

21 Chechen rebels killed in 2007 (Chechnya)

Twenty-one Chechen rebels have been killed and 138 arrested so far this year, a senior Russian interior ministry official said Tuesday.

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"We are undertaking considerable efforts against clandestine fighters. Since the beginning of the year we have arrested 138 fighters and killed 21," Alexander German, a deputy director of police operations in the North Caucasus, said in an interview released on the interior ministry's website.

He said 106 rebels had surrendered their weapons during that period.

Some 127 weapons, more than 40,000 rounds of ammunition, 653 shells and mines, 338 grenades, 19 improvised explosive devices and more than 100 kilogrammes (220 pounds) of explosives were seized, he said.

Chechnya continues to be rocked by instability despite claims by the Russian authorities to have normalised the situation after years of separatist conflict dating back to the early 1990s.

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