

Update on the Russia Federation's Federal Security Service

*By Stephanie Brophy
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On January 31, 2007 Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the Federal Security Service (FSB) at an annual meeting of the Collegium.¹ He commended the agency on its achievements, while acknowledging that the task of ensuring the security of the Russian Federation (RF) requires the FSB to constantly improve its work. His main points included counterterrorism, border control, anti-corruption policies, counterintelligence, and an increase in the FSB budget and personnel wages.

Counterterrorism is a significant part of the FSB mandate. Putin said that first among priorities was the need for the agency to step up efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. A recent terrorist alert dictated checks of all the main components of the RF's counterterrorism system. On January 16 the AntiTerrorism Committee said it had received a foreign report of a possible terrorist plot aimed at ground transportation and the metro system.² After this "live" test, Putin concluded the counterterrorism system could be improved. A new counterterrorism database will soon be implemented. Fingerprint data on people accused and convicted of terrorism will be included, as well as other "useful information for carrying out day to day operations." He also said that increased interagency cooperation and coordination in counterterrorist work is directly related to the 2006 creation of the National AntiTerrorist Committee headed by the director of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev. Putin especially noted the successful operations in Chechnya where armed groups and their leaders have been "neutralized." In December 2006 Patrushev said that the FSB had exposed 27 foreign intelligence officers, 89 Russian nationals working for foreign handlers, foiled more than 300 terrorist attacks and eliminated more than 100 terrorists.³

It is well known that porous borders facilitate terrorist entry and smuggling schemes. Putin said that it is crucial to "close the loopholes that allow international terrorists to enter Russian territory." He called upon the implementation of the State Border program to put in place a modern border protection infrastructure. He particularly highlighted the need to equip the most complex sections of the border in the North Caucasus. Putin also said that border security will not only keep the RF more secure, but that it will "inject new vigour" into the economies of border regions. He said that new technology and equipment can be used to prevent smuggling that is detrimental to Russia's marine and natural resources.

The economy was the next item on the agenda. Recently, Russia has enjoyed steady economic growth, and Putin said that the people should not forget that Russia

¹ Putin's speech at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/01/31/1743_type82913_117575.shtml

² "Anti-Terrorism Committee Warns of Transport Terror in Russia." RIA Novosti. January 16, 2007 at <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070116/59186121.html>

³ "Russian President Sets Task for FSB at Collegium Meeting." RIA Novosti. January 31, 2007

has ratified international anti-corruption conventions and agreements. He said, "We must ensure that the business environment in Russia is reliably protected from corruption and economic crime." Putin said that Russia's reputation as a country with a civilized economic environment would be "dealt a serious blow" if these types of crimes goes unpunished. He also mentioned the negative societal consequences of corruption, which include a culture of lying, cheating and stealing. According to Transparency International, Russia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world.⁴ In addition, investors are wary of what they see as an unstable business climate due to the perceived gangster rule of law in Russia.

Within his speech there was a gentle chide to FSB employees not to bloat their numbers through insignificant criminal cases. He said that it is important to focus on thorough investigations of crimes that represent a direct threat to the RF's national security. Boosting numbers was common during the Soviet Era when quality was sacrificed for quantity.

Security of state secrets through vigorous counterintelligence operations is another priority for the FSB. Putin said that as Russia is becoming increasingly integrated into the world economy, it is important to prevent leaks of protected political and economic information, and to ensure reliable protection for scientific developments and technology. He said, "Russia's foreign policy positions and its competitiveness on world markets depend to a great extent on this work."

Putin addressed the importance of law and order during the upcoming elections to the regional legislative assemblies and to the State Duma. He said the FSB must help protect society against those who attempt to manipulate the public through ideological extremism and intolerance, be it ethnic or religious. In his own words, "Elections are a most important democratic mechanism for the formation of state power, state power that is accountable and elected through a process of healthy political competition." The international community has questioned Russia's political climate, and the ability of opposing views to be voiced unharmed and compete in elections.

Putin felt it necessary to add that the FSB must work within the law while protecting society, and that any action must be based on the Constitution and Russian legislation. The FSB has been accused of using torture to fabricate its ideological needs, and of manipulating the courts and the prosecutor's office to its own ends.⁵ The FSB has also been accused of staging terrorist bombings against Russian civilians to incite support for the war in Chechnya, and promote loyalty to the Kremlin.⁶

Putin also spoke about budget increases and arms procurement. In 2006 the FSB budget increased by 27 percent. It will increase by a similar amount in 2007. In addition, arms purchases will increase by 20 percent this year, and spending on major construction work will increase by 73 percent. It is in the hopes that the FSB will be

⁴ See Transparency International CPI index at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006

⁵ Politkovskaya, Anna. *Putin's Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy*. Henry Holt and Company. New York, 2004. p 41.

⁶ Satter, David. *Darkness at Dawn*. Yale University Press. New Haven. 2003. p 33.

able to considerably reinforce and modernize its equipment that these robust budgetary increases are being implemented.

Putin ended his speech by telling his FSB comrades that their wages would increase by almost a quarter, which is more than double the national average. He added that special attention would be paid to resolving housing problems faced by current and retired personnel. Putin said these incentive based measures are being implemented to raise FSB effectiveness and to ensure the professional growth of its personnel.