

Blame Airport Owners for All Terror Attacks

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Throughout 10 years of terrorist attacks on Russian soil, not a single official has ever been held responsible for negligence of duty. Nobody was fired after terrorists seized Moscow's Dubrovka theater. Nobody was called on the carpet after the massacre in Beslan and bomb attacks at Moscow's Rizhskaya and Avtozavodskaya metro stations and in the Vladikavkaz, Astrakhan and Samara marketplaces. Even when the Nevsky Express train was bombed twice in separate incidents, nobody thought to take Russian Railways chief Vladimir Yakunin to task.

But when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the international arrivals hall of Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, President Dmitry Medvedev told all of Russia that the guilty parties were none other than the owners of the privately held airport.

Who else could it have been?

Based on Medvedev's remarks, four of the airport's managers now face criminal charges. As you might have guessed, not a single one of the Federal Security Service officers responsible

for protecting Domodedovo from terrorist attacks has been blamed. There is just one obstacle to the criminal investigation. There is not, nor can there ever be, a law that holds people accountable for preventing terrorist attacks in an airport's international arrivals hall or any other area open to the public, including streets and shopping centers.

Happily, on Feb. 8, just two weeks after the Domodedovo attack, the Transportation Ministry found a way around this obstacle by issuing an order on "requirements for transportation security." The order spells out in black and white that "subjects" in transportation infrastructure are obligated to "identify individuals who prepare and commit ... terrorist acts." The "subject" referred to here is defined as "any person who legally uses the transportation infrastructure."

This means that not only are Domodedovo owners Dmitry Kamenshchik and Valery Kogan responsible, but also the 21 million passengers who use the airport every year. We are all responsible: every last one of us who has ever used the metro, a public bus, a country road or a crosswalk because the directive considers each of us to be a "subject of the transportation infrastructure." According to the order by the Transportation Ministry, the entire population of 142.9 million, including infants, is responsible for all terrorist attacks carried out on Russian territory, and we all potentially face up to seven years behind bars.

The only exceptions are Federal Security Service and Interior Ministry officers because they are not "subjects of the transportation infrastructure." They are members of the security services and therefore not responsible for anything. I am not joking. This is actually how the directive is written. The mere fact that the Transportation Ministry has issued a weighty document retroactively assigning responsibility for terrorist attacks is worthy of the pen of the great 19th-century satirist Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin.

Of course, suckling infants and cheery-faced schoolchildren won't be thrown in the slammer for the latest bombing in Makhachkala for the simple reason that the directive is aimed exclusively at the owners of Domodedovo Airport. But because there was no conceivable way to lock up Kamenshchik and Kogan for failing to infiltrate rebel leader Doku Umarov's camp and predicting his next move, responsibility was placed on all citizens simultaneously. Now, if God forbid another bombing takes place anywhere in Russia, we'll know who to blame: the owners of Domodedovo.

Hey, I wouldn't mind it if the managers of Domodedovo and Lubyanka swapped jobs. Of course, this would turn Domodedovo into a circus. But terrorist attacks in Russia would probably end.

Yulia Latynina hosts a talk show on Ekho Moskvyy radio.

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