

1: Moscow bombings blamed on Chechnya's Black Widows | World news | The Guardian

Black Widow (Russian: Чёрная вдова, chyornaya vdova) or shahidka (Russian: Шахидка, Russian feminine gender derivation from shahid), is a term for Islamist Chechen female suicide bombers, willing to be a manifestation of violent jihad.

The Terror Threat of Black-Widow Suicide Bombers to the Winter Olympics Russian security forces fear that as many as three female suicide bombers may have infiltrated their security parameters and may be hiding in the Olympic zone at Sochi. These bombers could wreak havoc by setting off their bombs amongst the crowds of athletes and spectators. The Russians have deployed twice as many security personnel as the British did in the London Olympics. Foreign guests have been promised that they will be safe behind a "ring of security" i. The Olympics are a tempting target for terror attacks -- the events at the Munich Olympics in continue to live in infamy, and a bombing committed by a domestic extremist at the Atlanta Olympics claimed two lives. But the Sochi Winter Olympics are uniquely dangerous. The grim reality is that the Olympic games are taking place just to the east of Chechnya, a Vermont-sized republic that was the site of the bloodiest wars in Europe since the breakup of Yugoslavia. And just to the east of war-blackened Chechnya lies the Republic of Dagestan, home to the deadliest terrorist group in Europe, the Caucasus Emirate. The terrorists in Dagestan, whose ambitions have grown to include the secession of all the small Muslim republics of the North Caucasus into the Caucasian Emirate, have already struck at the main travel hub linking Russia to Sochi. On December 29 and 30 they set off bombs in Volgograd, killing more than thirty Russians. They were also accused of killing several taxi drivers in the neighboring province of Stavropol and planting explosives near their cars to kill police first responders in January. Now comes the latest threat. Russian security forces fear that as many as three female suicide bombers may have infiltrated their security parameters and may be hiding in the Olympic zone at Sochi. These bombers could wreak havoc by setting off their bombs amongst the crowds of athletes and spectators gathered for this joyous event. Recent Russian history shows their fears are not exaggerated. In October of that year Russia reinvaded Chechnya with the aim of bringing the unstable republic back into the Russian Federation. The outgunned Chechens fought back tenaciously to defend their capital of Grozny from the Russians in the winter of , but the city was pulverized by bombardments of a scale not seen since World War II. Thousands of Chechen civilians died in the bombardment and in attacks on the towns and hamlets of Chechnya. One could see Chechen cities burning from satellite images of the republic found on Google Earth. Having crushed the Chechen frontal resistance, the Russians occupied Chechnya and began to carry out "cleansing operations" known as zachistkas to capture real or perceived Chechen rebel fighters. Thousands of Chechen men were caught up in these sweeps and sent to so-called filtration camps. There they faced torture and all too often execution. Hundreds of innocent Chechen men entered these notorious camps and were never seen again. Some of them were later found with their faces and hands cut off and wrapped in barbed wire in garbage dumps and mass graves found outside the camps. It was in this context that the secular Chechens, who had not been previously known for their dedication to Saudi-style Islamic fundamentalism, began to deploy what the Russians called "living bombs. These young women drove a truck packed with explosives into a Russian special forces base in Alkhan Yurt, Chechnya, leveling it and killing as many as twenty-seven troops on June 7, The second female suicide bomber attack came in November and was carried out by Elza Gazuyeva. Targeting the Russian officer she blamed for the death of her husband, she approached regional commander Gaidar Gadzhiyev and asked him, "Do you still remember me? This attack was followed by other female suicide attacks on military targets in Chechnya. Their most famous terror attack was the involvement of nineteen Chechen women terrorists in the seizure of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow during the performance of a play in October of To prevent the Russian security forces from storming the theater as they had done in the past during hostage takings, the women terrorists were armed with bombs. At the first sign of a Russian assault they were told to blow up the bombs, killing themselves and the estimated seven hundred hostages in the theater. Several of the Black Widows were reported to have wept as they awaited their fate. The Russians responded by pumping a lethal gas into the theater that knocked everyone unconscious,

preventing the Black Widows from setting off their bombs. Unfortunately, the gas proved to be lethal for of the hostages. With everyone unconscious, Russian security troops then stormed the theater and executed the sleeping terrorists who had survived the gas with bullet to their heads. The death toll continued to rise with subsequent attacks. On May 12, , two women drove a truck into a Russian government center in Znamenskoye, Chechnya, killing sixty people. Two days later two Black Widows blew themselves and sixteen other people up trying to kill the pro-Russian head of the conquered Chechen Republic. Another Black Widow set off a bomb in Mozdok, in the neighboring republic of South Ossetia, killing 18 on June 5, On July 5, , the bombing campaign came to Moscow and two Black Widows set off bombs at a concert, killing fourteen. On December 5, three women and a man blew themselves up on a train in southern Russia, killing forty-four. On February 6, a female suicide bomber blew herself up on the Moscow metro, killing forty people. The female "living bombs" did not limit themselves to the ground, and on August 24, , two of them blew up their bombs on Russian commercial flights one to Sochi and killed another ninety people. Later in that month another ten people were killed outside a metro in Moscow by a Black Widow. After , the bombing campaign was suspended, but in a new organization, the Caucasian Emirate, restarted the killing with the March 29 Moscow Metro bombing. Forty people were killed. On January 24, , a Black Widow killed thirty-five people at an airport in Moscow. There were several smaller-scale female bomber attacks on government targets in Dagestan before two Black Widows struck in Volgograd this past December. While there has been considerable speculation as to what drives these Chechen bombers, the initial answers seem to point to revenge, hatred of the Russian occupiers, and a desire to carry the war to those whom they believe to be responsible for killing their husbands, children, or other loved ones. In this sense the Black Widows, many of whom are actual grieving widows, are victims who are transformed into victimizers. Increasingly, however, Black Widows appear to be driven by a desire to become martyrs to the faith. There have been cases of terrorists indoctrinating young women the bombers have ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-seven into the cult of martyrdom. While Islamic martyrdom does not offer women martyrs the seventy-two virgins of paradise promised to male martyrs, they are offered the chance to become Virgins of Paradise. In this sense the bombers more closely resemble those in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Lebanon, where dying for the faith and killing infidels is the main objective of suicide bombers. The greatest threat to Americans and other tourists may thus lie in simply getting to the site of the Olympics. Having already experienced the carnage of a bombing by two Chechen-Dagestani bombers recently during the Boston Marathon on April 15, , Americans know all too well the sort of impact that this sort of terror attack can have on such a joyous event. Regardless of their actual target, the Black Widows have shown themselves to be remorseless killers in recent years and have killed hundreds of civilians in their suicide attacks.

2: Talk:Black Widow (Chechnya) - Wikipedia

The first Black Widow attack took place in early , when Khava Baraeva drove a truck filled with explosives into a building housing Russian Special Forces in Chechnya. In the last 12 years, 46 women have turned themselves into suicide bombs in Russia and have carried out 26 terrorist attacks.

After two years of relatively calm situation with terrorist attacks on the territory of Russia and active security measures in the framework of preparation to the upcoming Winter Olympic Games hosted by Russia in Sochi, two recent blasts occurred in the city of Volgograd became a shocking reality for Russians: Some even claim it could disrupt security during Olympic Games. Volgograd, located on the South of Russian Federation close to the volatile Northern Caucasus region, city of Soviet military glory Stalingrad battle , was hit by two explosions at the end of Massive bomb detonated on 29 December in the hall of Volgograd railway station killing 17 people, injuring dozens and destroying the building from inside. According to investigation, the blast, which was designated as terrorist attack, was carried out by two suicide bombers, man and woman, allegedly of Caucasian origin. On the next day after this blast another bomb ripped the trolley-bus in Volgograd. This blast took the lives of 34 people and left many injured. The second explosion was also carried out by the suicide bomber, claim Russian police and security forces. Recent Volgograd bombings are believed to be organized by the same group, as the methods and type of explosives were identical. Volgograd bombings though stand in the long line of numerous terrorist attacks carried out by suicide bombers in Russia heartland in Northern Caucasus as well. Insurgency in Northern Caucasus is a direct result of the two Russia led wars in the region. Both Chechen wars have been actually the struggle of local people for independence from Russia and preserving national and cultural identity of Chechen people. Terrorist activities were among the key methods of Chechen rebel fighters since the second half of the Second Chechen War and after it. Suicide bombings became an effective method of fight used by Chechen rebel groups, controlled by separatist leader Shmil Basayev and Saudi born ideologist Ibn Al-Khattab. The majority of bombings occurred in the period of , but terrible terrorist attacks took place later too. This period was marked by the new phenomenon faced by Russian and Chechen community – female suicide bombers, female shaheed. This phenomenon became a part of mass consciousness of many Russians, it brings fear and panic as it seems to be impossible to protect yourself from such attacks. This phenomenon is also related to many stereotypes and controversies. What defines a suicide bomber? What is behind the decision to become shaheed martyr? What are the possible reasons and who are the people, who decide to end their lives in this way? Numerous studies of the issue conducted by many researches and scientists have shown conflicting results about what defines a suicide attacker. Criminal Justice Professor Adam Lankford identified classic suicidal risk factors by the terrorists and bombers, such as depression, psychological trauma, post-traumatic stress, mental disorder, other mental or health problems, serious physical injuries, drug addictions, suffering from unexpected death of the loved ones and other personal crises. These findings are also supported by the prominent psychologist Ariel Merari. And this moment is very important, when we are talking about female suicide bombers in Chechnya. Though not all of the Chechen female suicide bombers were widows, this term applies in Russia to all of them. Some of them were killed during the military operations, some killed by security forces and MVD Russian interior security forces on the charges of being rebels and members of the separatist groups mostly it happened without any court , some disappeared, some detained and brutally tortured. Chechnya has the whole generation totally traumatized by this war experience. We could add to this list of reasons also features of mentality and strict local traditions, combined with radical Wahhabi Islam, spread in the region. Many women, who have really lost their husbands, children, relatives and experienced the times of war and systematical purges committed by Russian security forces and later by so-called Kadyrovets army of the current Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov , became the suicide bombers carried out numerous terrorist attacks in and outside of Chechnya. The reasons for becoming a suicide bombers could be very different, but there are some psychological features helping to identify the potential bombers, thinks Nadezhda Tarabarina, Russian Doctor of Psychology, Head of Department of post-traumatic stress of Institute of Psychology of Russian Academy of Sciences. She states

that many of the terrorists are young average age of Chechen suicide bombers is year-old , in addition to that these are the people with not so strong psychological conditions and often with very hard life circumstances. They often have lost their beloved ones, and this is one of the driving motives for them, as the act of suicide bombing could be either their revenge or their way out of life where they have nothing to live for. In some cases act of suicide bombing could be a way for a woman to prove to her family or to her community that she is worth being respected as she made this sacrifice for the fight of her people. This motive occurs often by the young women who experienced hard life situations and appeared to be abandoned by their families and society as they are ashamed Chechen society is very strict and traditional. The future suicide bombers of this category are being convinced that their act of self-sacrifice will eliminate their sins, and Allah will send them to heaven as martyrs. But even these reasons are usually combined with the personal matters being the main driving factor for these women. Unfortunately it became a Chechen reality in the war time. And this is also very important moment: Psychologist Nadezhda Tarabarina also stresses importance of the fact, that these girls and women are being influenced and psychologically manipulated, as even a very strong personal reason or pain caused by the loss is hardly believed to be the only one reason. Psychological portrait of the potential suicide bomber includes strong suggestibility, these persons are being influenced easily through using of psychological manipulation and attempts to convince the woman, that she must take a revenge or that she will commit a great deed, help her people or help to stop the war by carrying out the act of suicide bombing. Thus manipulation is the most probable reason, thinks psychologist. Manipulation could be applied through different means, very often it can include drugging and usage of psychotropic substances paralyzing the will of a person and making it vulnerable to manipulation and infusion. Her information is based on the forensic analyses. Hard life circumstances, losses of the family members and beloved ones, psychological traumas, stress and personal matters, revenge are usually the main reasons for these women to become the bombers. In addition to that the belief that there will be meeting with the dead relatives and beloved persons in heaven, where shaheed should appear, is also very important moment in case of Chechen female bombers. According to experts the most important factor in forming of the suicide bomber is psychological one not religion, nationality of traditions , combined with the massive ideological work and manipulation. Julia Lugovska She is a freelance reporter and journalist based in Kyiv, Ukraine.

3: Are Russia's Black Widows Spreading? | World Affairs Journal

Black Widows - Chechen Republic -- GENERAL TERMINOLOGY Summary: Female suicide bombers from the Caucasus, known as the Black Widows, have targeted Russian civilians and security personnel in multiple attacks over the past decade.

The avenging Black Widows The avenging Black Widows The Black Widows is what Russian journalists call female Islamist suicide bombers who have participated in more than 30 attacks that have killed about people in Russia since July Mar 30, March 31, Flowers lie at Lubyanka metro station in Moscow on Monday after two female suicide bombers killed more than 30 people on two Moscow metro trains in the rush hour. A Russian Interior official keeps watch at a crime scene in Grozny, in the tumultuous Chechnya region, in September A suicide bomber blew herself up beside a police car, wounding six people. Baseyev was the mastermind behind the Beslan school massacre, a three-day hostage-taking at a school in North Ossetia in that left hostages dead, of them children. Baseyev was killed in , a death federal authorities take credit for, although others claim Baseyev accidentally blew himself up. Before his death, Basayev was keen to test his hunch that when the Russian authorities are on alert for potential terrorist attacks, a young woman in jeans or an older woman in a frock attracts less suspicion than a dark-skinned young Chechen man in a cheap jacket. It was composed of men and women, but it was the women who fascinated the Russian media. From to , his "shahidka" — a Russian derivative of the Arabic word shahid, meaning female martyr — staged high-profile attacks mostly against Russian civilians. Baseyev hoped to bully the Russian public into realizing it was better to allow the Chechen separatists to negotiate their ancestral homeland out of the Russian Federation than to fight a perpetual bloody war a thousand kilometres away from Moscow. Shamil Basayev, photographed in , was the mastermind behind the Beslan school massacre. Associated Press Russian Special Forces commandos ended the siege by pumping a powerful gas into the theatre that put everyone to sleep. The commandos then executed the Black Widows with a single bullet between the eyes as they sat unconscious in their seats. In a study of 47 Black Widows, psychologists Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova attempted to profile the women and determine who they were and what motivated them. The answer that emerged from interviews with their families was revenge. More than 90 ethnic groups live there. Most are Muslims that have more in common with Iran, which is kilometres to the south, than they do with Russia. What these mountain peoples have in common with each other is that they are clan-based societies. Their ancient clan values trump Russian civil law and even Islam, and revenge is a core clan value. Speckhard and Akhmedova studied 47 Black Widows ranging in age from 15 to The death of a brother, a father or the rape of a female relative at the hands of Russian soldiers had traumatized all of them. Some had been raped themselves. A wounded boy is carried to safety after he escaped from the school in Beslan, Northern Ossetia, where hostages, including children, were killed on Sept. Last year, a charismatic rebel commander calling himself Said Buryatsky bragged on the rebel website Kavkaz Center he was training new suicide bombers. What had started as a battle for Chechen independence had spread to all six Muslim majority Russian provinces in the Caucasus. Moreover, the insurgency had been transformed by new hard-line Islamist leaders into a religious crusade. A new leader, Dokka Umarov, emerged declaring the new goal was to separate all six Muslim majority provinces in the Russian Caucasus from the Russian Federation, and create a new Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. He also became a valued military strategist. In August , a male suicide bomber drove a truck bomb into the headquarters of the federal police in Nazran, the capital of Ingushetia province. Twenty-six police officers were killed, and more than officers and civilians were wounded. Twenty-seven passengers died in that attack. On Wednesday, two more suicide bombers blew themselves up in Dagestan, killing at least 12 people.

4: The Black Widows of Chechnya - The Scotsman

The Black Widows of Chechnya February 24th, by fiona Leave a reply» For most Islamic terrorist groups, using female suicide bombers is a relatively new phenomenon.

Sochi will host the Winter Olympic Games from February 7 to I think back to May when a series of Islamist bombings in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, left 13 dead and over injured. Two weeks later, two suspected terrorists were cornered in a house by security forces and, after the intervention of protesters, some women carrying babies were allowed to leave the premises. The women were angry. One, who claimed both her brothers had been killed by Russian forces, said to me, "I am ready to do anything. I can blow myself up, together with all these nonbelievers. Police suspect Ibragimova is already in the Olympic city, having arrived from from Dagestan earlier this month. I also met recently another woman closely associated with Islamist terrorism, "Aisha" - not her real name - a niece of Doku Umarov, the leading Chechen terrorist who has promised to wage war against the Kremlin until his country is free of Moscow rule. Russians call him "the Russian Osama bin Laden. I asked Aisha when she had last seen him. It was in a mosque in the Ingush city of Nazran more than 10 years ago, in the midst of the second Chechen war, she said. She looked deep into the dark sharp eyes of a bearded man who had come in to the mosque to pray and she found them to be familiar. As he and his two companions were leaving, one of the men - her uncle - turned to her and said, "Tell your grandfather that Doku Umarov paid a visit. Umarov had once lived in the October district of Grozny, working as the state security secretary for the government of the independent republic of Chechnya when it was briefly independent of Russian rule. He was not particularly religious, relatives said. Shortly before he disappeared to join the guerrillas, Umarov was studying to become a student at Grozny State Oil and Technological University in the mundane construction department. Then he disappeared to join the armed struggle for Chechen independence. If Umarov is dead, he is continuing to wage war from beyond the grave. His latest order to his jihadist followers, delivered in the summer via Youtube, was to attack the Olympic Games that open next month, the order that sent the black widows heading for Sochi. Putin has a lot riding on the success of the games. This week, the Russian authorities issued the warning to beware of four women suicide bombers. Photographs of the women were issued, their stern faces framed in hijabs.

5: Black Widow (Chechnya) - Wikipedia

The decades' old Chechen conflict has not received much media coverage in the West; however, there has been one aspect of this struggle which has been reported upon: female suicide bombers, known as "Black Widows".

Andrew Foxall Obscured by the attacks in Paris a day later, the January 6th suicide bomb attack in Istanbul was nonetheless a significant one. It was not the first terrorist attack to be carried out by a Russian woman, but it was the first terrorist attack to be carried out by a Russian woman in Europe. Little is known about Diana Ramazova, the Istanbul suicide bomber, at the moment. Female suicide bombers were central to the North Caucasus insurgency during the early s. Between and , all but five of the 27 Chechen-linked suicide bombings in Russia included women. On June 6, , Barayeva and Luiza Magomadova drove a truck bomb into a military building in Chechnya, killing themselves and two police officers. Thereafter, female suicide bombers, dressed in their black hijabs, were prominent in both the Dubrovka Theater siege in Moscow, in October , and the Beslan school hostage siege in North Ossetia-Alania, in September . Since then, the role of female suicide bombers in the insurgency has seesawed. In the aftermath of Beslan, insurgency became less active, and effectively lost its momentum following the death of Shamil Basayev, leader of the Chechen rebel movement, in . In March , for example, two women blew themselves up on the Moscow Metro , killing 38 people. In , however, following a change in the leadership of the Caucasus Emirate, the insurgency renounced the use of female suicide bombing. For at least a decade, there have been suggestions that the North Caucasus insurgency is part of the global jihadist movement. In the past, this has not stood up to any scrutiny. It is true that the nationalist cause that inspired Chechen fighters more than 20 years ago merged into a broader Islamic one, but North Caucasians have fought almost exclusively to liberate their own region from Russian rule. Until recently, that is. Since November , six prominent members of the North Caucasus insurgency have retracted their allegiance to the Caucasus Emirate and pledged loyalty to the Islamic State. In February , two Chechen females were arrested in France on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks and having ties to the North Caucasus insurgency. Sapiyat Shemileva, one of the two, was sister of Khamzat Shemilev, the former rebel emir of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, who was killed in . Over the past two years, meanwhile, at least four different insurgent formations led by Chechens have appeared in Syria. Estimates suggest that as many as 1, Chechens and other North Caucasians are fighting there. Taken together, these developments suggest that the North Caucasus insurgency is dividing between those wishing to maintain a nationalist jihad in the North Caucasians and those wishing to reorient toward the transnational cause. The Caucasus Emirate, meanwhile, has a number of important operatives—including Akhmed Umarov, who is a brother of Doku Umarov and was accused of masterminding the militant attack in Grozny on December 4, , in Turkey, some who are said to help transport North Caucasians to and from Syria. The suicide bombing in Istanbul received little attention in the West. But the West should take note.

6: The Black Widows of Chechnya Â» Women's Courage

In total, since , there were over thirty attacks by these "Black Widows" in Chechnya and Russia, which ranged from attacks on music concerts, to kidnappings of schools and theaters, and there are around thousand people were killed (Speckhard and Ahkmedova,).

There is a strong motivation of resentment and grief for their loved ones that invigorates to revenge, and this grief leads to further heinous activities against oppressors carried out by black widows in the form of suicide terrorist activities. Behind the attacks, the majority of those females are poorly educated which is driving force for Islamist extremists to get recruitments and trained up with relative ease. On the other hand, a number of female terrorist accuse Russian forces of using overly brutal tactics against the civilian population, including women, in order to flush out rebel fighters. It is a counterproductive strategy that only serves to radicalize people. The first Black Widow attack took place in early , when Khava Baraeva drove a truck filled with explosives into a building housing Russian special forces in Chechnya. In the last 12 years, 46 women have turned themselves into suicide bombs in Russia, committing 26 terrorist attacks. Most of the bombers were from Chechnya and Dagestan. Most studies of Chechen female suicide bombers have found that these women have experienced serious personal trauma and are then take arms in hands. As the term Black Widow would suggest, many have lost almost every single thing and almost have nothing left behind to care about over the last two decades of continuously facing violence and brutalities since war. Resultantly, all individuals including males and females have experienced deep personal traumatization, and evidence of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are commonly present in the entire survey. The demographic description and psycho-social motivators for embarking this devastating path plays a significant role for female terrorists before bombing themselves. It further leads to other motivating factors like nationalistic conflict and less knowledge about Islam. There is a wide division and factions within Chechens which totally split the mainstream agendas of violence. On the other hand, there is minority of Salafist preaching radicals led by figures as Shamil Basayev, Movladi Udugov, and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. These two factions play a significant role in destructions against Russian land and masses. For the young women, the suicide missions are not especially a question of religion, is it just that they understand the revival of Islam in Chechnya as a critical element in the identity-building of the torn region. For them, not to allow them to practice Islam freely is understood as the ultimate attack against who they are, or who they are trying to be: As Nivat analyzes, nobody will be able to stop these young women who are in deep despair and have no fear of death to proceed with more suicide bombings. Before the fall of communism, the practice of Islam was limited by Russia. They were actively promoting Russia in Chechnya, promoting the Russian language and other Russian cultural elements. The Chechens continued to strengthen Nationalism and sense of unity of the Chechens did not appear to be suppressed at all. It was inevitable that after the collapse of communism, a domestic revolution would take place in Chechnya as separate entity. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in , the religion Islam appeared as a binding factor. This collapse caused a wave of national awareness among all the peoples of the former Soviet Union. Because the Islam showed a clear separation between the Northern Caucasus and the rest of Russia, it is no surprise that the Islam is an important part of the awakening nationalist feeling among the Chechens. This period is also known as the Islamic Renaissance of the Northern Caucasus. In Islam especially Wahhabism ideology got deep roots in females terrorist to explode themselves and meet their parents and loved ones in paradise. The magnitude of Chechen separatism played an advocacy role for maximizing sympathizing effects from a number of various networks on the basis of ethnicity, religion and gender. Chechen separatists have sought to establish the region as its own sovereign state, realizing this briefly between to and to Most scholars maintain that their will for separatism has been predominantly driven by ethno-nationalism. In recent years however, many argue that Chechen separatism has now somewhat been co-opted by the worldwide jihadist movement. This further sparked the potential motivation for joining together and having strong association between Chechen separatism and Islamic extremism. This may reinvigorate the Chechen movement, increasing the number of fighters drawn to the cause and widening the

scope of the conflict. Every single factor has got significant importance through nationalism, religion, sociopolitical, ethnic culturalism, personal life experiences and much more to be enlisted. As Ramzan Kadyrov, vice premier of the Russian backed Chechen government said in his interview to Chechen TV on May 11, , Chechen women are the most dangerous for national security because they have carried out the riskiest operations. If the current trend continues, Chechen female bombers will continue to be a grave threat to Russian national security 0.

7: Chechens' Violent History Includes 'Black Widows,' Attacks on School, Theater - ABC News

The year-old was about to join the ranks of the so-called Black Widows, the Chechen female suicide bombers behind the recent downing of two airliners and the carnage in Beslan.

Then I found out that everybody had to take up the gun. About half of the suicide bombers in Russia have been women. For her, the hardest thing to get over was the uniform. Responsible for the deaths of 39 people in two Moscow subway bombings this week, they have also blown up a Russian airliner and taken part in two bloody hostage-takings, leaving hundreds of innocent victims in their wake. Reports say that since , Black Widows have been responsible for at least half the suicide attacks in Russia. Their menacing but unobtrusive presence has made them the most feared militants in the country, convincing many Russians there is no safe place. And they have raised worldwide questions about the minds and motivations of women who are prepared to kill ruthlessly for political ends. Before her, Yael, a nomadic woman, hammered a spike through the head of the sleeping Canaanite commander Sisera after he had fled a battle with the Israelites. Article Continued Below Celtic Queen Boudicca famously fought the Romans after the death of her husband, fitting her chariots with knives to slash enemy troops. Russian firebrand Fanny Kaplan fired nearly fatal shots at Vladimir Lenin when he betrayed her revolutionary ideals, and the Irish aristocrat Violet Gibson made an unexplained assassination attempt on Mussolini. And German anarchist Ulrike Meinhof was involved in bombings, robberies and gunfights before killing herself in a jail cell. Homicide data compiled over years in a range of societies shows that male-on-male homicide is most common, and 30 to 40 times more frequent than female-on-female killing. Male murderousness, some researchers believe, is driven by high testosterone levels that promote aggressive behaviour. Others blame violent environments and childhoods. Since the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers pioneered female suicide squads in the s, Palestinian, Lebanese and Kurdish women, as well as Chechens, have turned themselves into human bombs. They make their own choices. Studies of Palestinian women bombers pointed to two main causes: And it added, vengeance for death of relatives was also a strong motive. But the galvanizing factor was the arrival of radical Islamic groups known as Wahhabis. Although most Chechens belonged to the moderate Sufi sect, extremists funded by Arab countries set up shop in the months after the first war ended in , and young impoverished men were enticed into their fold with guns, cars and aid for their families. They pushed the ideals of jihad and martyrdom, and by , the first female recruits crashed their explosives-laden car into a Russian military headquarters in the Chechen town of Alkhan-Yurt, outside Grozny. More were to follow, donning the black costumes that won them the title Black Widows, and they struck fear into Russians from Moscow to the Caucasus. But Chechnya is now the only territory in the world where female suicide bombing is a growth industry. Although better educated and more independent than those in many Muslim countries, Chechen women are still subordinate to men. To date, no females have plotted terrorist attacks or led brigades of bombers. And there are suspicions that their desire for revenge and religious redemption is being used as a dramatic tactic in a strategic war of nerves. Women in traditional societies may join groups and carry out attacks, but in the end they are in the same place.

8: I Met the Black Widow Suicide Bomber

This attack was followed by other female suicide attacks on military targets in Chechnya. But it was the Black Widows' (a term first coined by the Russians who labeled them chyornye vdovy) strikes.

Katherine Russell, an all American girl who converted to Islam after falling in love with Tamerlan, was married to him in June of and together had a small child. Back in the nineties when the Chechen secular rebel movement was met with a firm Russian response culminating in the first Chechen war of independence, the Chechen freedom fighters looked to the west for support. But they did find between the two wars of independence with Russia an influx of foreign fighters coming in victorious from the Afghan jihad where the euphoric militants defeated the former USSR. He successfully convinced then rebel leader Shamil Basaeyev to change methods. What was perhaps most chilling about the Chechen terrorists was that they used women from the start. The first Chechen suicide bombers were two young women who drove an explosive laden truck into their target. Half of the hostage takers in Moscow were women dressed in long black Salafi style robes with bomb belts strapped to their waists. All the Chechen suicide bombers that we conducted psychological autopsies on over half of the total had lost a family member traumatically to the two wars. For Chechens this was the first time that women had been involved in revenge seeking behaviors a domain in Chechen culture usually reserved only for the men. As Chechens joined the militant jihadi ideology we found that they were instructed by their Middle Eastern teachers that they should fulfill their life duties before going on suicide missions by marrying and having children something that Tamerlan also did. Basaeyev as well as other terrorist leaders also chose their wives strategically from among various areas and clans so as to guarantee protection when needed from their extended families. The Chechen case gave us one of the first insights into how women carry out their roles in militant jihadi groups. Thus far al Qaeda central has been slow to use women although two Belgian women were recruited into their ranks and one a European descent white convert Muriel Degauque carried out a suicide mission in Iraq. Al Qaeda in Iraq also began to use female bombers toward the end when males could no longer pass the checkpoints and we have now seen them in Afghanistan as well. Women have yet to be fully activated in al Qaeda central. Although women joined right from the start in the Chechen case, we did not find them in leadership roles men still call the shots when it comes to terrorism. Indeed in the Moscow theater hostage taking, the women terrorists inside the theater mercifully did not detonate their bombs without an order from the men who were outside the theater properly engaged in battle with Russian Special Forces. However, the women could have blown the theater and all those held there to bits, had they felt the initiative to act on their own. With Katherine Russell, we still wait to learn more. She was a hardworking mother supporting her family working seventy to eighty hours a week outside her home. She may have been just like the many Palestinian family members I interviewed who were in complete shock upon learning their son or daughter had blown themselves up and she may have failed to notice how radicalized and serious her husband had become about his extremist views. Lack of knowledge and denial of the horrific is often a common attribute among close family members of terrorists.

9: Chechen 'Black Widows' Bring New Fears - ABC News

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However, Chechnyans, Ingushetians, Dagestanis, and other Caucasians have long been recruiting women. For a bit of a background, the Russian empire initially took over the Caucasian region during the 19th century. At the time of the Russian Revolution, most of the Caucasus attempted to regain independence, and many ethnicities grouped together in solidarity. However, the Soviet Union eventually recaptured the entire region. During the USSR, the Caucasus was subject to a number of russification campaigns, in addition to forced resettlements, land takeovers, and other far more serious human rights abuses. Once the Soviet Union grew weaker in the late s, nationalism rose and small rebellions started throughout the mountains. Fighting has continued throughout the s and s, with two official wars: The Caucasus has a strong nationalistic tradition, and is know for being one of the most ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and geographically diverse regions in the world. The name comes from the fact that many of them have seen their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers die in the ongoing conflict with Russia. However, before jumping to conclusions as to their motivations, one must examine the demographics. Out of the 26 female suicide bombers or shahidka from only 5 But, nearly all had lost close family members at the hands of the Russian forces, and as expected, they suffered from depression and other psychological conditions following these traumatic experiences. So far, it is possible that these women were mainly motivated by a desire to seek revenge. But still, the leap from anger at a death to a suicide attack is pretty wide. I think there have to be other reasons. Historically, Islamic Caucasians are more liberal than their counterparts in the Middle East. For example, wine is enjoyed at many celebrations, and women were actually forbidden to wear hijabs during Soviet times. Although, even the Kemlin-backed President of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov has started to implement some aspects of sharia law, and even supports honor killings, polygamy, and shooting women who are dressed immodestly with rubber bullets among far more horrifying ideas. But, as previously mentioned, Caucasian Muslims have been rebelling against Russian rule for at least years, and so I hypothesize that the issue is more one of ethnic pride than religious fervor. Back to women, those from the region have traditionally been allowed to work outside the home and pursue higher education. Sharia law was not enforced during the last century. This has been posited as a possible reason why women too were on a more equal footing with men, and also expected to carry out attacks. Other assert that most shahidkas were coerced, through violence, threats, and drugs into carrying out their attacks. Most of these claims have been debunked however. They stem from the testimony of failed bomber Zarema Muzhikhoyeva, a Chechnyan Ingush widow who in changed her mind and alerted authorities so as to not detonate her bomb. She told authorities that she decided to become a Black Widow after her husband was killed by Russian forces, however it was later revealed that he actually died in a business dispute. Afterwards, she testified that she was abused by his family and that they stole her daughter away from her. She turned to suicide bombing as a last resort to regain some sort of respect, and provide financially for her daughter. She also claimed that she was drugged throughout her training and upon her arrival in Moscow before she was sent on her mission. She and her lawyer ended up presenting a case of a woman suffering in a backwards culture who had no other option but a suicide attack. Personally, I think there are multiple reasons why women make up nearly half of Caucasian suicide bombers. It is true that women are freer to interact with men, which makes training easier to coordinate. While recent attacks are changing this stereotype, women are not expected to be suicide bombers, so they can often slip in unnoticed. It is also easier for women to hide bombs under layers of closing. As for motivation, the fear of rape and economic devastation at the hands of the Russians coupled with experiencing the deaths of multiple family members and friends is a powerful galvanizing force. I do not think though that these women are drugged or kidnapped by terrorist organizations. They have ample recruitment opportunities, so I do not think it is necessary for them to resort to force but it may be true that bombers are given sedatives to relax before carrying out their mission. I have concluded that the differential treatment or discrimination against women is not a reason why there are so

many black widows. Instead, they are simply seeking vengeance and some form of twisted justice after the many atrocities of the ongoing conflicts have killed many of their male counterparts.

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