

# What was in Ryazan: sugar or rdx?

The investigation of the Novaya Gazeta casts doubt on the version of the training alert

14.02.2000 - Pavel Voloshin

That evening, on September 23, Alexey Kartotelnikov, one of the tenants of the house on Novoselov Street, noticed suspicious "Lada" with numbers taped with paper near his entrance. Several men were unloading some bags from a car into the basement of the house. A police squad called by Kartotelnikov found bags and a clock mechanism attached to them in the basement.

The residents were evacuated, and the explosive device was defused by the sappers of the engineering and technical department of the Ryazan public security police. An express analysis carried out with the help of a gas analyzer by explosives specialists of the Ryazan Department of Internal Affairs showed the presence of hexagen vapors in the detected substance. The explosives found were immediately sent to Moscow, and the local FSB leadership reported on the successful prevention of the tragedy.

The joy of the Ryazan FSB officers over the victory over terrorism did not last long. Two days later, the leadership of the FSB of Russia stated that in fact, exercises organized by this special service were held in Ryazan to check the combat readiness of local law enforcement agencies and the vigilance of citizens. The bags found in the house on Novoselov Street, it turns out, contained ordinary refined sugar, and the readings of the devices that recorded the hexagen vapors were nothing more than an expert error. In some comments, the FSB leadership mentioned the insufficient qualifications of Ryazan sappers and improper care of the devices.

According to the results of the exercises, the preparation of the Ryazan special services for the prevention of terrorist attacks was assessed as eighty percent, and the most distinguished participants were awarded cash prizes and valuable gifts.

Today, provincial Ryazan will soon equal Moscow in terms of the number of foreign journalists per capita. Rooms "Suite" local hotels occupy the correspondents of the 'Baltimore sun' and 'Los Angeles times' and reporters the 'independent' and 'Figaro' in company with the television crew CBS precipitated by the local police and the FSB.

The special services of Ryazan are holding a deaf defense. FSB officers shudder at the word "interview". By an order from Moscow, all contacts with the press are prohibited. The press service of the FSB of the Ryazan region was instructed not to comment on the

events of last autumn. Moreover, Ryazan policemen and employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations received a similar order. The order is being carried out, the head of the press service of the FSB of Ryazan, Yuri Bludov, responds categorically to all journalistic requests: "No comments".

Then we will take the trouble to comment on it. Because somehow the available facts do not add up too much to an optimistic official picture.

## **Exercises?**

So. On September 23, exercises were held in Ryazan. Then why was the central leadership of the FSB in such confusion? Recall that only two days later the official version was expressed.

Further. No exercises in our country (except for the first nuclear tests) have ever been surrounded by such a veil of secrecy. Nevertheless, all information on the exercises conducted is closed, even the one that is pointless to close.

For example, the materials of a criminal case initiated by local security officers upon the discovery of explosives.

The investigator of the Ryazan FSB could not open the case just like that. This requires good reasons, for example, the results of the examination. To close the case, you also need good reasons. The Moscow FSB leadership stated that the case was closed, representatives of the Ryazan FSB refused to confirm this.

But the main question seems to be hidden not in legal subtleties, but in the examination data: sugar or hexagen?

In fact, the third option is likely: both sugar and hexagen, since the food product in this case plays the role of a necessary additive (phlegmatizer) for the manufacture of explosives. So it was in Moscow.

## What was in the bags?

As it is known, during their detection, the gas analyzer of the explosives specialists of the Ryazan ATC showed the presence of hexagen vapors. The head of the engineering and technical department of the public security police department, Yuri Tkachenko, who personally carried out the neutralization, is fully confident in the serviceability of the device. And there was no evidence that the bags contained sugar.

Could an error have occurred? Yes. In several cases. Outdated technique and methodology. But the department of explosives specialists is a unique unit not only for Ryazan, but also for all nearby regions. There is no such thing in the FSB or the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Not only that, only professional sappers (thirteen people) who have accumulated extensive work experience work here. In addition, all of them have repeatedly passed advanced training courses on the basis of the STC "The explosion test was held in Moscow, and every two years they passed exams.

About technology. The equipment in Ryazan, oddly enough, is world-class. Only one gas analyzer for detecting explosive vapors (the same one) it costs about 20 thousand dollars. Yuri Tkachenko, the head of the engineering and technical department of the Ryazan Public Security police, is confident in his people. He is also confident in technology. Otherwise, it simply cannot be, their life depends on the serviceability of the devices.

An error could occur if the equipment was improperly cared for and the gas analyzer "retained" traces of previous research.

No. Yu. Tkachenko: "Maintenance of the gas analyzer is carried out only by a narrow specialist and strictly on schedule: there are planned works, there are preventive checks, since there is a source of constant radiation in the device."

The gas analyzer is not an enema, it is not washed, and a set of planned measures is carried out for prevention. Therefore, the "traces" could not remain in any way. They could not also because none of the local specialists already remembers the last time (except on September 23) they examined hexagen pairs. This is a very rare case in the practice of any laboratory.

Further. Why were the exercises never completed? Why were Ryazan specialists not given the opportunity to conduct a full study of the contents of the bags, and the cargo was urgently sent to Moscow by employees of the central office of the FSB? Sent, surprisingly, to the Forensic Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Why, if it was already clear that

deposits of sugar were found in Ryazan? Were you trying to make it to the morning tea party? Or were you still not sure?

The examination of explosives is a complicated matter. To write a comprehensive conclusion, it is necessary to conduct at least five tests, and this takes time. But even before the end of the study, the FSB leadership announced that the substance found was harmless sugar with the addition of hexagen for the smell. It is impossible to verify the results of the examination because the work of Moscow criminologists is classified. Our conclusion: the residents of Ryazan were not mistaken. The equipment and people worked professionally. There was hexagen in the "training" bags.

### **Why a combat fuse?**

The second "evidence" ≈ Fuse.

According to the experts who defused the found charge, the detonator attached to the bags was not a dummy and was made at a completely professional level (see photo).

It is not clear then: why should a dummy explosive device be equipped with a combat fuse?

Still. If real explosives were used in the exercises, how safe was it for the residents of the house? For transportation on highways, streets in ordinary "Zhiguli"?

The choice of the place for the exercises and the form of their conduct raise many questions. Police ensign Andrei Chernyshev, who was the first to enter the mined basement, testifies:

At about ten o'clock, a signal was received from the duty officer: suspicious people were seen coming out of the basement in the house on Novoselov Street, 14/16. Near the house we were met by a girl who told us about a man who came out of the basement and left in a car with the numbers taped.

I left one policeman at the entrance, and went down to the basement with the other. The basement in this house is deep and completely flooded with water. The only dry place is a small nook, such a stone closet. They shone a flashlight, and there were several sugar

bags stacked. The upper bag is cut, and some kind of electronic device is visible: wires wrapped with duct tape, a clock... Of course, there was a slight shock with us right away.

They ran out of the basement, I stayed to guard the entrance, and the guys went to evacuate the residents.

Fifteen minutes later, reinforcements arrived, the authorities from the Department of Internal Affairs arrived. Bags with explosives were taken out by the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the presence of representatives of the FSB. Of course, after our bomb technicians neutralized them.

No one doubted that the situation was combative. I still have the confidence that these were not exercises. And the choice of a house for a terrorist attack is characteristic: it is in plain sight and the place is crowded.

## **Why house 14/16?**

A convenience store selling food is attached to the first floor of the house 14/16 on Novoselov Street. At the very least, it is strange to expect that residents will suspect people unloading sugar bags near the hatch of the warehouse of a 24-hour grocery store of terrorism. In addition, there are several residential buildings nearby that are more suitable for conducting exercises by all indicators. And the outskirts are not the center of the city.

But for a terrorist attack, the house on Novoselov Street fits perfectly. Especially if the target of the explosion is the maximum number of victims.

A square on the outskirts of Ryazan, popularly called the Old Circle. Novoselov Street. On a small hill there is a single-entrance yellow tower, a twelve-storey building made of silicate brick, similar in design to the previously destroyed house on Kashirka. In the event of an explosion, the residents had no chance of survival. The visitors of the store located on the first floor would also suffer. According to one of the residents of the house, a builder by profession, the neighboring house would not have survived the explosion either. I would just slide down the slope, as if on an ice slide. The soil in this place is weak, sandy.

The choice of a house prepared for an explosion is the same as in the capital: a low-prestige suburb, a typical house inhabited by ordinary people, workers of idle factories and penniless engineers. (By the way, it would seem that it is more profitable for terrorists to

intimidate the Russian elite. An no. Prestigious houses for some reason do not blow up, the public response will not be the same. The people will not be afraid.) The scale of the explosion prepared in Ryazan is similar: the further away from the center of Moscow, the more destruction. The manege is the minimum number, Guryanova is half of the house, Kashirka is the whole house, in Volgodonsk a whole microdistrict was affected. The tragedy in Ryazan could overshadow everything that happened earlier.

And the last. The behavior of the high ranks of the FSB seems very strange. Such a synclite did not go to Volgodonsk, in Moscow high-ranking officials did not talk to residents.

The resident of the ill - fated house Marina Vitalievna Severina testifies:

Several people came to us from the FSB, headed by a colonel. Apologized. They said they didn't know anything themselves.

In addition to apologies, the FSB officials asked for one more thing: they persuaded the victims of the games of the special services not to sue.

And Alexey Kartofelnikov, the most vigilant tenant of the house on Novoselov Street, to whom, perhaps, the neighbors owe their lives, now knows:

If something was blown up, it means a terrorist attack. If the military exercises were cleared...

The leadership of the FSB and the country is simply obliged to answer all the questions of residents of Ryazan and journalists. At least to dispel doubts. First of all, the special services of the state themselves should be interested in this.

Only its authors can protect the official version. It is not difficult, it is enough to publish, for example, an order to conduct exercises in Ryazan and clearly explain: whose idea, under whose leadership the operation was carried out and under what scenario.

To name the perpetrators of the most mysterious terrorists who unloaded bags of Zhiguli with sealed numbers. Give them the opportunity to tell about their "scout feat", even with their backs to the TV camera.

To make public the order on the end of the exercises and their results.

To admit journalists to experts in Moscow and Ryazan, to remove the secrecy stamp, which will allow to give interviews to direct participants of the events.

Show evidence: bags, the substance contained in them, and the fuse, explaining what's what.

And then they may be believed.

In the meantime, adhering to the official version, we ask the Prosecutor General's Office to explain: how legitimate are such exercises? Especially if it turns out that the explosives used to test the vigilance of the Ryazan residents were real...

### **Specialist's comment:**

In order to dispel at least some of the fog around the Ryazan exercises, we turned to an army specialist with the rank of colonel with a request to comment on the situation. Are exercises conducted with the use of real explosives, are there instructions and regulations that regulate such activity?

Powerful explosive devices are not used even in live firing exercises. They manage with explosion packages. If you need to test the ability to find and neutralize an explosive device, for example, a mine, use layouts in which there is neither a fuse nor TNT.

Demolition classes, of course, include the actual detonation of sufficiently strong explosive devices (specialists should be able to destroy them). But no more than two or three to train a group of 20 to 30 people. They have a clear idea of what they are blowing up. And, of course, such exercises are conducted locally, without outsiders. Only trained people are present. There is no question of involving the civilian population.

All this is strictly regulated. There are instructions on engineering support, instructions on mine clearance, relevant instructions and orders. Of course, they are similar for the army and special services...

