

Federal Security Service Board meeting

The President held a meeting of the FSB Board.

February 24, 2021 14:40 Moscow

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Good afternoon, comrade officers,

This year, the meeting of the Federal Security Service Board, which usually meets in an expanded format, is being held in a restricted format. But this does not downplay its importance. Unfortunately, we have to comply with the current epidemiological restrictions.

Therefore, I would like to welcome and address not only those present, but also all your colleagues, your local staff and the heads of regional and other departments.

I would like to thank all of you for doing your jobs professionally and precisely, and for your readiness to achieve all your goals in non-standard conditions without reference to current circumstances. I would like to emphasise that the matters of state security, the protection of our citizens from internal and external threats are always in the focus of attention of the country's leadership, which regards them as a priority, and I would even say top priority.

We can see that there is no reduction in the scale of global challenges, such as terrorism, cross-border crime and cybercrime. Against this complicated background we also have to deal with the so-called containment policy towards Russia. Actually, this is something we have been well aware of for a long time. This is not competition as a natural part of international relations, but a consistent and highly aggressive policy aimed at disrupting our development, at slowing it down and creating problems along our external perimeter and contour, provoking internal instability, undermining the values that unite Russian

society, and ultimately, at weakening Russia and forcing it to accept external management, just as this is happening in some post-Soviet states, as we can see.

This is not an exaggeration. In point of fact, you do not need to be convinced that this is the case, because you know this very well and possibly even better than anyone else. It is enough to read the publicly available strategic documents and the extremely direct statements made by officials in a number of countries. They are not even trying to conceal their unfriendly attitude towards Russia and several other independent and sovereign centres of global development.

But the point is not the aggressive rhetoric, but real, practical actions. A targeted information campaign is being waged against Russia with various peremptory and unsubstantiated accusations. Even absurd and anecdotal conspiracy theories are being used. For example, take the recent attempts to question our achievements in medicine, in the fight against coronavirus.

By the way, many of our partners are very friendly about our results in this area. They are ready to cooperate with us, and we also welcome this kind of attitude. We understand that global problems can only be resolved by joining efforts.

Nevertheless, as you know, a lot of attempts have been and are being made, thank you for the information you supply to the country's political leaders, about provocations planned in this sphere. But we have long been accustomed to this and we are prepared.

They are trying to shackle us with economic and other sanctions, to block large international projects – those our partners are also interested in, by the way – to directly interfere in public and political affairs in Russia, in its democratic procedures, and of course, special services' tools are being used against us.

Again, this kind of policy towards Russia is absolutely futile. We are ready to conduct an open dialogue, to find compromise solutions so we can deal with the most difficult problems, on the basis of mutual trust and respect. But one thing is unconditional for us, and that thing is Russia's sovereignty, its national interests, the security of our citizens, and our people's right to determine their own future. And these values, the foundations of our development must be reliably protected.

In this regard, relying on the foundation already laid, on the service's growing capabilities and potential, we need to ensure an even higher quality of work in all the main areas. Its effectiveness and efficiency must correspond to the nature and dynamics of the threats that we face.

First of all, the fight against terrorism, the most acute and dangerous threat, calls for constant concentration and well-thought-out prompt preventive actions.

The last organised armed gang committing crimes in the Chechen Republic and Ingushetia was eliminated in December 2020. This is a significant result. We are also conducting long-range operations, including air strikes against terrorist bases in Syria. I would like to once again thank those who participated in these operations and those who continue to do so.

At the same time, I would like to note that 72 terrorism-related crimes were prevented last year. This is 25 percent more than in 2019 when 57 such crimes were averted.

Certainly, these statistics show that in the overwhelming majority of cases, it is possible to expose criminal intentions at the preparatory stage, during their preparation and therefore to save people's lives and safeguard their wellbeing. I would like to thank you for this and to motivate you to conduct such high-quality work in the future.

But these statistics also show that the terrorist chain is trying to resume its activity, no matter what. Consequently, it is important to expose and eliminate terrorists, including the so-called deeply-hidden "sleeper" cells and to analyse and predict the overall situation and to heed the fact that ring-leaders and terrorist ideologues always change their tactics and look for sources of finance, and that they use new methods to conduct propaganda and recruit young people. I am asking you to focus on exposing the contacts of terrorist groups and foreign secret services. You know this very well, unfortunately, they use everything, including terrorists.

And, of course, we need to increase the counter-terrorism protection levels of public places, vital facilities, social institutions and to more effectively coordinate the overall work of the Federal Security Service and other law enforcement agencies under the auspices of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee.

Efforts to counter extremism are another high-priority aspect. These two trends are interlinked. Protection of the constitutional system, civic peace and inter-ethnic accord in our society is a highly important task. You should also pay attention to efforts to thwart any outside attempts to encroach upon the Russian people's right to determine their future.

This year we are going to hold elections to the State Duma. The citizens' constitutional guarantees of electing their representatives freely based on democratic procedures must be protected from any provocations.

We must continue working strictly within the legal framework while relying on support from our citizens, setting a clear line between political competition that is natural for any society, including ours, competition between political parties, ideological platforms and different views on national development and actions that have nothing in common with democracy and are aimed instead at undermining the stability and security of our state, at serving alien interests, the interests of those who are financing such activities from "over there," as people say, to ensure that they serve not ours but their interests.

In this connection, I would like to mention the effective and precise actions of our counterintelligence agencies last year. As a result, they cut short the activities of 72 career officers and 423 agents of foreign intelligence services.

It is important to continue upgrading the protection of our confidential information, to prevent any leakage of classified military data or information about advanced technology and forward-looking designs of our research centres and defence industry enterprises. As you know, there are things we must protect.

Overall, the protection of Russia's economic security is becoming an increasingly essential and important task. In 2020, we cut short the activities of 87 criminal groups in this sphere.

I would like to ask you to continue acting in this efficient manner, together with the other concerned agencies, in order to help maintain the economic and financial stability of the country and to make use of your competencies to support and protect Russian businesses and companies from criminal encroachments and unfair competition

on the global markets.

In the same consistent manner you should also combat corruption in the economy and at all levels of power. I would like you to pay special attention to preventing the embezzlement and unauthorised use of budgetary funds, first of all, allocations for the construction of strategic facilities, state programmes and the state defence order, as well as for the efforts to counter the coronavirus infection.

All these funds must be disposed of rationally, in strict compliance with the goals for which they are allocated, and in the interests of Russian citizens.

The FSB Border Guard Service is to be dealing with a wide range of tasks, including as part of our common efforts to lower the risks of transmission, spread and potential import of new strains of the coronavirus infection.

In this context, I would like to note that the number of people detained for crossing the border illegally or violating the border control regime remains striking. Therefore, it is important to work on improving the border infrastructure, to equip border patrol guards with modern equipment – primarily in the areas where there is a threat of border crossing by terrorists and illegal migrants or where criminals may try to build trans-border drug trafficking and smuggling channels.

Cybersecurity requires new approaches. Global digital space has become a ground for rigorous geopolitical competition. Last year, if we take only those regarded as the most dangerous, the number of attacks on Russian websites, including government websites, surged by almost 350 percent.

In these circumstances, we need a long-term and meticulous strategy to protect our national interests in the digital space, based on forecasting, recognising potential risks to the public and the state and, of course, relying on the most advanced technology and technological solutions. We must also work with our partners from other countries on developing the international information security system.

Colleagues,

There is one more thing that I must talk about. I would like to specifically thank workers of the FSB Central Archives for their hard and significant work. Last year, when we marked the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory, many unique documents were declassified and released for the first time. Those materials consist of evidence of crimes committed by the Nazis and their accomplices, including crimes against civilians, and the truth about the courage and heroism of security officers during the Great Patriotic War.

I believe that by continuing this work, we are making an important contribution to preserving historical memory and preventing attempts to falsify history.

Of course, speaking about the results of 2020, I cannot but say to this audience that doctors and the agency's other healthcare professionals deserve high praise. I know that at the onset of the pandemic, hospital departments and health resorts affiliated with the Federal Security Service were promptly repurposed, and hospital bed reserves were created. All the FSB departments received and continue to receive timely supplies of personal protective equipment.

Considering the continuous and fast-paced nature of your work, those measures made it possible to curb the critical spread of this dangerous infection and ensure quality treatment and prevention for FSB officers, their family members and agency veterans.

We will continue to improve the system of social benefits for FSB officers, to develop healthcare, and resolve housing and other social issues.

Comrade officers,

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank the personnel of the Russian Federal Security Service for their honorable service. I am certain that you will continue to perform your duties in a professional and efficient manner.

Thank you and congratulations to everybody present and all FSB officers on Defender of the Fatherland Day that we celebrated yesterday.

<...>

Publication status

Published in sections: News, Transcripts

Publication date: February 24, 2021, 14:40

Direct link: en.kremlin.ru/d/65068
