

Leader of Dagestan's Rebels Killed in Shootout

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Security forces on Monday killed an Islamist militant leader who masterminded attacks in the North Caucasus and threatened Moscow, the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said.

The committee said security forces shot dead Israpil Validzhanov and three companions early Monday in Dagestan after the militants opened fire on members of the security forces who tried to stop their car.

Validzhanov was the top representative in Dagestan of North Caucasus insurgency leader Doku Umarov, who claimed responsibility for a bomb attack at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport in January that killed 37 people.

"Special forces together with law enforcement officers neutralized four active members of the bandit underground, among them the leader of Dagestan's bandits, Israpil Validzhanov," the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said in a statement carried by RIA-Novosti.

Known among insurgents as Amir Khasan, Validzhanov received training in a separatist

militant camp in 1998 in Chechnya, where he fought federal forces that entered the region the following year in the second of two wars since 1994, the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said.

It said Validzhanov was also responsible for dozens of attacks since the war died down a decade ago.

Dagestan, a multiethnic republic between Chechnya and the Caspian Sea, is now considered the heart of the insurgency.

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