

SVRC

Fact Sheet

The Events of the Beslan, Russia School Siege

On September 1, 2004, the community of Beslan, North Ossetia, Russia was changed forever. On this day, thirty-two Chechen terrorists entered the local school on the first day of the school year and took hostage of 1,181 people, mostly children, who were in the school at that time. Over the next three days, negotiations occurred between the terrorists and local and federal authorities but to no avail. It is estimated that 336 hostages, including 156 children, died because of this horrible act of violence. Ten law enforcement officers were also killed during the incident. The following is a summary of the events over those three days.

Day 1, September 1, 2004

- Between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., thirty-two Chechen terrorists entered the school in Beslan, North Ossetia, Russia, taking 1,181 people hostage.
- At 9:30 a.m., the North Ossetian Republican Ministry for Emergencies announced that terrorists had seized the school. Children, parents, teachers, and administrators were led to the school gymnasium. Explosives were placed throughout the building, including the basketball goals and hanging from strings, and barricades were placed in front of exits. The terrorists then executed several men and threw their bodies out gymnasium windows.
- The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) anti-terrorist commando unit was activated and ordered to Beslan at 10:15 a.m.
- The school was cordoned off by the Ossetian Police Force at 10:30 a.m. and supported by the 58th Army of the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and local volunteers armed mostly with hunting rifles.
- At 11:30 a.m., all educational facilities in Beslan and Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetian, were evacuated and closed.
- The terrorists released some hostages with a videotape of their demands at 12:30 p.m. They demanded the release of some 30 people arrested on suspicion of participating in a raid by Chechen rebels and Ingush Wahhabis on police installations where 98 people were killed, including 60 police officers. Negotiations began with the terrorists at this time.
- Around 3:50 p.m., the terrorists released another message saying they would execute 50 more hostages if any of the terrorists were killed and 20 hostages for every terrorist who was injured. They also threatened to kill hostages if the electricity was

shut off or if wireless communications were blocked to or from the school. Negotiations continued throughout the afternoon and night.

Day 2, September 2, 2004

- As negotiations continued, the terrorists refused water, food and medicine for the hostages. At 3:00 a.m., the terrorists demanded that Aslanbek Aslakhonov, President Vladimir Putin's Advisor on Chechnya, join the negotiations. Discussions between the terrorists and law enforcement continued throughout Day 2.
- Around 4:30 p.m., former Ingush President Ruslan Aushev negotiated the release of 26 hostages, primarily women and infants. Later, the terrorists sent out a note demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya and independence of the Chechen Republic.

Day 3, September 3, 2004

- Throughout Day 3, the terrorists refused food and water for the hostages. Around 12:45 p.m., the terrorists agreed for a small group of emergency ministry officers to enter the school and collect the bodies of 20 male hostages who had been killed during Day 1 of the crisis.
- At 1:05 p.m. as officers were loading the bodies, a bomb exploded within the gymnasium where the hostages were being held. Witnesses say that the bomb fell from one of the basketball goals and exploded upon impact. Hostages began jumping out of gymnasium windows only to be gunned down by the terrorists. A larger fire started within the gymnasium as two more bombs exploded, causing the roof of the gymnasium to collapse.
- Police and armed volunteers stormed the school, firing at the terrorists and assisting injured hostages. The Alfa commandos joined the skirmish at 1:40 p.m.
- With gunfire still prevalent, ambulances and volunteers rushed the injured away from the scene and to local hospitals and clinics. Some terrorists tried to escape with the injured hostages only to be apprehended by the police and volunteers. Two of the terrorists were lynched by the mob.
- The siege ended around 10:00 p.m. with FSB commandos apprehending the final group of terrorists in the school's basement.
- At last count, minus the 336 on-site fatalities, 767 hostages required medical treatment with around 400 being in the hospital for more than a week. Fourteen additional people died from their injuries while in the hospital.

Source: Abdullaev, Nabi. (Vol. 2, Issue 8) Beslan, Russia...terror! in the schoolhouse!. *Homeland Security Journal*, pp. 28-35.