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What needs to be changed in the work of special services

Russian special services ought to learn certain lessons from the tragedy in Beslan. Some of the lessons appear quite obvious already. Not only should the FSB staff and members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs be aware of them, but common Russian citizens have to be informed as well.

**Lesson N1. Militants have to be used intelligently**

Russian official law enforcement structures came face to face with something rather unusual while in Beslan. Men, whose children and relatives had been kept hostage inside the building, picked up guns in order to prevent the rebels from escaping. According to some sources however, those armed civilians had been actually preparing to storm the school building. Most likely, as soon as two bombs had exploded, they were the first ones to approach the building to cover up the children who were running away from school. Special services men had to chase after the armed civilians. They've lost their main advantage: suddenness. They failed to act at the speed of light. So basically, the so-called militiamen had hindered the work of the real professionals.

Since no one can guarantee at this point that there will be no new hostages capturing situations in North Caucasus, it would probably be good to think about how such spontaneous actions could be used.

-It was impossible to disarm those civilians; it could have led to typical street fight between militia and civilians, -states one of the FSB officials in Beslan, - those armed civilians could have been used intelligently. For instance, they could have been for cordoning off the crowd from the epicenter as well as preventing the rebels from fleeing. Obviously, they had to have a specially appointed commander to keep everything under control.

One should also think about military insignia to enable special service members distinguish ordinary civilians from armed bandits.

Lesson N2. Field hospitals beat Ambulances

Military operation at the Theater center on Dubrovka (Moscow) gave rise to

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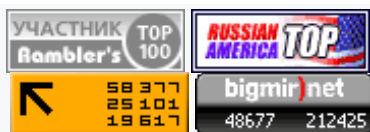
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an interesting discussion on the pages of the Russian newspaper "Izvestia." The main argument concerned the following fact: whether the victims should have been transported to hospitals or helped right there in field hospitals. Those in support of the evacuation used to say that there was no need for field hospitals in the downtown Moscow. According to them, the victims had been provided with professional medical assistance in hospitals.

Those who are in support of field hospitals are military doctors in most cases. Judging by their experience, precious time had been lost during the evacuation. Ambulances, in their opinion, mainly functioned as taxis that simply transported people to the local hospitals.

Storm of the school in Beslan was indeed spontaneous. There was drastic shortage of Ambulances and people had to be transported to clinics in ordinary autos. However, many children were treated right on spot in field hospital arranged by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation. It was only after people received first aid in those field hospitals were they transported to a regular hospital.

Most likely, doctors of those field hospitals had saved lives to several dozen people. Thus, the events in Beslan have clearly demonstrated that field hospitals are tremendously important and they ought to be used at all times when dealing with high numbers of victims.

Lesson N3. Avoid being taken hostage

This particular lesson concerns not so much the special services but ordinary civilians. Anti-terror experts claim that the best way to survive mass hostage capturing is to try to avoid to be among the first captives, when terrorists do not have everything under control.

"In a situation when you feel there is a high chance of being taken hostage, you should leave the danger zone.", state an anti-terrorism pamphlet. Those 50 people who managed to escape from the danger zone on September 1 in Beslan only prove this fact. Obviously, one always runs a risk of getting shot by a terrorist. However, it is lower than the risk of getting shot afterward.

Lesson N4. Our special services need to develop new techniques

Terrorists are good learners. They quickly adjust and can practically foresee the next step of our special services. That is why it is inadmissible to make the information regarding the actions of our militia public.

It is also of utmost important to develop new methods of military operations to fight terrorism..

Konstantin Getmansky

Read the original in Russian: (Translated by: [Anna Ossipova](#))

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