

## Chechnya counter-terrorist operation ended

*by UPI*

MOSCOW -- A counter-terrorism operation launched in Russia's volatile republic of Chechnya in 1999 has ended, officials announced Thursday.

The Russian National Anti-terrorism Committee said in Moscow that closing the operation will mean withdrawal of some 20,000 interior ministry troops in the republic and removes restrictions on international flights.

Grozny is expected to seek international airport status.

The committee said the decision was aimed at further normalizing conditions in Chechnya and to "restore and develop its socio-economic sphere," RIA-Novosti said.

Russian federal troops launched a counter-terrorism operation in Chechnya in the fall of 1999 after militants invaded neighboring Daghestan.

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