

## SLAVES OF THE OMON

Omon strongmen have talked about what “safeguarding public order” really consists in.

**Slaves of the Omon.** In the elite branch of the special police called MOSCOW GUVD there has been a bit of an upheaval. In the sub-section assigned primarily to crushing citizen street protests, trouble is brewing. Letters unmasking culprits have already gone to the President's office and to the Prosecutor General. And strongmen from the number two battalion have reported to the editor: they tell us how the police bosses are working late hours in connection with what they call “safeguarding public order”, and just how “dissident demonstrations” are dispersed.



(caption: after missions in Chechnya OMON strongmen get medals which carry a 2% increase in salary.)

“Once a rat has appeared in the cellar, they get to be habitual” - this was the assessment of the situation that has developed in the Second Battalion according to the Moscow OMON head General Vyacheslav Khaustov (a press service passed his words on to the New Times, the official channels of the GUVD refused to). And today's situation? The “rats”, or in other words, strongmen from the Second Battalion of the Moscow OMON GUVD, have approached Dmitri Medvedev with a letter: “Sometimes we work ten or fifteen days in a row, and 17-20 days on end with no dinner... The battalion commander, Police Colonel S.A. Yevtikov, demands three detainees at the end of every shift, or the colleague loses his bonus or his raise...Colonel Yevtikov has imposed his own illegal overtime on the battalion...As Colonel Yevtikov often says, “You are slaves and you just have to do what I tell you.” The list of complaints goes on. The letter has been signed by Alexey Volnushkin, Andrey Struchkov, Aleksey Popov, Sergey Taran, and Mikhail Potekhin. About ten men in all,

warrant officers and sergeants. Copies of the letter have also been sent to the MVD Department of Personal Safety, the Prosecutor General, the presidential executive, and the head of the Moscow GUVd, Vladimir Kolokoltsev, the section commander Major-General Vyacheslav Khaustov, and the head of the MOB GUVd General Vyacheslav Kozlov. And in reply – silence..

*But the OMON strongmen intend to remain silent no longer. This is their story as reported in the New Times.*

## **WORKING FOR OMON**

***“We don't want Muscovites, they ask too many questions. We need people from towns elsewhere, the loyal and dumb sort.”***

Special branch police (OMON) have been trained for dangerous assignments in urban conditions, to seize and destroy particularly dangerous criminals. But catching criminals is a job that has been around since the 'nineties. The strongmen's priorities have changed. In what way? Here are a couple of examples. At the end of last year, Dmitri Medvedev decided to have an informal dinner party for an eminent foreign guest. For us, this dinner lasted four days, because that's how long we were on duty around the restaurant. The OMON was down below and the FSO up above. They showed the dinner on TV, but not our four “Urals” parked there also. We were cursing at this dinner. But he (the President) was pleased. We could see him as plainly as the nose on your face. We were standing on the other side of the street. However, unplanned cover of visits by important guests doesn't happen to us very often. Three of our brigade are standing endlessly by the Kremlin, and one on the square by the Town Hall, at 13 Tverskaya St., one is always in reserve, in case something goes wrong. There is a non-stop patrol on Manezhnaya Square. If anyone crosses us, by committing some act of hooliganism or something illegal, we have to detain him, take him to Kitai Gorod MVD headquarters, and check him out. If the guy has done nothing, what do we have to check him out for? On each shift a colleague has to book at least three guys. And if they are not there, just make sure the GUVd account reports them, for the sake of appearances. Vagrants show up at UVD headquarters in Kitai-Gorod a dozen times a week, charged with petty hooliganism. And no amount of words about changing this draconian system has actually changed the situation. In 2008 the Moscow OMON detained, handed over, and assigned fines to forty thousand citizens. In ten years we'll be writing up half of Moscow. And don't think of planning on refusing to do this type of booking because you'll lose half your salary. Our battalion commander, Colonel Sergey Eftikov, says “If you don't have any detainees, you won't get full pay.” The pay of an OMON colleague is fifteen or sixteen thousand rubles. Plus the Mayor of Moscow's bonus of ten thousand rubles. And they'll also lose this bonus. For recruits, 26,000 rubles is quite an inducement, but still there are few Muscovites. As early as 2005, Colonel Eftikov said “We don't want Muscovites, they ask too many questions. We need people from towns elsewhere, the loyal and dumb sort”. Folks from elsewhere are obedient, they live in hostels, meaning they are dependant on the bosses, and they are not going to ask any unnecessary questions. Dumb, the Colonel is right; it's easy to control them. Do they need a lot of brains to wave a rubber stick? What do we want: mines cleared or terrorists apprehended? There are two thousand men (OMON strongmen) in Moscow whose main job is to wave a rubber stick. The French come to us for advice: they can't get Arabs off the streets of Paris like we do here and they are astonished: two thousand, that's an entire military detachment, and what for? And don't forget the ones posted in the Moscow suburbs: the outlying Omon, the elite ones who take personal charge of the Minister of the Interior.

## **The OMON as a business.**

*“Long may this market flourish. It's good for us.”*

Our commandant and his deputies have discredited themselves to such a degree that they are just “werewolves in uniform” as one of us told Lieutenant Colonel Yeftikov. “You are unworthy to bear the rank of a police colonel”. A complaint reached the Department of Property Protection in 2008: nine of the brigade's officers had forged diplomas. You could buy a diploma from the Novomoskovski Technical College from the battalion commandant for 22 thousand rubles. By paying the commandant five thousand dollars you could be a company commander. According to those who paid, salaries would then increase fourfold, from twenty-five to a hundred thousand. The battalion resumed its formation after the financial business. Conflict with the management came out in the open when our entire platoon refused to disperse a meeting of local inhabitants in the commercial center of Moscow where they had reassembled after a trader in the Cherkizovski market had been closed down. The appearance of the OMON in the market was a cause for lamentation. We arrived and a man in uniform came up to us and said “I'm the head of the security service. Gentlemen, there are some locals coming right now to protest against the market. Your job is to destroy their banners, don't touch the women and children, but drag the men straight towards us over here”. They weren't carrying any papers, orders, or instructions from the management. We just came straight out and asked “Who are you? The boss? Have you got some sort of documents?” Usually when we go to a meeting they write for us: “Unauthorized meeting. Such and such a number of people have turned up.” But here there was nothing of the kind. Our officer, Senior Lieutenant Andrey Cheklanov, began calling the authorities. In the local OVD they showed surprise, and the head of the criminal police arrived: “I had no idea that this was OMON territory.” Then someone came from the district prosecutor; “What are you doing here?” They took us on one side, to the edge of the market. Our whole management turned up. Lots of foul language directed at the “boss”, and the next day Colonel Evtikov received an excuse from him, saying “See how much money you've lost, you fool.” The Senior Lieutenant was given the sack.

It turned out that detachments of OMON had quite often stationed themselves in the market. Several times they had taken money for administering it. It was simply that on this day it happened to be our division, and the platoon didn't have any young and stupid people in it. The youngest had already been serving for three years, and six of them were pensioners. In other words, we were all experienced and know very well what we have to do, what documents we need, when we can take our leave, or why we have to stay. It was the same story after the explosion in the Petrovko-Razumovski market. In 2008 there was a conflict between the local authorities and some traders, so Colonel Yevtikov gave the order: “Remove this market. You will be rewarded.” The Omon men were delighted and set to it with sledge hammers, they demolished the market, and there were no orders to detain anybody. Then the two parties reached a compromise, and one of the Omon men had criminal charges pressed against him. Our Colonel told him: “You're dismissed. You're a thief, and I have no use for thieves.” But he was just carrying out his orders!

*“Georgian thieves are protected by law: in the 90s it was O.K. to persecute them, but now they protect them.”*

### **What does the price list for Omon services look like?**

#### **What costs how much?**

Every case is different. It depends what you agree on. Evtikov, the battalion commander, might reach an agreement with a merchant in person, or maybe the company commander or maybe a strongman might come and say “I've agreed to protect this kebab stall here. O.K.? Paying two thousand rubles a day. In Izmailov, one of our colleagues was protecting a kebab stall in front of a hotel.

But this is peanuts. On Rublyev Highway, for instance, our battalion is protecting eight cottages. Or a factory in Filia. On the Arbat, there's the office of a Georgian thief who's within the law, we protect him too. Now he's a businessman, and he likes the idea that in the 90's the OMON and

RUBOP harassed him, and now they're protecting him. Two OMON jeeps follow him everywhere. He had a straight talk with our Colonel, for one man they pay 12 thousand rubles a day, of which the strongman gets 1500. In the old days there used to be precise tasks and "hired guns". But if you use methods like this now how are you going to explain it? For that reason, as time has passed we've given up on the "hired gun" and have just recruited colleagues from the blue uniforms and given them a black one instead, with OMON trimmings. And to cover themselves, the management has taken a statement from each of them: "Warned of the restriction on undertaking paid work", and in advance each new strongman signs an undated statement concerning termination of duties, and these are kept in Evtikov's safe. If, at a later date, they sack a man and the management is not opposed, then of course he is no longer a colleague of the OMON.

Literally, right now, a trader got through to Minister Nurgaliev to show him photographs of the people who seized his stall. Colleagues of the Second Battalion are in the photo. The minister gave instructions for this to be verified but that was the end of the matter. Who gains by covering up this lucrative business? An OMON *Gazelle*, on a seizure mission, costs fifty thousand rubles. The task is usually simple: we break in, we break down the door, and we detain everybody who is there. Any computers, or technical gear is discarded or the colleagues simply loot it. After which we occupy the terrain so that no new owner can turn up. In the Fili-Davydkovo region we once seized a factory and stood guard there from September to February until all questions of ownership were settled.



The commanding officer gave orders for his favorite task: the strongmen detain veterans of the BOB on their "march of the dissidents"

No-one asks questions, they reward you for clear-cut implementation of the task at hand. Lieutenant-Colonels were supplied ahead of schedule, as deputies for Evtikov, why? One of them, Lieutenant Colonel Ivanov of the MKAD, in Khimki, on the square with the three stations, was taking money from prostitutes. These are all items that the Moscow OMON covers. Sometimes enthusiasts make arrangements for the girls to go to headquarters and entertain the officers in their quarters. In Strogino, all the home-based pick-ups of whores are under Moscow OMON control. Our headquarters are right next door and orders can be given any minute if some punters are unruly or refuse to pay.

The OMON also undertakes the escorting of convoys. Our strongmen with their cargo have gone as far as Vladivostok. When they closed down the Chirkizovski market they made sure the cargo was taken to this very base, Moscow Tts. Transporting cargo with an OMON escort costs 100 thousand rubles. Nobody trashed any goods, and there were no cover-ups or detentions. On the first day of the conflict colleagues came from the district council of the FMC: "Find us thirty guys doing something illegal to book." Nothing could be easier; we have a thousand and a half of these types. The boys and I were just amazed when Putin started talking about cleaning up Cherkizovo. No-one cleaned up anything, and it never even occurred to anyone to eradicate misinterpretations of this.

## **The Omon as an instrument of oppression**

*“If there are placards at meetings with anything derogatory on them about the MVD, Medvedev, or Putin, we have to destroy them immediately.”*

Why, in defiance of all these indicators, do they not apprehend Evtikov? Because, at the right moment, he said to deputy minister Mikhail Sukhodolsky, who was supervising the Omon: “We are ready to implement WHATEVER orders you may give us.” So he's in their good books. That's why it was our Second Battalion that harassed the “march of the dissidents”, “Russian marches”, and pensioners. Think back to the “march of the dissidents” in December 2008, when Soviet veterans from different wars came out to Novopushkin Square. We disrupted them and broke through their ranks but tried to detain no-one. But an 80 year old general gave us grief. A Second World War veteran, the president of the Union of Soviet Officers Lieutenant General Aleksey Fomin, was detained. His hand was hurt so bad that we had to get first aid from the Tver' UVD. That's why Khaustov and Kozlov love him. As they say in the OMON, he's been dumbed down. One veteran on this occasion couldn't make it as far as the motor depot, he could hardly walk. Four of us loaded him up, and we carried him to the UVD in our arms. If there are placards at meetings with anything derogatory on them about the MVD, Medvedev, or Putin, we have to destroy them immediately. They cart Comrade Limonov away as soon as they see him. An unspoken command – see him, have him away. Then the operatives sit in department offices and work out what charges to charge him up with.

The base has its special rogues' gallery, with Limononov, Kasparov, and Kasyanov. There are regular committee meetings where they talk to us about the situation in the country. There's a big hall in the basement. The management gathers everyone together and explains that marches of dissidents, Russian marches, and gay parades all send the foreign special agents into paroxysms of weeping. They say that everything here is awful, American special agents want to wreck our state and that is why dissidents or gays take to the streets, in the hope of bringing shame to Moscow. In 2008, we spent fifteen days on high alert watching every central metro station because of a gay parade. They designated our platoon to guard the FSB building on a regular basis. They were really scared that the gays would make a special trip there. They're terrified of everything, but if you turn on Channel One or Channel Two you'd think all was well in the land.

Before attending every meeting they drill into us who these guys are, and why they're doing what they do. So in 2005 they broke up a meeting against cash privileges. We intercepted the crowd thinking “We also had our free electric, metro, trams etc taken away.” Or again: On December 31<sup>st</sup>. 2009, Limonov gathered people on Triumphal Square. The order came to clean it up. A colleague isn't going to bother to ask whether he should stop to find out whether this is a demonstrator or a chance passer-by. They detained everyone and took them off to the department.

On December 31<sup>st</sup>. There were lots of passers-by, tourists going to look at Red Square. Chance spectators. They took one individual with his girl, they'd come on an excursion from Voronezh and Evtikov, he spent a long time explaining to them what a nuisance they'd been but they couldn't understand. To disperse a “march of dissidents” they generally send about three or four hundred men. That's in addition to others for documentary and video events, the people we call “groupies”. They are all officers. They wear civvies, merge with the crowd, and pass on information about who you can find where and who should be arraigned. In the Kremlin, they are afraid of a popular disturbance, a “march of the dissidents”. Among those we detained was Gary Kasparov. We also detained Nemtsov, and he shouted at us “I'll bring you to justice!” Who will you bring to justice? With Kasparov it was OK: they just sat him down, and they just talked quietly with him, but Nemtsov became threatening. They also got Kasyanov out of the way. And what is one to say if a German journalist's nose has been broken and no-one was the least bit concerned? An order was sent round to the journalists: no photographs. Before the meeting the battalion commander explained in front of the ranks: “There will be journalists there:

get shots of them A.S.A.P. “ And indeed they did this when they could, but earlier ...there was a case when a journalist had shot some good material, they especially changed one guy into civvies, and he bumped into the journalist and made him drop his camera. And they hit another journalist on the head while they were loading him on to a truck. Was anyone punished? There wasn't a single case of one of our colleagues being punished.

*“Our platoon had the endless job of guarding the FSB building. They were terrified that the gays would make for it.”*

**The Omon attracted a hell of a lot of attention when they destroyed a Russian flag at one meeting.**

If there are placards at meetings with anything derogatory on them about the MVD, Medvedev, or Putin, we have to destroy them at once. If they have not been photographed it is as if they had never been. By his own wishes the flag-destroyer took retirement and was reinstated in a different part of the police. General Khaustov sent for him and simply said, like a good chap, “Write your own personal report”. Our Second Battalion also broke up the last anti-fascist march along Chistoprudny boulevard. We are real experts at this. When there were protests in Vladivostock our division was unable to assemble (an MVD personnel carrier was involved). Otherwise we would have made a beeline for the coast. There was consternation when the war in southern Ossetia started, but that was settled by the 58<sup>th</sup> army, and there were enough men even without us. In April 2009, when there were disturbances in Kishynev, our colonel got a formation together and declared that he had fighters ready to send. But in the end they got the “Lynx” special formation. A special unit drawn from the central organization of the MVD went there in a hurry. There was reason to hope that with the advent of the new boss of GUV D the situation in the OMON will improve. But Pronin was able up to a point to listen to ordinary colleagues, while the new one just turns a deaf ear to his officers. Those of us who they've already cleaned out they are trying to take to court. But this will make you laugh: our boys are guarding the Moscow State Justiciary court rooms, and our Colonel Evtikov went there right now with a request: “A complaint is on its way from four of our colleagues. They are bad eggs. We don't want them reinstated.”



An

OMON officer who destroyed the Russian tricolor and took retirement by his own wish and was moved without any complication to another branch of the militia.

***P.S. General Khaustov personally requested the New Times to become acquainted with the work of the OMON. The New Times found out more than once about the harsh methods of the OMON strongmen and threw light on the meetings and demonstrations on the streets of Moscow. They will be pleased to accept General Khaustov's invitation if (that is) it is still valid after the publication of these reports.***

### **The OMON in Chechnya**

What does the Omon do in Chechnya in this time of peace? It protects the government. You've seen on TV that the fat cat Edelev (the deputy of Minister Edelev keeps an eye on MVD activities in the Caucasus, according to the New Times). No-one is itching to kill him, but he has three circles of guards around him. He can hardly move. He's long overdue for being freed from this. They've built a grand dacha for him, and his Rolton strongmen live on tinned meat. He drinks cognac with Kadyrov. We've been preparing a mission for two months, we're going to the Polygon. They're

giving us sixty cartridges each, but we have to sign for 120. The rest of the military supplies are black market. It's a special mission, so we get a special cash bonus. In 2005 they took 1500 rubles for our uniforms out of our cash bonus, justifying this by saying that the store-room was out of their hands. A senior officer, one of Evtikov's deputies, went off as if to buy us uniforms. But in fact he got them from the stores. So we arrive in Chechnya. They give us an allowance. Everyone was assigned a certain amount of meat, fish etc. We don't get all of it. The tour of duty is six months and twice in those six months the battalion commander brings us humanitarian aid from different dealers. After each foray there are votes of thanks, and medals, he addresses the new recruits with stories of how "I've been in Chechnya 38 times!" Well he was, just bringing aid. The train arrives with containers of juice, tee-shirts, ... In 2007 they brought shaving utensils from Nivea. We loaded them up on the "URAL" truck with the inscription "OMON GUV D Moscow" and took them to the market in Grozny. We sold the lot. No-one saw any Nivea, knitwear, tee-shirts, or J7 juice, or Putin Vodka. It's very handy to have the OMON in Chechnya. You see we're awash with diesel. Every two or three days the "Ural" is in a state of combat readiness. If something happens we have to get moving. But no-one goes anywhere, they run off after the documents to say we're going. In 2005, troops disposed of diesel worth thirty thousand rubles to the locals every month. Vyacheslav Khaustov greeted the general in his train. Evidently, they told someone at the top in Chechnya (without consulting us). "Khaustov's gone off to war", they said. The Colonel got on the train, they spent the night there, with the next day vodka all round, and the word is that "Khaustov has received the general. He's going off to war." He's already off on the General's hunt. We arrive, and Edelev wept to see him. They embraced like old friends. Edelev gave him an Astrakhan hat. The two generals sat and drank brandy. One complained about how awful things are in Moscow, the other about how bad it is in Chechnya.