imams and tutors, which has been functioning on the premises of the Russian Islamic Institute. Each of the candidates must be interviewed by the principals which is a mandatory procedure before the personal profile of a new tutor is approved by the Council of Muftis.

Several major improvements were introduced into this work after the establishment of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, whose areas of responsibility you may see on the screen.

In our view, more outfits of this type on a regional level would provide the government authorities with new opportunities to counter the propaganda of anti-social ideological views under different religious covers as well as to better coordinate relations between the state and different spiritual congregations.

Notably, the youth remains in the focus of attention of terrorist ideologists. Out of 546 members of illegal paramilitary groups who had surrendered to the authorities on the terms of the aforementioned amnesty in 2006, about 80 percent was comprised of the young people aged between 19 and 30. Based on the analysis of the situation over the past five years, four out of every five militants killed in action had been aged under 30.

It has become a common trend since recently, that, apart from socially-maladjusted or financially-challenged persons, people with success stories (athletes, artists, students, relatives of highly placed officials etc.) have been joining terrorist groups. This refers not solely to Russia, but to many other countries as well. In a sense, terrorism-inspiring ideology is "in vogue" these days, similarly to what was the case with fascist, anarchist, radical Communist and other ideological doctrines through different periods in the world history. We take all this into account in the process of designing the terrorism ideology counteraction system, when distributing relevant powers among government authorities.

In particular, the Russian Federation Government, with due reliance on its legal powers under the federal Constitution law, provides direction and oversight to a number of agencies, assigning them to execute some obligatory tasks, including those related to terrorism ideology counteraction. This could be exemplified in the decree "On the Terms of Reference of the Federal Executive Authorities Answerable to the Russian Federation Government in the Field of Counterterrorism". Under this regulation, Russia's Ministry of Education and Science, for instance, shall provide for the implementation of the cluster of measures aimed at the efficient counteraction to terrorist propaganda, specifically to the dissemination of the materials containing either appeals to the terrorist activity or the advocacy of such an activity.

In order to inculcate the steadfast rejection of terrorism-supportive ideology in the youth, the Education and Science Ministry has been:

- including the materials exposing the criminal essence of terrorism and its supportive ideology in the curricula across all educational institutions;
- authorizing publications of popular science, documentary and fictional type with an antiterrorist message; embedding in the texts of teaching aids mandatory sections with explanatory comments on the threats entailed by the propaganda of terrorism, specifically ethnic and sectarian divisions, and ways of counteraction thereto;
- introducing corrections into the “Basic Course of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” so as to avoid turning this curriculum into the platform for propagating any particular religion in prejudice of the principle of equal social importance with respect to any traditional religious belief.

Other ministries, agencies and public associations have been:

- actively using all-national and regional youth, above all, student fora (*Seliger, Caspian* etc.); rallying regular conventions focused on the prevention of terrorist views propaganda among the youth, as well as on inculcating multiethnic and multireligious tolerance in the youth;
- providing antiterrorist narratives in support of children’s online media projects (such as *Spas-Extrim* and *Spasaykin*) to be subsequently used in the “Everyday Life Safety Basics” primary schools curriculum; this includes the information coverage and advertising of relevant publications in federal and regional media;
- taking special measures to protect the Internet-based media against the dissemination of terrorism-friendly content. Specifically, in 2014-16, based on the corresponding decisions made by court and prosecutorial authorities, Russian competent agencies had taken appropriate measures to either block or to remove from online circulation of over 15,000 materials featuring terrorist propaganda content.

For their part, antiterrorist commissions and public associations have been doing a critically important work populating the Internet with positive antiterrorist messages, targeting primarily the hearts and minds of the youth audience, these publications being able to compete successfully with terrorist narratives.

People working in the field of antiterrorism should meet appropriate qualification criteria, having all relevant knowledge and information at their disposal. To this end, purposeful measures are being taken in terms of improving the system of training the cadres to be deployed on the first line of terrorism ideology counteraction.

Given the increased rate of drawing people of younger generations into the terrorist activity, - sometimes, by way of misusing legitimate educational institutions, - a set of adequate and comprehensive preventive measures is necessary. Measures of this kind are being implemented in the form of imposing upon school teachers a direct duty to inculcate the habits of active rejection of terrorist ideology in their pupils, as well as establishing the teachers’ liability for a failure to do this duty. Russia’s Ministry of Education and Science has accordingly drafted appropriate amendments to the “Law on Education” and updated the supplementary education programs intended to provide orientation to government and municipal officials in dealing with the youth. Funding

was also provided in support of some refresher training programs for higher education institutions focused on terrorism ideology counteraction.

The current escalation of terrorist activities worldwide necessitates more resolute steps towards the counteraction to the spread of terrorism-supportive ideology and general public radicalization. More visible against this background, however, has been the scarcity of international contacts as could have helped consolidate the antiterrorist efforts on the part of the global community.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October Russia has submitted for consideration by the U.N. Security Council a draft resolution on “counteraction to terrorist and radical extremist ideology” in furtherance of the resolution 1624 (2005), which came as the first international call for criminalizing the instigation to terrorism and public advocacy thereof, which our country has implemented for the time being. We will not falter under the initially fierce critique of this Russian initiative. And we are ready to work in a concerted and precisely targeted manner with our partners towards establishing a rapport pertaining to all the key points of today’s presentation, with the United Nations and its dedicated committees providing an unconditionally overarching coordination. It is especially important nowadays, for the sake of building mutual trust between Member States, cementing the legal foundations of international counterterrorist cooperation and closing the ranks against the global terrorism-related threat. The same refers to a number of the immediate standing tasks which require of us combining all our efforts.

This appeal is addressed to all of us.

I also wish everyone successful work. Thank you for your kind attention.

Now, I would welcome any questions you might have.