

A glance at Chechnya and its conflict

Geography

Oil-producing region in Caucasus Mountains in southern Russia; 5,000 square miles, about size of Connecticut.

Population

Preliminary figures from official 2002 census put population at more than 1 million, about same as estimated 1994 prewar population. More than 100,000 Chechen refugees live in neighboring Ingushetia region. Population mostly Muslim with strong religious beliefs.

History with Russia

Conquered by czarist armies in 1859 after decades of war, but Chechens never accepted Russian rule. During World War II, dictator Josef Stalin ordered Chechens deported en masse to Kazakstan. Many died. The rest returned in 1950s, after Stalin's death.

Current conflict

1991 Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev declared area's independence

November 1994 Russian troops invaded to oust Dudayev, setting off 20-month war that killed up to 30,000, including Dudayev. Afterward, Chechnya was de facto independent and plunged into lawlessness.

1999 Fighting resumed after raids by Chechen rebels into neighboring region and bombings that killed some 300 at apartment buildings in Russian cities. Russian leaders blamed bombings on Chechens.



Major incidents blamed on terrorists in Russia since 1995

1995

June 14: Chechen rebels take some 1,000 hostages at a hospital in Budyonovsk; about 100 killed in the raid. Dozens die in rescue attempt.

1996

Jan. 9: Chechen rebels seize about 2,000 hostages at hospital in Kizlyar, Dagestan; 23 people killed.

Jan. 16: Rebels hijack a passenger ferry bound for the Black Sea; gunmen surrender.

1999

September: Five bombings in four weeks kill nearly 300 people in Moscow; targets were a mall, military housing and apartment buildings.

2000

July 2: Four Chechen towns hit by suicide truck bombings, killing 54; more than 100 wounded.

2001

April 23: Pro-Chechen gunmen storm a luxury hotel in Istanbul, Turkey, taking 120 hostages; all are released.

2002

Oct. 23, : Chechen militants take 800 hostages at Moscow theater; 129 hostages and 41 Chechen fighters killed.

Dec. 27: Suicide truck-bomb destroys headquarters of Chechnya's Moscow-backed government, killing 72.

2003

May 12: Suicide truck-bomb kills up to 60 at a government compound in northern Chechnya.

Aug. 1: Suicide truck bomb explodes at military hospital near Chechnya, killing 50 people.

Dec. 5: Suicide bombing on commuter train in southern Russia kills 44 people.

2004

Feb. 6: Explosion in Moscow subway kills 41.

Aug. 24: Two airliners crash within minutes of each other after taking off from the same airport, killing 90 people.

Tuesday: A suicide bomb attack in central Moscow kills 10 people and injures 51.

Yesterday: More than a dozen militants seize a school in the Russian region of North Ossetia bordering Chechnya.