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Checkpoints have become targets of suicide bombs

Chechen rebels claim there has been another suicide car bomb attack on Russian positions in Chechnya - the third such attack within six days.

At least two Russian soldiers had died in a similar suicide bomb attack on Sunday night.

Rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov told Reuters news agency that Monday's bomber targeted a checkpoint in the Chernorechiye district of the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Mr Udugov said the suicide bomber was a former Russian soldier who had converted to Islam and joined rebel forces.

According to Mr Udugov, he had served in the Russian army alongside the soldier who carried out the attack on Sunday evening.

Moscow has denied reports that a former Russian soldier was involved in Sunday's suicide attack.

Mr Udugov said both bombers approached military checkpoints in cars loaded with explosives and then detonated their bombs.

Fresh fighting

Latest reports quoting Russian army sources said fierce fighting raged on Monday in the Chechen town of Argun, 13 km (eight

“ He went to his death voluntarily and willingly, saying it was for Allah

Movladi Udugov
Chechen spokesman

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miles) east of Grozny, between Russian troops and Chechen rebels.

The fighting began at dawn near a former sugar factory on the south-western outskirts of the town

One report said the rebel fighters ambushed a Russian police convoy on the outskirts of the of Argun early on Monday and fighting raged for about an hour.

The report also said the Russian army rushed reinforcements to the town and deployed helicopter gunships to pound rebel positions.

A military source quoted by agencies said the Russians were conducting a "severe mopping-up operation".

Roads leading to Argun and Grozny, including the Baku-Rostov motorway, have been sealed.

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