REVENGE – this is the motive that (according to the experts) constitutes one of the most significant factors turning ordinary folk into ticking bombs that explode next to a government building somewhere in the Caucasus, which happens almost daily, or in a bus at the Kashir metro station, like in 2004, or now in the Moscow metro. Terrorists on the streets of Russian cities are the logical consequence of the tough clean-up operations in the Northern Caucasus where the forces of order are “cherry-picking” or “shaking out” people who are frequently completely innocent. The New Times has made a study of how this happens in connection with the fate of Muslim Khamzaev.

The 23-year-old Dagestani citizen, Khasavyurt Muslim Khamzaev, died on December 2, 2009. A brief report of this came from the press agencies at the time: “As a consequence of an armed conflict one of the antagonists, 23-year-old Muslim Khamzaev, known as Khamza, has been killed.” According to the Dagestan section of the MVD press agency the story went that “Khamzaev was cornered in his own home on Korkmasov St. by officers of the MVD and the FSB. The order to surrender was greeted with shots from an automatic weapon; he threw a grenade at the officers of the law, then tried to take cover”, said the Dagestan MVD. “The gunman was shot dead on Kandaurovskaya St. at a construction site. An AK-74 automatic rifle was retrieved from the scene together with an IZ-79 gas pistol, some spent cartridges, two hand grenades and more than 300 rounds of various calibers.”

“This has to be stopped!”

At the time, this news passed without comment. Which, by the way, is unsurprising, to the extent that we hear dozens of things like this from the Northern Caucasus on a weekly basis. However, on March 29th, a few hours after the explosions on the Moscow Metro, there was a call to the editor, followed by a visit from Lieutenant-Colonel Alexey Tukhvatulin, a retired officer of the MVD. He came bearing a letter from his former colleagues in a detachment of the special duties police department (OMSN GU MVD, Central Federal Command). The letter contained information that this 23-year old citizen, Khasavyurt Muslim Khamzaev, was killed gratuitously simply to cover up the evidence of illegality. “There was no justification for the use of weapons in connection with Khamzaev, and if he had gone to hospital or been set free this might have led to punishment for the illicit use of weapons”, the letter tells us. In addition we are given the words of one of the commanding officers of the detachment: “He's just a Dagestani retard, they should all be killed.” So they killed him: first they chucked a grenade at him, then when they saw that he was still alive they shot him “with his army-issue gun”.

“This has to be stopped!” said Lieutenant-Colonel Tukhvatulin to the New Times correspondent. “If not, we will just choke on their blood.” Tukhvatulin has served in a number of special divisions – OMON, SOBR, and finally eighteen years in this special duties detachment of the police. He began as a junior, and in October 2008 he was discharged as a Lieutenant-Colonel. Why discharged? He tells us that a dispute arose with the detachment chiefs in connection with another killing which the New Times will relate in subsequent issues. In Tukhvatulin's own account of things, the letter he brought to the editorial office was transmitted by his former colleagues, OMSN operatives in the Khasavyurt affair of December 2nd, 2009, to the Internal Security Department of the MVD and to section “M” of the FSB. This directorate exercises control over the organs of the police, but ineffectually. “I know for a fact that they met and showed this document to one of the deputy leaders of section “M” of the FSB. It's perfectly possible that they simply shelved the information,” says Tukhvatulin. “I understand that even if an official inquiry was begun, it was stopped in its tracks. That's why I decided to do what I did and give the letter to the editorial office of the New Times. Tukhvatulin gave the names of the authors to the New Times but asked them not
to pass them on because these people are still working in the special section of the police. The editors have not yet managed to make contact with them.

The New Times approached the Central Federal Division of the Directorate of the MVD for comment. The journalists were informed that Colonel D. was on holiday at the moment and was not authorized to have dealings with the press. Similarly, with Lieutenant-Colonel O. “The names you mention are not authorized for public disclosure”, the head of the press service of the GU MVD (Ts FU), Angela Kastuyeva, told the New Times, and suggested that the inquiry should be directed to Valery Kozhokar, the head of GU MVD PO TsFO. An appropriate inquiry was sent forward on March 31st, and an answer arrived at the editorial office the very next day:

Dear Evgenia Markovna,

The information contained in the inquiry emanating from your publishers is libelous and designed to stir up trouble. It does not correspond to the facts.
Your inquiry has currently been forwarded for execution to the DSB of the Russian MVD for appropriate action to be taken including criminal prosecution.

I take this opportunity to inform you that in accordance with the in-house protocols of the Russian MVD subscribed to by colleagues of the Special Branch they may not make disclosures and must maintain official secrecy. If such documents are published in your paper this can threaten the safety of colleagues and members of their families.

(signed) A.B.Kastuyeva (Press Secretary)

“He's no use to them”

So what really happened in Khasavyurt on December 2nd last year? At six a.m. an operation began to detain “criminal suspects” involving the authors of the letter together with detectives from Khasavyurt and combatants from the special division of the police from Vladimir in the Rostov region. The press service of the OMSN (Rostov region) informed the New Times that information concerning the participation of combatants in operations of this type is secret, but underscored the fact that their role is simply to guarantee support to the forces of the special operations division. “M.K.Khamzaev (born in 1986) sprang from his house...began to run off...they started firing at him...he was tracked down by traces of blood” the text of the letter says. Khamzaev was wounded in both hands, the collar-bone, the shoulder and the arm, and he was given first aid.

“Local colleagues from the militia engaged him in conversation, and said they “didn't need him” and that “he was of no interest to them.” Upon which the Khasavyurt militia washed their hands of him, leaving the captains of the Moscow section to deal with him, in particular Colonel V.D and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel K.O. We all know how they sorted him out. It should be added that in the words of the authors of the letter a whole arsenal of weapons was collected at the site of the killing, with which, apparently, Muslim Khamzayev returned their fire.

Could there be an investigation?

The elder brother of the deceased, Musapir Khamzayev, whom the New Times tracked down in Tyumen', endorsed the story of the OMSN combatants. He describes the morning of December 2nd as follows: “The guy was sleeping peacefully in his home, he heard the noise of engines, went outside to see what was happening, and no-one saw him again.” “They found their brother riddled with bullets and his head torn off two kilometers from his house,” says Musapir Khamzayev. After the killing, in the words of Khamzayev, the police visited the relatives with a search warrant: they showed them documents to prove that the deceased was under suspicion of robbery. It appeared that he had stolen 1,700 rubles from a filling station. “He was no fighter, he had dropped out of university, he had a workshop making paving stones,” said the deceased's brother. “All his neighbors said that he was on the run from the police who were shooting at him and that he had no kind of weapon in his hands. In other words, he did not put up any kind of resistance.” When the New Times asked whether his family had made any kind of approach to the law-keepers, Khamzayev just gave a sad smile and said “Do you really not know what they do in situations like that?” However, Lieutenant Colonel Tukhvatulin was convinced that it is not only possible, but absolutely vital, to investigate this crime: “The most important thing is that the public prosecutor should take this matter on. We have to question colleagues who formed part of this subdivision. Of course they will say they know nothing. But their bosses formed a gang of people who were accessories to the murder.” “Anyway, this guy's family knows the truth”, Tuchvatulin said with conviction. “Khasavyurt is a big village. They know everything that went on there. They know colleagues of the policemen, dozens of people. Such information gets around one way or another. But the regular powers that be do not want to know about it.” Tukhvatulin is certain that stories like
these go the rounds of terrorists in the Moscow underground. It was precisely for this reason that the Lieutenant Colonel, hearing what happened at “Lubyanka” and “Park Kultury” metro stations, came to the newspaper office. The New Times wishes you to consider such material as a formal petition to the Russian prosecutor. We are waiting for an answer.