

Expanded meeting of the Interior Ministry Board

Vladimir Putin took part in the annual expanded meeting of the Interior Ministry Board.

April 2, 2024 15:00 Moscow

Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev delivered the main report.

The agenda included priority objectives in various spheres of operational activities, including ensuring public order, countering extremism, preventing illegal migration, the performance of district police offices, as well as the Ministry's efforts to combat organised crime.

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President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Mr Kolokoltsev, comrades,

During our recent annual Board meetings we held a substantive discussion with the heads of the Federal Security Service and the Prosecutor General's Office on their performance and objectives in the sphere of law enforcement.

We will continue this discussion today, at the expanded meeting of the Interior Ministry Board. I believe that we must give special attention to several priorities such as ensuring public order, countering extremism, preventing illegal migration, the performance of district police offices, as well as the Interior Ministry's efforts to combat organised crime. It is worth noting the cross-border operation of such groups, some of which are real crime syndicates and work hand in glove with foreign security services and the envoys of international radical and extremist organisations. These criminal communities are involved in human, firearms and drug trafficking, as well as financial crime and cybercrime.

In particular, the use of especially dangerous hard synthetic drugs has recently increased in Russia. The Interior Ministry should work together with the Federal Security Service and other security services, as well as the Federal Customs Service, to redouble efforts to expose the production sites of these drugs and the sources of foreign raw materials for them, as well as to block their delivery routes and trade.

Overall, a key priority is to strengthen close coordination among all our law enforcement and security services. We must bear in mind that internal and external threats are often interconnected today, and all of them are targeting our citizens and our society and are aimed at containing Russia and undermining its sovereignty.

Comrades,

You are working together with your colleagues from other agencies now to investigate the heinous terrorist attack of March 22. As I have said before, it is not only important to identify the actual perpetrators but also all the links in the chain and the end beneficiaries of this atrocity. We will definitely bring them to justice.

Here is what I would like to say in this regard. Those who use this weapon – and it is obviously a weapon against Russia – must understand that it cuts both ways. Numerous crimes have been perpetrated for money. In addition, it can be said, and you are fully aware of it, that no agent is fully reliable in that professional community. Anything is acceptable there for money; no religious or political considerations are taken into account, only financial gain. Likewise, everything is for sale there, any information can be bought and sold. In other words, we will get to those who masterminded this crime.

I would like to add that we are comprehensively assessing the activities of all our law enforcement and oversight services, as well as commercial organisations that were responsible for the large facility where the terrorist attack was carried out.

We have paid an extremely high price. And we must analyse the situation with utmost objectivity and professionalism. This is important, first and foremost, for taking our efforts to ensure public order and security in crowded places, sports facilities, transport, shopping and entertainment centres, schools, hospitals, universities, theatres, and so on, to the next level. All these facilities must be closely monitored, and Interior Ministry bodies have the main role to play in this effort.

I would like to emphasise that the Interior Ministry has extensive experience and powers in ensuring public security. According to statistics, and this is true to fact, the number of crimes committed in crowded places and transport decreased last year.

But as we can see, it is necessary to constantly work on enhancing readiness for emergencies. This concerns all services of the Russian Federation, our law enforcement bodies and all regions of the Federation. And, of course, this also applies to the regions that are located in the direct proximity to the line of contact in the special military operation zone.

I would like to make special mention of the work of law enforcement officers in Donbass and Novorossiia. I know that in these areas they have to deal not only with criminals, but also sometimes with subversive enemy groups that are trying to use, in part, their long-term contacts with organised crime. Therefore, one of the main goals in Donbass and Novorossiia is to protect people against criminal threats and ensure normal functioning of government bodies, industrial facilities, banks, shops, farmers, and small and medium-sized businesses.

Our colleagues from other Russian regions are very helpful in this respect.

I would like to thank all those who go on operational and working trips and serve in combined police units where people of different ethnicities and confessions from all over our vast country are performing their combat duty shoulder to shoulder.

I would like to note that units of internal affairs bodies have been formed in all new regions of the Federation. Your work largely sets the standard for evaluating the power of law in Russia. This is an enormous responsibility, as I am sure you know.

I will mention a revealing figure. Over 3.2 million people in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions have received passports of citizens of the Russian Federation in the very difficult situation of ongoing hostilities.

I would like to ask Interior Ministry bodies to consistently continue these efforts. Be attentive and very careful in your approach to every person, every family, especially families with children, and all those who apply for a Russian passport or other, often lost, documents. It is also important to work with refugees. As soon as an opportunity appears, it is necessary to visit practically every building in cities and villages and do all

you can to prevent the legalisation of subversives and neo-Nazi accomplices. You should exercise the strictest control over this.

Of course, I would like to emphasise the need to conduct this work in close coordination with local government bodies – both regional and local authorities. No matter how difficult it may be, you should establish direct contact with these people.

At the recent meetings of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Prosecutor General's Office boards, I placed special emphasis on the need to effectively counter any extremist manifestations.

As you know, in many cases, illegal migration and ideological indoctrination by all sorts of false preachers and websites provide fertile ground for such extremist activities and outright crime.

At the same time, I would like to point out that it is unacceptable to use the recent tragedy to incite ethnic discord, xenophobia, Islamophobia and the like. Actually, the main goal of the terrorists and their masterminds was to sow discord and panic, conflict, and hatred in our country, to split Russia from within. It is their main objective. We must not allow them to achieve it under any circumstances.

But when you look into a particular case, a specific crime, it turns out that people enter Russia relatively easily: they go through all the formalities and get a work patent even though they have a long record of offences, sometimes persistent ones. Then they apply for citizenship without speaking even basic Russian. This issue requires modern digital, electronic biometric databases. Apparently, the current ones are insufficient. They are not enough to fully mitigate the risks and relapses of illegal migration.

At the same time, our compatriots, whose ancestors grew up in the most central regions of our country, sometimes cannot obtain citizenship for years.

I have already said that we need to thoroughly and radically update our approaches to migration policy. I would like to ask the Interior Ministry, our other law enforcement agencies, and security services to work together with the Government and the Presidential Executive Office to address these issues comprehensively and in detail. I have had a brief conversation about this with the Minister just now. What I want to see is a list of top priority issues.

First of all, we must ensure the interests and security of the state and society, to preserve and maintain inter-ethnic and inter-faith harmony, our cultural and language identity, that is, everything that is Russia's power. The priority principle must be to allow only those who respect our traditions, language, culture, and history to live and work in Russia.

Another priority is to carry on a consistent and unwavering fight against corruption, which is poisoning our society, destroying law-abiding businesses, stealing the money we need for the defence of the country and its economic and social progress. This fully concerns the task of ensuring internal security of the Interior Ministry system itself.

Colleagues,

We must continue to increase the clearance rate when it comes to corruption and other crimes, including those that were not solved in previous years. I have to say that the number of grave, extremely serious and several other kinds of crimes increased last year. We must work to reverse this negative trend. I talked with the Minister about this as well. Of course, we should carefully analyse this issue and scrutinise the figures, but if it is true, we must act on it.

Next, the number of cyber crimes has increased by almost 30 percent to nearly 680,000, causing damage of over 156 billion rubles. It is necessary to carry out a thorough upgrade in the mechanisms of combatting offenses in this area and seek to strive ahead of criminals.

It is particularly important to protect the younger generation from the influence of radicals, extremists in global networks and from the criminal underworld in general. Let me note that the level of teenage crime has been decreasing in recent years. This is certainly a positive result, and I want to thank those who work in this sector.

This shows that the strategy of system-wide prevention of teenage crime has been chosen correctly. It must be continued, including by the Interior Ministry's juvenile divisions. In this context, the Ministry should enlist help from the public, religious, educational, and volunteer organisations, and generally make use of the broad opportunities that we are planning to create within the framework of our new Youth of Russia national project.

The effectiveness of district police officers needs to be enhanced. Many officers carry out this challenging and often inconspicuous work with great quality indeed and have achieved significant results. In 2023, for example, district police officers helped to identify offenders in one out of five solved crimes (21.9 percent).

Another important point is that the Safe Quality Roads national project has made it possible to renovate many federal highways and transport infrastructure in major agglomerations. Now, as you know, we will be focusing on developing the network of regional and local roads. This means an increase in traffic and speeds. Therefore, I expect the Traffic Police staff to be proactive in implementing advanced safety technologies and up-to-date road traffic management methods. Of course, it is also important to promote awareness and instil a culture of responsible behaviour on the roads, starting from school and possibly even preschool age. In this regard, unfortunately, we have observed a 4.5-percent rise in road traffic accidents and an increase in casualties, with 14,500 fatalities and 166,500 injuries in 2023. We will be upgrading roads, and this must necessarily be accompanied by efforts to enhance road safety.

Comrades,

I fully expect you to present concrete legislative, law-enforcement, and administrative proposals following the discussion of these and other topics.

In conclusion, there are certainly many unresolved problems, but a tremendous amount of work has been accomplished and continues to be done. Therefore, I want to thank the Interior Ministry leadership and its personnel for this.

I wish you success. Thank you.

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Vladimir Putin: Mr Kolokoltsev, colleagues,

I will not go into the details of your current professional activities, although, of course, I regularly discuss them with the Ministry's officials and my other colleagues. But I would rather not discuss that now. I will highlight a few general aspects that I find

important – just a few general points that will serve as guidelines for accomplishing specific objectives.

As you know, Russia is going through a challenging period. This is clear to everyone; everything is clear here. After the collapse of the USSR, our geopolitical adversaries naturally became determined to finish off what remained of historical Russia, primarily to accelerate the collapse of its core, Russia proper, the Russian Federation. Anything that was left was destined to serve their geopolitical interests. I can say this with confidence, as a former director of the Federal Security Service, as a former secretary of the Security Council, and as President and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Russia.

Strange as it may seem, someone still seeks revenge for their failed attempts to defeat Russia in the past – for Hitler's and Napoleon's unsuccessful campaigns against Russia. There have been many such examples in history, and surprisingly enough, our adversaries still hold them in their historical memory. I know this is hard to believe, but I have encountered it; it is surprising but true.

Certain countries are desperate to preserve their hegemony in today's rapidly changing world, including at our expense. Naturally, given our country's vast territory and abundant human and natural resources, they would not want to miss the opportunity to plunder Russia.

Apparently, some considered our country a weak link. They are mistaken. I would even say that many have realised by now that they were wrong. This has never happened; no one has ever succeeded in doing this, and no one ever will. This is an obvious fact, I am absolutely certain of it.

However, if we want to grow and be competitive, we need to work hard; there is no place for complacency. What I mean is that our economic performance has been generally satisfactory. Russia achieved a 3.6 percent growth [last year], something Europe was not capable of, and the growth has continued at a fairly good pace. The current growth rate is over four percent, industrial production is growing. We are successfully addressing the current challenges in the social sphere. Unemployment is at a historical low, as is the number of people living below the poverty line. These are all the results of our work, of our joint work. There is much more to list. But as I said, there are no grounds for complacency, much less slackness.

In order to be successful, we need to stay focused, each of us working effectively in their respective area. What is important here, and I will repeat this again, is to support the economy, the social sphere, and maintain general calm in society. Yes, voters were active during the presidential election – that was because they count on our effective work, and I need you to keep this in mind. Yes, I received a record number of votes as a presidential candidate, but this reflected the citizens' views on all aspects of the state and society, including every government agency, not least the Interior Ministry. This Ministry plays an extremely significant role in every sphere, including the economy, social sector, the fight against crime and corruption, and so on. The internal situation in society – which is an extremely important aspect – largely depends on how effective you are.

Your job is to ensure that an average Russian citizen has a normal life, but for you, it means working in conditions that are close to wartime. I think this should be clear to everyone in this hall, to all people in uniform.

I am counting on you. And this is the kind of work that the people of Russia expect from you.

Thank you. I wish you every success.

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