

POINT STROKES

The non-selective use of force by the federal troops in the course of the armed conflict in Chechnia in September - October 1999

Preliminary report

by A.Cherkassov and O.Orlov

The preliminary report contains information on some cases of non-selective use of force by the federal troops during the first month of the armed conflict, before October 21.

The right-defending center "memorial" continues to collect and systematize information on the infringement of human rights and humanitarian right norms in the course of he conflict.

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. [Missile bombing of Grozny, October 21 1999](#)
 - 1.1 [Media reports](#)
 - 1.2. [Comments of the RF authorities](#)
 - 1.3. [Conclusions](#)
 2. [Bombardment of village Elistanji, October 7 1999](#)
 3. [Bombardments and firings of inhabited areas: refugee evidence](#)
 4. ["Artillery strikes their own". Dagestan, Ingushetia](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

INTRODUCTION

A month has passed since September 22, the beginning of bombardments of Grozny and other large inhabited locations of Chechnis by the federal air forces.

Reporting on the course of the warfare in the Northern Caucasus in autumn 1999 the RF officials, as well as the media (basing mainly on the words of authorities) stress the distinction of the present events from the Chechen campaign of 1994-1996. Besides little losses, they point out the selectiveness if the warfare, the use of high-precision arms aimed at the destruction of terrorists with the minimal losses among the peaceful population. These are the circumstances which must provide the support of the Government actions both by the population and by the political elite of Russia:

YEVGENI PRIMAKOV: The point strokes, of they are really point strokes, if the high-precision weapons are used, and I am sure they must be used and they are surely already used, then casualties among the peaceful population are minimum. ("Eho Moskvu", Interview, 01.10.99; 15;35).

SERGEY STEPASHIN:... The main task which must face the troops, the internal troops today, besides the destruction of the terrorist bases, is the high-precision weapons, artillery, air forces and special operations... (TV channel TV6, Obozrevatel, 10.10.99; 19.55)

These are the ways of waging war the authorities are constantly speaking about; so does Prime Minister PUTIN:

Vladimir Vladimirovich... has expressed his sincere admiration of the professionalism of pilots and in an especially warm way mevtioned the Russian armourers who had created... the high-precision weapons which allows today to deliver blows directly at the terrorist bases and to avoid unnecessary casualties among the peaceful population. (ORT, Novosti, 20.10.1999, 12.00).

How correct are these words by Putin? Even the polititians quoted above doubt their reality:

Sergey STEPASHIN: ...let us estimate objectively the fighting efficiency of our troops, including the so called high-precision weapons and space reconnaissane. During the last 5-7 years, excuse me, a brass farthing was not allotted for these technical researches. (NTV, Geroy Dnia, 05.10.99, 19.40).

The Russian militaries and officials speak a lot about using the high-precision weapons in Chechnia, although we know about it only from their words. But both media reports from Chechnia, and refugee evidence, and even, the simple comparison of the official declarations of the RF authorities and representatives of the Defence Ministry, allow to doubt the "point" and selective character of the federal troops action.

1. THE MISSILE BOMBING OF GROZNY, OCTOBER 21 1999

1.1. Media reports

About 18:10, on October 21 1999, explosions took places in some districts of Grozny; according to the report of the Associated Press correspondent Maria Aismont, there were 118 people killed and more than 400 wounded.

One of the explosions took place at the central market of Grozny. "According to the words of the witnesses, it was among the counters where they usually sell leather garments and food" (Interfax). The same was reported by the correspondents of Svoboda Radio (22.10.99, Liberty Live Programme):

Andrey BABITSKY: The stroke at the central market of Grozny, the part of it where they sell not food but garments, utensils, mechanical devices and other things, took place at the end of the working day, when everybody hurries to make the necessary purchases. This morning all of us were at the market... A whole block of counters, pavilions and tents was destroyed by the explosion.

Piotr Wail (the leader): In other words, it was an ordinary "kolkhoz market", as it was called in the past?

A.Babitsky: Yes, it was quite an ordinary kolkhoz market where they sell food, and at the place where the missile fell they sold things. We were near the General Headquarters building, in the inner yard. And at that time two explosions were heard, after which we went down to the cellar. The explosions thundered near us, in 50-60 meters; we were saved by the fact that the missiles fell on the external side of the building and, in fact, struck the facade,

According to the words of the reanimation department chief of the 9-th municipal hospital of Grozny, only that hospital "received about 17:15-17:20 (taking into account the one-hour time difference from Moscow - comment of the compiler) some 60-70 wounded people (NTV, Segodnia, 22.10.1999).

A.Babitsky. We went to the municipal hospital #9... and we found a monstrous picture there: The floors covered with blood and an enormous number of the wounded. The wounded, killed and dying people were arriving every second. By buses, minibuses, cars. The whole inner yard of the hospital was occupied by cars with heavily wounded people, there was no time to carry them into the hospital. I must say, I counted about thirty people; it was hard to say who was just wounded and who was already dead.

Hasin RADUYEV: All the missiles exploded in the central part of Grozny, at the Central Market, which functions, in fact, day and night; 61 people were killed. In the mosque of the village of Kalinin there were about 60 people at the time of the evening prayer. 41 people were killed. One of the missiles exploded in the yard of the only working maternity home in Grozny. The casualties were 13 women and 15 newborn infants. Other 7 people were killed by shells at the parking in front of the maternity home. There were many wounded near the Central Post Office where several buses with passengers were at the stop at the moment of the explosion.

The witnesses who have remained alive describe the events near the market in the following way:

Announcer: "The local inhabitants have said they had seen something explode in the air".

An inhabitant of Grozny: "Three shells from out there, three times, and as if it explodes in the air, and then these shells fly... Well, I don't know, it looked like they exploded in the air" (NTV, "Segodnia", 22.10.99).

The inhabitant of Grozny, Natalia ESTIMIROVA, was at that time taking the bus 37 near the former building of the post office. On hearing the explosion from the direction of the maternity home and on seeing the brown cloud of brick dust coming from that direction, the passengers rushed to hide from the firing in the ruins in front of the post office. Hardly had they hidden, new explosions thundered above them. The ruins remained standing, but those who were not protected by overhead covers received multiple shell wounds (Interview of N.Estimirova to M.Zamyatin and A.Cherkasov, Moscow, Memorial", 25.10.1999).

The next day the TV reports showed the destructions at the market and the deformed metal wrecks; as the Chechens said, these were fragments of the missiles "ground - ground" - "enormous, a meter and a half-large shells, marked by figurea and by cyrillic letters" (A.Babitsky).

By the words of the reanimation department chief of the 9th municipal hospital of Grozny only that hospital "received about 17:15-17:20 (taking into account the one-hour time difference from Moscow - comment of the complier) some 60-70 wounded people (NTV, Segodnia, 22.10.1999). The lists of the killed were not complete, as the relatives took away many bodies in order to bury them; and they are sure to be completed as about 100 wounded are in the critical state. The next day, the chief of the operation section of the Chechen army Mumadi Saydaev spoke about 137 killed and more than 250 wounded (Interfax).

1.2. Comments of the RF authorities

On the 22th of October, the RF authorities of different positions gave at least five essentially different comments of the event the day before.

The chief of the Russian Information center Alexander Mikhailov in his interview to the morning news programme of the NTV channel, declared that the planes of the federal troops had made not a single mission to Grozny the day before, and the tactical missiles "ground -ground" had not been used. MIKHAILOV thought it possible that the explosion in Grozny had been the result of a terrorist act prepared by the terrorists themselves.

The Chief of the Center of Public Relations of the FSB, Alexander ZDANOVITCH in his interview to the Russia Radio declared that the Federal Security Service of the RF had nothing to do with the explosions in the center of Grozny, including that at the municipal market; he said that "the FSB had information about piling weapons, ammunition, explosives at the market. Moreover, the terrorists who thought there would be no air or artillery strokes at the place of large concentration of people, deposited a great quantity of ammunition there. So we can assume, a self-explosion of ammunition could have taken place there, which has led to the death of people".

Alexander Veklitch, the chief of the joint press-center of the federal military grouping in the Northern Caucasus, declared in his interview to the ORT TV channel, that on Thursday near the Grozny market a special operation against weapon dealers had been held.

"According to the intelligence data, yesterday in the Grozny district of Birja a market was discovered where weapons and ammunition were sold to terrorists. As the result of the special operation, the market was destroyed together with the weapons and ammunition as well as the dealers. I'd like to stress that the operation was held independently of the regular arms, without using artillery or aviation".

Answering the question whether peaceful inhabitants had suffered in the course of the operation, VEKLITCH said:

"You know, at the dark time of the day peaceful inhabitants don't loaf around the market where weapons are sold to bandits and terrorists, but sit at home. That is why, if someone had suffered, these were people who sell weapons to bandits".

At the press-conference in Helsinki, the Chairman of the RF Government Vladimir PUTIN said:

"I can confirm that some explosion took place in Grozny at the market. But I want to draw the journalists' attention to the fact that it was not a market in the common meaning of the word, it was the ammunition market, so they call that place in Grozny. It was the weapons base, the ammunition depot. And this place is one of the headquarters of the bandit squads. We can assume that the explosion was the result of the conflict between some antagonistic groups".

At the same time he denied the participation of the federal side in the event, thus, in fact, denouncing the words of A.VEKLITCH:

"There is information that some special operation was carried out by federal forces. Yes, such operations are carried out regularly, there are grounds to suppose such operation was conducted yesterday as well, but it has nothing to do with the events in Grozny".

Finally, the chief of the organization and mobilization office of the RF General Staff, colonel-general PUTILIN declared:

"No blows were stricken at Grozny at that time, and the military forces have nothing to do with that affair. As Grozny at present is not controlled by the Armed forces of Russia, there is no objective possibility to confirm the objectiveness of the first announcement made".

Thus Putin has also denounced the declaration of VEKLITCH.

These declarations, in general, need no comment: PUTILIN, PUTIN, VEKLITCH, ZDANOVITCH and MIKHAILOV denounce one another themselves.

Still, the next day the "last word" of the federal side became the version which included all the three mentioned above; it was delivered by Valery MANILOV, the deputy Chief of the General Staff of the RF Air Force:

Speaking about the latest operations, including that of the 21st, it was a special operation, independent of the regular armed forces, and it was carried out in GROZNY. This rapid special operation resulted in a conflict between two large bandit groups which had been enemies for a long time, and that conflict between the two bands culminated in its sharpest phase near one of large weapon and ammunition depots. This depot is, or, as one should say now, was situated near the territory where weapon and ammunition dealing had long taken place. As the intelligence data show, that depot contained an enormous quantity of different kinds of ammunition and weapons, including missiles. So, as the result of that intense shooting, perhaps one of the strokes or tracing... hit that ammunition depot, and a powerful explosion took place. (NTV, Segodnia, 23.10.1999, 19:00).

1.3. Conclusions

As V.PUTILIN observed commenting on the event at the Grozny market:

If the missiles had fallen there, or the market had been hit by three "ground-ground" missiles, the destructions would have had an absolutely different character... (RTR, Vesti, 22.10.1999, 10:00).

Really, an explosion of one or several compact powerful explosive mechanisms on the ground level in this case is out of the question. Even TV reports allow to make several conclusions about the character of the destruction on the territory of the Grozny market:

- First, all the vertical elements (poles etc.) in the rows of stalls remained standing, while the horizontal ones (tents and overhead covers) were destroyed, broken, hit by shells;
- Second, the foregrounds show the characteristic traces of ready-made destructive elements (balls) used in ball-bombs with which, in particular, cassette ammunition is equipped (both aviation and missile warheads); the fugace element of the explosion was insignificant, the buildings seen on the foreground, have remained intact.
- Finally, the metal wrecks which were demonstrated in the reports, look like fragments of tactical missiles (guided or non-guided) allowing the cassette equipment with sub-ammunition (including ball-bombs).

The TV sequences and the story of the Grozny inhabitant exclude the versions of ZDANOVITCH about the "ammunition self-explosion", of VEKLITCH about the "special operation" and of PUTIN about the "conflict about the hostile bands". If one of them had been true, a ground explosion would have taken place with a different picture of destruction.

The RC "Memorial" had already possessed information about the use of tactical missile in their cassette variant in Chechnia. In the course of the interrogatory of the Chechen refugees on October 10-11 by representatives of the RC "Memorial" and "Grazhdanskoye Sodeystviye", some refugees from Urus-Martan said that, beginning with October 8, several missiles with cassette equipment had exploded in the district of Urus-Martan and the Roshni-Chu village. But as they must have exploded far from buildings and concentrations of people, and brought no casualties, the refugees did not focus their attention on them. The media reported the same:

High-precision weapons are also used. Last night 4 tactical missiles "ground-ground" of medium range were shot at the terrorists ... (ORT, Vremia, 11.10.1999; 21:00)

Thus, the most probable explanation of the October 21 explosion in the area of the Grozny market is the use of tactical missiles with cassette warheads.

The same opinion was given by the President of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev in the talk with the Director of the Moscow Bureau of the Svoboda radio Savik Shuster (23.10.99, Liberty Live). He denounced the version of the ammunition depot explosion as ridiculous:

R.AUSHEV: I have seen fires at ammunition depots. Even when the largest depots in the Far East exploded, there were one or two wounded. And here - such precision and so many wounded and killed. As a military man I understand that it was a tactical missile blow...

By the words of General R.Aushev, in Ingushetia and Northern Ossetia those missiles were heard flying; in all probability they had been fired from the base of the 58th Army near the Tarskoye village on the territory of the Northern Ossetia. He doubted the fact that the decision on the attack of Grozny could have been taken on the level of the army commander:

R.AUSHEV: No, the level was the highest. Everything is decided on the highest level... the missiles "ground-ground" were used... in fact, nuclear weapon carriers. When the question was discussed what forces and means were to be used... when the operation was planned... the consent was given there. I think, President knows about it. Who will take up the responsibility to use missile forces without President?

Finally, on October 26 1999, in the TV programme of Yevgeni Kiselyov "Glas Naroda" (NTV TV channel), the chief of the Federal armed forces group "Zapad", major-general Vladimir Shamanov admitted that the explosions in Grozny on October 21 were the result of the missile blow of the Federal armed forces:

V.SHAMANOV: The "means of the highest chief" were used.

Ye.Kiselyov: What are the "means of the highest chief"?

V.SHAMANOV: These can be either missile strokes used by air or ground forces, or the high-precision weapons.

The question who had a right to give an order to use such kinds of weapons was answered in the following way:

V.SHAMANOV: This question is not to me but to higher authorities.

Ye. KISELYOV: Can you give such an order?

V.SHAMANOV: No, I have no such means.

Thus, the highest authorities of the RF and the General Staff not only lied trying to conceal the reasons of the explosions in Grozny, but are also directly responsible for the massacre of civil population.

The cassette warheads of missiles equipped with sub-ammunition with ready-made destructive elements are intended for destruction of non-protected live forces on large areas, and their non-selective use, moreover, their use against civil objects, is surely an infringement of the norms of humanitarian right.

The Russian authorities speaking about the explosion in Grozny, no matter whether they admit or deny the participation of the federal side in the events, coincide in one point: they call the Grozny central market "an ammunition market (or depot)", a "terrorist headquarters" etc. This is nothing but an effort to pass a civil object for a military one and in such a way to acquit the possible intended attack of civilians.

As yet we have no list of the wounded and the dead and cannot evaluate the correlation of men and women among them. In the sequences of TV reports where the bodies of the killed were shown we saw only women. The market in the center of Grozny had worked all the last years. It was attended practically by all journalists working in Chechnia (3 hours before the tragedy it had been visited by the correspondent of "Epicentrum" agency Petra Prochazkova) who can confirm that it had never been and moreover, had never been called an ammunition market.

However, one could actually buy weapons in one of the corners of the Market, "the Birja".

"...I don't know who gave this nickname to the part of the market where they play the billiard, fry shashlyk and sell weapons. Let's go to the Birja. It works. A Kalashnikov submachine-gun - 350 dollars, a Makarov pistol - 250, a grenade-discharger "Fly" - 400, an RPG - 1000 dollars.

The prices are in direct relation to the situation in the republic. During the events in Dagestan they jumped up. Then they fell... Now they are climbing up again.

(A.YEVTUSHENKO. "Black market" in Grozny... "Komsomolskaya Pravda", October 23 1999).

It is clear that it goes about retail trade, not about "weapons depots". But even if someone had sold weapons somewhere at the market, the use of weapons against the market was non-srlrctive, which is prohibited by the norms of humanitarian rights. The mosque and the maternity home, about which the Russian officials have chosen to keep silence, are undoubtedly civil objects, the attack of which is explicitly prohibited.

We should also observe that the target of the missile firing could not be command points, administrative buildings and other capital buildings. They cannot be destroyed by sub-ammunition shells and give good protection from them; to destroy them, monoblock fugace ammunition would be needed, and, as V.PUTILIN correctly said, the character of destruction would have been absolutely different. The fire was aimed at the unprotected live force.

2. CARPET BOMBARDMENT OF THE ELISTANJI VILLAGE, OCTOBER 7, 1999

On October 9-13, representatives of "Memorial" and "Grazhdanskoye Sodeystviye" L.Gendel, M.Zamiatin, and A.Cherkasov interrogated Chechen refugees in refugee camps of Ingushetia. In the five stories wriotten down in four different camps, the refugees (including Gunaeva Irana, MAGOMADOV Daud, IMURZAYEV Zayndi) spoke about the bombardment of the Elistanji village on October 7, which resulted in the death of more than 30 villagers.

D.MAGOMADOV was in Elistanji at the funeral of his niece Imani MUSAEVA killed during the bombardment, 18 years old, at the 6th month of pregnancy. According to his words, three streets near the school were ruined in the village.

The "Memorial" representative A.D.MIRONOV was in Chechnia on October 9-12.

On visiting the mountain village of Elistanji, A.N.Mironov pointed out a zone of throughout destructions (300*800m). According to the local inhabitants, the destructions appeared on October 7 about 12 a.m. as the result of a bombardment from a great height. A characteristic feature of the destructions is the mutual overlapping of zones of destruction by different kinds of ammunition. Thus, the carpet bombardment has taken place.

34 of those killed are buried in the Elistanji cemetery; according to the list made on the base of the inhabitants' evidence, they are mainly women and children. Besides, the bodies of refugees from other villages who had escaped to Elistanji and had been killed there (their number has not been determined) were taken away by the relatives to be buried in the family cemeteries. A relatively small number of the dead is explained by the sparce building in the village where the houses are separated by large orchards and vegetable gardens.

At the hospitals of the cities of Shali and Grozny, the "memorial" representative interviewd the wounded from Elistanji (about 20 people). Only one of them was an adult man, others were women and children.

In the Elistanji village and in its vicinity our observer found no object which could be taken for military ones.

The incomplete information about the killed in the Elistabji village was taken from two defferent lists. The first one was received October 11 1999 in Nazran from Adlan Betmirzayev (human rights Committee, CRI), the second one was taken from the CRI Internal Office site.

Both the sources give the same list of the killed, but the information on the names, surnames and age sometimes differs; besides the sequence of people in the lists is different. It can be asserted that the lists are of different origins, mutually confirm each other and are true, though not complete.

There 6 people over 60, 7 children below 14, 11 women; only 8 of them can be called men of "efficient age", from 14 to 60, at least according to one of the lists.

According to the list of the wounded received by the surgical department of the Shali central hospital on October 7, among 35 people there are 11 children below 14, 3 over sixty. Among the adults from 14 to 60, there are 11 women and 8 men. According to N.ESTIMIROVA, who gave the list, by October 21 the total number of the killed and dead from wounds had reached 48 people.

Judging by the distribution of the Elistanji casualties by age and sex, one can also assert that the bombardment of the village was non-selective.

3. BOMBARDMENTS AND FIRINGS OF INHABITED AREAS; REFUGEE EVIDENCE

On October 9-13 representatives of "Memorial" and "Grashdanskoye Sodeystviye" L.GENDEL, M.Zamiatin and A.CHERKASOV interrogated in the camps of Ingushetia (Sunzha, Ordzhonikidzevskaya, Karabulak, Kantyshevo, Aki-Yurt) several dozen refugees from different parts of Chechnia:

- from villages of the Northern Naurski, Shelkovski and Nadterechny districts where the federal forces had carried out operations;

- from inhabited areas of the flat Chechnia bombarded and fired at by the federal air forces since September 22;

- from villages bordering on Dagestan, those of Vedenski and Nozhay-Yurtovski districts, which the federal artillery and air forces had begun to bombard and fire at in the course of resisting the invasion of Basaev squads to Dagestan.

The refugee interrogatory has shown that before October 10 bombardments and firing were aimed at Grozny and its suburbs, Urus-Martan, Gudermes, Argun, Samashki, Serzhen-Yurt, Zandak, Vedeno, Nozhay-yurt, Benoy, Zamay-Yurt, Pravoberezhnoye, Ken-Yurt, Naur, st.Naurskaya, Goragorsk.

All the refugees said they had fled to Ingushetia saving their lives and the lives of their families from bombs and fire. Practically all of them left their homes after people had been killed by bombs and fire in their native areas. We have collected dozens of stories, but here we shall give only three episodes. Each of them is confirmed by several refugee stories in different camps.

On September 27 in the Staraya Sunja village, a suburb of Grozny, 4 attack planes delivered a missile and bomb blow at a block of flats. Two houses were destroyed, four were badly damaged. In the cellar of a garage, Batukayev street 6, at least 6 people were killed: The TEMIRSULTANOV family - Ramzan, aged 34, his mother Taus, aged 62, his daughter, aged 5 and their acquaintance, Hadjichanova (ALIEVA) Liza, aged 21, a pregnant woman with two children, aged 3 and 1,5. In the neighbouring house UMCHAEV Abdul was killed, aged 48. About 50 people got wounds of different heaviness. This is reported by 5 refugees.

In Grozny in the late September and early October, the federal aviation for several days tried to destroy the TV tower. As the result of numerous hittings 18 people were killed near the "56th area", among the wounded there were at least 10 children aged below seven. This is reported by 6 refugees.

According to the evidence of the refugees from Ulus-Martan, the Wachhabists there based in the buildings of the veterinary surgery, veterinary laboratory and military registration and enlistment office. On October 2-3, none of those objects suffered from bombardments. School #7 not far from one of them, was destroyed; the teacher Zakriev Said'Hassan who was in school at that time was killed. On October 6, in several hundreds meter from there, a bomb hit the cellar where people were hiding: at least 6 members of the KERIMOV family were killed: Hassan, aged 46, his wife Mariam, aged 26 and their son Zurab aged 2, Aldan, aged 39, his wife Birlant aged 36, their daughter Rita aged 13. In the cellar also refugees from Vedeno were killed: ALGIREEV Lechi, aged 43 and Dunaev Kazbek aged 37. In the cellars of their houses were also killed DjJANARALIEVA Aset, aged 32 and RASUYEV Abujazid aged 49. GAITAJEVA Mariam, aged 42 was killed by a burst of machine-gun fire in the street, In school #1 the teacher KATAEVA Luisa, aged 26, was killed. BAPAEV Sultan aged 52 and

HAMZATOV Akhmed aged 47, keepers of a grain farm, were killed by a bomb stroke at an elevator with grain. This is reported by nine refugees.

According to the refugees, the hospitals are overcrowded with the wounded and cannot work efficiently: for instance, hospital #9 in Grozny is left without electricity, the current is provided by a generator. There is no gas, consequently no heating. There is a sharp lack of medicines. The same can be said about any hospital. The hospital in the Zavodskoi district is closed.

4. ARTILLERY FIRE AT ITS OWN POSITIONS

The estimations given above concern the territory of Chechnia which at present is not controlled by the armed forces of Russia. But there are numerous facts, "the objective possibility" "to confirm the objectivity" of which is quite real; moreover, at present the military procurator's office is actively working in order to do it. We mean the cases of bombardment or firing by the federal aviation and artillery at their own troops and squads.

Already in the course of the combat action in Dagestan, the air forces showed their inability to deliver not only "point", but simply aimed strokes.

Several cases were pointed out when erroneous but aimed bombardment of federal troops and squads took place. The military procurator's office of the North Caucasian military district started three criminal prosecution cases according to the article 109 - uncaredful causing of death. As deputy military procurator Of the Caucasian military procurator's office Igor Afanasjev said in his interview (NTV, SEGODNIA, 23.10.1999, conducted by Mikhail Osokin, reporting by Vadim Tekmenev), the cases concern the bombardment of Dagestan militiamen in Botlikh, of the Kemerovo OMON in the Karamikhi village and of the 15th Armavir special purpose squad of the Air Force of the RF Home Office in the Novolakski district where 34 soldiers were killed.

CORR. On September 9 the 15th squad faced a single task: to capture height 715.3 in the Novolakski district , better known under the name of "Televyshka" and to hold it up till the arrival of the reinforcement. Several hours before the beginning of the operation during the formation, combat helicopters delivered the first stroke at their own positions...

Grigori TERYENTYEV, the first deputy Headquarters chief of the North Caucasian district of the RF Home office air force (the commander in the district at that time): At 19:45 4 combat helicopters MI-24, well, the fifth helicopter MI-8 hung above us as a spotter, delivered three strokes with non-guided reactive projectiles aimed at the troops preparing for the offensive. The fourth blow was struck by guns. The second blow covered 8 men of the most fighting group.

CORR. Soon the group was encircled by the terrorists... and at that very time the position of the Russian special purpose troops was once again attacked from the air, at that time by the attack planes SU-25.

Pavel URLANOV, commander of the 2-nd group of the Armavir special purpose squad: About 6 missions were made, 3 were aimed at us...

CORR. The special purpose troops could be helped neither by signal rockets, nor by the giant emblems on the equipment which are well seen already from the height of 200 meters.

Igor AFANASYEV; If there were cases of carelessness on the part of these or those - the aviation, who laid the guns, what was the target, what combat tasks, where they were situated - whether the ground troops were to be there - we are checking up all this now. We shall find it out objectively. When we find it out, I think the guilty will be punished.

Those described above are not all the cases of federal air forces stroke at their own positions: the procurator did not mention the bombardment of the Makhachkala OMON in the village of Karamikhi. According to the commander of the North Caicasian district of the RF Home office air force, colonel-general Mikhail LABUNETS, 40% of the losses the federal forces suffered there were caused by their own air force. The villages could be captured only after the aviation stopped to be used.

The same continued in Ingushetia. According to the RI Home office, on October 7 the aviation had been methodically shooting the Block-post of the Ingush militia "Vostok-44" until the commander of the federal unit located on the neighbouring height informed the aviators they were firing at their own. All the buildings and three cars were destroyed. Besides, by October 10, 7 cases were registered of shells falling near inhabited areas, which

can be explained by chance or by mistake. At present these episodes are also investigated by the organs of the military procurators office of the SCVO.

CONCLUSION

All this testifies to the unsatisfactory work both of pilots and of the reconnaissance and commandment. Even on the territory controlled by federal forces, the firing was often aimed at their own units, the location of which was to be well known. The only conclusion is the following: speaking of the fire being exclusively aimed in the Chechen campaign is out of the question.

At present the territory of Chechnia is "not controlled by the armed forces of Russia", and there is as yet no "objective possibility" to "confirm the objectivity of any declaration made".

There are no grounds to assume that it is possible at the same time to "strike blows directly at the bases of terrorist concentration and to avoid unnecessary casualties among the peaceful population".

All the aforesaid allows us to state that the actions of the aviation were as "pointed", or non-selective. It inavoidably resulted both in failures during the attacks of the "allowed" objects and in attacking civil objects.

26.10.1999