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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Electoral anticipation

Once upon a time in Russia, when Boris Yel'tsin was president and setting tanks on the parliament was not condemned as "antidemocratic," political, and specifically electoral, campaigns were waged last in public; the initial salvoes sounded in the corridors of the few money-making industries of the Yel'tsin-era (quite literally in the 1996 struggle for control of Rosvooruzhenie, whose chairman "got the message" and resigned after an unexploded bomb was found in the hall just outside his office). Then, as now, recent re-election had rendered the President a theoretical lame duck, and potential contenders jockeyed for position over critical issues, such as the financial wherewithal to campaign effectively and, of course, access to the media.

Then, a clan emerged from the Yel'tsin camp and was called "The Family," as a reference to the unusual role played by the President's daughter. Now, the Kremlin, the remnants of The Family, and various bureaucratic groups each have their own clan, and in some cases ideology, and are competing for spoils in a re-division of assets. Most of the media (if you will pardon the pun), have been sucked into the Kremlin orbit; there are however a few, generally small, exceptions (such as Ekho Moskvy).

There was a minor, independent, not particularly liberal but non-governmental, television station left in the public orbit. That is, of course, until last month, when a blackout in Moscow caught Anatoli Chubais in the crosshairs for a second time this year, Chubais "got the message" and his company, RAO UES sold its
interest in REN-TV to the state-owned (and more specifically, Kremlin apparatus) Gazprom. (For more on the blackout and its fall-out, see Russian Legislative and Domestic Affairs below). Chubais, who served as regent during President Yel'tsin's long hospitalization prior to and following his heart surgery in 1996, was a comfortable, perhaps even founding member of the Family. Throughout Putin's reign however, Chubais has walked a tenuous tightrope between clans. (1) The assassination attempt and the blackout can both be seen as messages meant to concentrate his attention.

While a recent regular RAO UES Board of Directors meeting confirmed Chubais as President of the electrical systems company and solidified his control through the confirmation of his hand-picked team as board members, the sale of REN-TV to a Kremlin clan/Putin ally, Aleksei Mordashov (Northern Steel) suggests Chubais' continuing presence at RAO UES had a price. (2) And REN-TV might not have constituted the whole of the cost: The electric company's agreement this week to finish the Boguchany hydro-power project and aluminum smelter with oligarch du jour Oleg Deripasko (in fairness, Deripasko has been with Putin for years) also raises questions of the quid pro quo. (3) And should Chubais appear among western political and financial leaders earnestly explaining the necessity of amending the constitution to keep Putin in power, or lobbying for support for a hand-picked Kremlin successor in the face of a nationalist, perhaps even quasi-fascist opposition threat, remember the bargain he evidently had to make this summer—and be thankful that the parliament has only been turned into a rubber stamp, and not a smoldering stump.

**Gazprom and the state**

Dmitri Medvedev might just be the dark horse candidate for President in 2008. As Chair of Gazprom and head of the Kremlin Administration, he wields tremendous power in relative quiet. Control of substantial financial assets coupled with proximity to the Kremlin inner circle clearly are still reliable indicators of both current political clout and future ambitions; the government's
recent acquisition of a controlling stake in Russia's gas conglomerate makes Medvedev, and his clan, a potent force in the upcoming political stakes. (4)

**Security Council's full agenda**
The Security Council (SC) occupies an unusual place in Russia's constitutional order: the description of its role leaves enough room for interpretation to allow it to function, at times, as little more than a talking shop with rare regular meetings. Under forceful, and usually well-connected leadership, the Security Council has brought together the Kremlin's top players in decisions that can have the force of law.

Currently, the Security Council meetings have been regular, frequent, and covering a broad range of issues: On 28 June, the SC met to discuss military reform (5); on 2 July, the SC took to the road, meeting in Kaliningrad as part of the city's 750th founding celebration, to discuss the role of Russia's regions in achieving "social and economic development goals" (6); and on 9 July, Putin "had a conference with members of the Security Council" to discuss migration policy. (7)

The natural curiosity arising from this flurry of SC activity focuses on the policy, action, or results attributable to Security Council decisions. While little tangible effect has appeared as yet, the Secretary of the Council, um, ah yes, Igor Ivanov, certainly will herald the news, when there is something to report.

**Source Notes:**

(1) Current clan nomenclature, "liberal," "St. Petersburger," siloviki," etc. seems woefully inadequate to address the web of regional, professional and financial ties that bind the current power elite.
(3) Yulia Latynina, 2008 and the Lesser of Two Evils, Moscow Times, 6 Jul 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) Moscow News, 29 Jun 05 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(6) "Introductory remarks at the Security Council session," President Putin, 2 Jul 05 via www.kremlin.ru.
(7) Itar-Tass, 9 Jul 05 via Lexis-Nexis. Interestingly, the SC Secretary was listed third among SC members present at this session. In specifying discussion of migration policy, this Itar-Tass report also noted that Presidential Aid Viktor Ivanov and First Deputy Minister Aleksandr Chekalin, specifically, were involved on this topic.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Maolmordha McGowan

The people vs. Nur-Pashi Kulayev
From the moment he entered the courtroom in Vladikavkaz on May 31, Nur-Pashi Kulayev was confronted by throngs of belligerent mothers chanting "you should be killed and your body thrown to the pigs." (1) It must have been quite uncomfortable for Kulayev, the sole (official) surviving terrorist of the September 1-3, 2004 Beslan siege. Perhaps not as uncomfortable as when he was dragged out from under a truck, beaten and arrested by masked men (just a short distance from where 31 of his compatriots and 330 civilians were massacred in a bloodbath pointless from every point of view) but still quite uncomfortable.

Unfortunately for the Kremlin, in this show trial not everything is going according to the script. The relatives of the deceased are proving to be quite difficult to please, and Kulayev is not playing the villain as they would have liked.
Public anger has been brewing as witnesses and Kulayev have given testimony that contradicts the official line of the FSB and the prosecutor general's office. The official parliamentary investigation shows no signs of producing answers either; one member of the committee has already admitted that the question the families of the victims want answered, namely, who is responsible for the deaths of their children, "is the question our commission probably won't be able to answer." (2)

In lieu of the truth, someone in Moscow must have convinced the President that satisfying the families' lust for revenge by parading Kulayev through court would provide sufficient closure. There was little to stop Putin from keeping Kulayev in legal limbo indefinitely. Clearly, the Kremlin thought it more advantageous to prosecute, convict, and officially imprison Kulayev than to allow him to languish indefinitely.

Not surprisingly, many of the victim's families have seen through the façade. Zalina Guburova, whose 10 year old son was shot in the head, declared that "prosecuting Kulayev was like throwing us a bone, as if to a dog." (3) "They've dumped the blame onto this one man; they've found a scapegoat," said another voice from the crowd of relatives and witnesses in the courtroom on June 15. The fake trial of the People vs. Nur-Pashi Kulayev is quickly devolving into a very real trial of the People vs. the Kremlin, the FSB and the MVD. Kulayev himself has become little more than a footnote in the text.

What is remarkable is the degree of pity shown for Kulayev, perhaps out of sheer indignation at the lack of government transparency in the case. In a series of surprises in late June, relatives of the victims, among them the outraged and outspoken Committee of Beslan Mothers, turned on the prosecutors at the Vladikavkaz courtroom. Committee head Susanna Dudiyeva, addressing Kulayev directly, promised that "if you tell the truth, we are ready to appeal for a pardon for you." (4)
How awkward for federal prosecutor Maria Semisynova! Unfazed, however, she replied sarcastically that perhaps Kulayev's status should be changed from defendant to victim. (5)

"We need him to tell the truthŠ We need to be confident he won't die of a heart attack or fall down the stairs," Dudiyeva continued, appealing for protection of the defendant. Semisynova tried to regain control of the crowd, reminding them just who had detonated the bombs in the school, which ultimately killed most of the civilians. "Were these people not terrorists?" she asked. (6)

They were, but that's not the point.

The point, as far as these relatives are now concerned, is that no one in the government or the security services is being held accountable for the botched rescue operation. Dudiyeva put it in simple terms; "What we want to see is the heads of the security and law enforcement agencies on trial." (7)

In a sign that things are spiraling out of the Kremlin's control, a witness who was preparing to give evidence that contradicted the FSB's narrative told the court that he had been approached at night by unidentified agents, and ordered to "shut up, or be killed." (8)

Anatomy of an FSB failure
A devastating lack of coordination on the part of the supposed rescuers at Beslan is supposedly one of the issues being addressed by a parliamentary commission, due to report in October. For a day and a half after the start of the siege, the security forces of the President of North Ossetia, the regional division of the MVD, the regional directorate of the FSB and the 58th army division were all conducting separate operations in the area around the school. (9)
Two FSB counter-terrorism "experts" were dispatched to Beslan from Moscow to help manage the situation. FSB Deputy Director Vladimir Anisimov and first Deputy Director General Vladimir Pronichev arrived on the scene at noon on the second day of the crisis. (10) General Pronichev previously had commanded the "rescue operation" in the 2002 seizure of the Dubrovka Theatre (Nord-Ost), in which 170 civilians were killed.

After their arrival, the two presented North Ossetian President Dzasokhov with an order from Prime Minister Fradkov which placed Valeri Andreev, the regional FSB commander, in charge of the crisis at a joint headquarters. According to Russian law, a headquarters should have been set up as soon as possible, so it is unclear why this process took a day and a half. Not necessarily surprising, but still unclear. (11)

It has since come to light that Pronichev and Anisimov were themselves in control of the operation, though they operated from a separate headquarters staffed by officials from Moscow, to which the local FSB had little access. It now seems clear that Andreev was only nominally in command, but available to serve as scapegoat when operations went awry.

In the aftermath of the debacle, Andreev was removed from his post, but remained on active duty. (12) Dzasokhov was the subject of repeated protests in the wake of Beslan, and eventually resigned for supposedly unrelated reasons. Interestingly, Anisimov was quietly transferred to the active reserve just a few weeks ago. Almost no information has surfaced about the Anisimov transfer, and it is difficult to tell if it was with his consent. (13)

**Prosecution or promotion?**

What makes Anisimov's retirement interesting is his close association with Nikolai Patrushev. He was promoted to his current rank in Patrushev's wake, and was long assumed to be one of "his people." Anisimov served with Pronichev in
the Karelian MGB, and the two are longtime associates. It is unclear whether Anisimov's departure was caused by his performance at Beslan.

Patrushev lost an associate, but does that mean that things bode ill for him? His tenure of six years has been quite long by FSB standards and has been characterized by numerous failures. Of course, his record is less critical than his relationship with Putin. It is nearly inconceivable that he would be removed for disciplinary reasons, as long as he retains the President's trust. Rumors that Patrushev would leave the FSB to become deputy prime minister surfaced in 2004, with Pronichev among those seen as possible successors. This talk has subsided of late; Patrushev's record at the FSB may have made him a political liability from the Kremlin's viewpoint, and eyes already are turning towards the 2008 election (coronation?). (14)

Novaya gazeta reported on June 30 that there were rumors that Patrushev would be replaced by Rosoboroneksport Director General Sergei Chemezov within days. This has not transpired, though it may have led some observers prematurely to speak of "former FSB director Nikolai Patrushev, now a State Duma deputy." (15) But on a presidential visit to Dagestan just days ago, Patrushev and Pronichev accompanied Putin. (16)

**Fighting off the angry mothers' revolution**

If Patrushev stays on at the FSB, he should not anticipate ridding himself of the Beslan mothers any time soon. The Beslan mothers' desire for the blood of the FSB and MVD was in no way sated by the retirement of Anisimov, the resignation of Dzasokhov or the reassignment of Andreev. "Our search for the truth will continue until the day we die," said Guburova on June 24. (17)

Bowing to pressure from the mothers and others, Deputy Prosecutor General Nikolai Shepel publicly mentioned the possibility of FSB and MVD leaders being prosecuted, promising that "the role of each of them will be considered." He did
not elaborate on whether he was referring to regional or senior security service officials. (18)

The actual likelihood of dismissals is low; however, the fact that such a development would even be suggested publicly by a senior prosecutor indicates that Moscow might be feeling compelled to hold someone accountable for the handling of the botched rescue operations. In addition to the families, the government of North Ossetia is determined to serve its constituents by finding the truth, before it gets buried.

The local investigation has refused to share information with the federal authorities and is considered illegitimate by Shepel, probably because it has come up with a laundry list of possible falsehoods in the official FSB/Prosecutor-General storyline. Rather, the list more closely reflects the testimony of Kulayev and some of the survivors, including:

- That a list of the terrorists' demands was received by the FSB;
- That the army used tanks and flame throwers in storming the building, which was the primary cause of the fire which killed many hostages;
- That there were significantly more terrorists than the government's number of 32, and that many of these escaped;
- That the terrorists hid most of their weapons in the school, then retrieved them after entering the building. (19)

The result of these revelations has driven the mothers to apply to the Prosecutor-General's office for criminal cases against Patrushev, Pronichev, Anisimov, Andreev and MVD head Rashid Nurgaliev. (20) Thus, it might be a advisable for Patrushev to stay atop his perch, where he will have the power to diffuse the situation with covert agents, should it become necessary.
As if to guarantee that history will continue to repeat itself, as Kulayev stood trial in Vladikavkaz, NTV Mir showed a story about an anti-terrorism exercise in which the FSB was proud to announce that "the terrorists have been captured and most of the hostages have been saved." People of Russia, you may now rest easy. (21)

Source Notes:

(1) Yana Voitova, The Moscow Times, 17 Jun 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(2) Viktor Khamraev, Kommersant-Vlast, 20 Jun 05; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(3) Tom Parfitt, The Observer, 26 Jun 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) Voitova, ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Parfitt, The Observer, 26 Jun 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(8) Ibid.
(9) Khamraev, Kommersant-Vlast, 20 Jun 05; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(10) Ibid.
(11) Ibid.
(13) Roman Shleinov, Novaya gazeta, 30 Jun 2005; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
(14) Konstantin Demchenko, Russkii kurier, 22 Sep 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
(18) Ibid.
Values for tomorrow’s world?
Within the last month, Russia has attempted increasingly to demonstrate a strong relationship with the "eastern vector" of Russian foreign policy, specifically China. This was clearly on display during the Moscow-Beijing summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao, late in June, and also throughout the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) July summit in Astana. Clearly, Moscow's increasing rapprochement with China in terms of geopolitics, trade, and "common values" indicates a desire for an alignment that would propel Russia into a stronger international position, one that is directed less towards the West and more towards Asia. Konstantin Pulikovskiy, Russian Presidential Envoy to the Far Eastern District, said as much: "The E.U. does not exactly like Russia. They are doing everything to lower Russia's profile or its influence on European issues. This is why it is very important that in the East, in Asia, we have a friendly country – the People's Republic of China." (1)

Trade and geopolitics are key concerns in the bilateral relations between Russia and China, and both leaderships are committed to strengthening the Russia-China axis. Their influence within the SCO reflects an effort to undermine U.S. influence, whether perceived or actual. During the SCO, both Russia and China called for the U.S. to set a deadline for withdrawal of its military bases in the region; Kyrgyzstan's president-elect and other Kyrgyz officials reiterated this call,
no doubt under pressure from Russia and China. Other language emanating from the SCO criticized "outside interference in nations' internal affairs." (2) This referred, no doubt, to Western criticisms of Uzbek actions against demonstrators. Most recently, Moscow described the U.S. presence as "non-regional," which echoes official Iranian rhetoric against any Western presence in the Caspian Sea region. (3) [For more on the SCO summit, please see Military Affairs below.]

If U.S. influence should diminish in the Central Asian region, who would be the primary beneficiary? During their summit in June, Putin and Jintao claimed to have a joint philosophy, one that values the "cult of human dignity" over "human rights," a key Western value. In a joint document, the two leaders commented that "ideological, moral and cultural values are growing in importance in the world today" and stated that within the SCO, "security and economic development, yet also ideology, are important." (4) An ideological, as well as a geopolitical alignment, could be very valuable for Russia in the short run, especially with trends showing China's continuing ascendancy in the international arena. In the long term however, Russia must realize that it will be overshadowed ultimately by this powerful neighbor who seemingly shares the "values necessary for tomorrow's world." (5)

**Continuing controversy: Moscow and Tehran**

Although Moscow continues to insist that cooperation with Tehran in the nuclear sphere is conditional on transparency of policies, respect of the IAEA and absence of a nuclear military program, it appears that Moscow also is seeking new opportunities for nuclear partnership. Russia's top nuclear official, Aleksandr Rumyantsev, head of Rosatom, stated on 29 June that Russia wanted to bid for contracts to build more nuclear reactors in Iran. This underscores Putin's remarks that Russia would continue its nuclear cooperation with Iran under its new presidential leadership. (6) As Moscow increases its ties to Tehran, it will have to deal not only with U.S. objections but with the possible repercussions of having armed a neighbor with nuclear devices.
Energy issues
During the recent G-8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, President Putin assured his G-8 partners that Russia will do everything possible to ensure stable energy supplies. (7) This involves a series of proposed pipelines that are projected to increase natural gas supplies to 40 billion cubic meters by 2010. This includes a pipeline to the Far East, from Siberia to the Pacific, one from Siberia to the White Sea to serve the U.S., and a Baltic pipeline that would serve both the U.S. and Europe. (8) The next G-8 will be held in St. Petersburg, and already Putin has stated that the primary issues will be energy, security and education. In a recent press briefing, Putin even invoked a higher power in connection to his energy policies: "It was God's will to make [this] country the leader of the market for natural gas, oil and nuclear energy, and to make this the main theme." (9)

Providential or not, energy will be not only a topic for next year's summit but also for the "trilateral commission" meeting of Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran, which will take place 19-21 July. The current agenda focuses on cooperation among the countries' respective energy systems, with the goal of uniting the energy systems of Europe and Asia. (10) The commission first met in Tehran in late 2004.

Energy was also discussed during President Putin's recent meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan in Sochi, the fourth such gathering to take place in the last seven months. Economic interaction and energy issues topped the list, as the two leaders continue seeking ways to develop further cooperation. The Black Sea pipeline as a means to bring natural gas to Turkey, a possible underground gas storage reservoir on Turkish territory and joint efforts to bring electricity to Iraq were all covered by the leaders. (11) Russia also continues to encourage a settlement between Turkey and Greek Cyprus; Putin reiterated his support of the United Nations Secretary General's approach to the problem. (12)

Aliens in the European Parliament
The dispute continues within Japan and Russia over the Japanese Northern Territories, the islands of the Kuril archipelago. However, this time discussion was initiated by the European Parliament, which recently demanded that Russian return the Northern Territories to Japan. The Russian Foreign Ministry responded by saying this demand was "absurd," and Vladimir Chizkov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, added, "The European Parliament seems to be living on another planet." (13)

Source Notes:

(1) Interfax, 15 Jul 05 via Johnson's Russia List (JRL), #9201 (www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9201-30.cfm).
(2) "Russia Rejects U.S. Accusations of Bullying Central Asia" (www.crosswalk.com/news/1340815.html).
(4) RIA Novosti, 30 Jun 05 via JRL #9188 (www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9188-32.cfm).
(5) Ibid.
(7) RIA Novosti, 8 Jul 05, 10:00 (GMT) via http://en.rian.ru/russia/20050708/40868273.html.
(8) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.
Power outages
Anatoli Chubais, erstwhile reformer and CEO of Unified Energy Systems of Russia (RAO-UES), came under severe criticism because of the power outage that swept Moscow and several neighboring regions on May 24 and 25. The outage affected at least four million persons, with 20,000 stranded inside metro trains and 1500 caught in elevators. In the Tula region, outages reached 90 percent of consumption volume. (1)

In his 4 June address to the Security Council, Putin ruled out financial hardship as the cause of the outage. He cited RAO-UES’s net profit of 55 billion rubles last year and questioned how the company was spending this money. (2)

Putin criticized Mosenergo, the company responsible for operating the Moscow city and region power grids. Mosenergo executives called for a substantial hike in fees following the power failures. Putin's response? "This looks like sheer blackmail in a pursuit of corporate interests at the expense of customers, or the whole society, in fact." (3)

Putin also emphasized the need for executives within RAO-UES who are not merely good economists, clever administrators, or real estate aficionados. Instead, he called for personnel that "understand[s] the role of a small screw in the country's vast energy system...[and is] able to identify on time the problem
with a dirt-cheap transformer and to foresee the havoc its improper maintenance may produce." His comments were hardly profound or original, but apparently necessary, given that wear and tear on the machines is thought to be the culprit behind the outages. Putin cited several problems within the current energy system, concluding, "All of it testifies to problematic management." (4)

Given this criticism from the chief executive, it is scarcely surprising that there were calls for Chubais' removal. On 27 May, the Duma refused to include on its agenda a bill calling for Chubais' resignation put forward by 90 deputies, primarily from the nationalistic Rodina (Motherland) bloc, although it did not eliminate the possibility of a parliamentary inquiry at the time. In a 28 May interview on (at that time) RAO-UES-owned REN-TV, Chubais refused to step down as head of RAO-UES because of the protests staged by the Communist, Yabloko and Rodina parties. He went on to accuse Rodina of masterminding the attempt on his life that occurred on March 17. (5)

The hubbub resulted in a parliamentary investigation, which declared Chubais free of responsibility for the power failures. Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzkhov attacked the investigation, declaring that any investigation that found Chubais not responsible was not an "objective" investigation. (6) The investigation has lead to inquiries about the salaries of UES executives and top management. (7) The Rodina (Motherland) bloc requested Chubais' removal but was defeated. The Communist party, ever one to seize an opportunity, staged a protest on 7 June that called for Chubais' resignation. (8)

Chubais has said that obsolete equipment and employee mistakes were responsible for the problems at Moscow's Chagino electrical sub-station. UES has stated that it will provide compensation for all legally demonstrable damages resulting from the May 25 power outage. (9)

Media
Izvestiya, formerly owned by Vladimir Potanin's company Prof-Media, is being bought by the state-owned Gazprom Media Holding Company. Some critics allege that this purchase constitutes the state's move toward controlling newspapers in the same way that it currently controls the television market. For example, the television channel NTV, renowned for its unflinching coverage of the first Chechen war, was another media source to "benefit" from Gazprom ownership. Gazprom acquired a controlling stake in NTV in 2001 and subsequently altered the station's hitherto independent programming. The changes were accompanied by high staff turnover. Similar changes in editorial staff are widely predicted for Izvestiya following the completion of the Gazprom takeover.

Kommersant, a newspaper owned by exiled Boris Berezovsky, is experiencing a shake-up in its editorial staff. General Director Andrei Vasilyev and chief editor Aleksandr Stukalin are being replaced, according to Berezovsky.

UES-RAO has sold its 70 percent controlling interest in REN-TV, but the new owners are not what was expected. Yevrofinans Bank had been negotiating to purchase REN-TV for several years. That deal apparently was shoved aside, however, as UES-RAO, in the name of divesting itself of "non-core assets," sold its stake for $100 million to Severstal-Group. The remaining 30 percent stake, held by the president and general director, was sold to RTL Group, a subsidiary of Bertelsmann AG. The current President Irena Lesnevskaya and General Director Dmitri Lesnevsky announced to staff members that they would stay on for a transitional period. It remains to be seen how brief that transition will be.

North Ossetia president resigns
Aleksandr Dzasokhov, the former President of North Ossetia, has taken a position as North Ossetia's representative for the Federation Council. Taimuraz Mamsurov, the region's parliamentary speaker, succeeded Dzasokhov as the
region's leader. Dzasokhov has been under intense domestic pressure since the terrorist attack in Beslan, North Ossetia, in September. At the time, he attempted to divert attention from himself by dismissing his entire ministerial staff. The continued pressure from his constituents has made Dzasokhov a political liability. Technically he is removing himself from office, however the Kremlin was almost certainly involved in the decision.

**Union of Right Forces update**

The newly-elected head of the democratic party Union of Right Forces (SPS), Nikita Belykh, faces the challenge of making SPS electorally viable. He stressed in a 30 May interview that SPS is operating on a timeline that threatens to reduce its effectiveness if it does not compete successfully in the next parliamentary elections. "I for one understand clearly that if we fail to secure a convincing victory at the 2007 elections, it will be very difficult for us to talk about prospects for the following five or 10 years," said the new leader. (11)

Belykh anticipates soliciting funding from medium-sized businesses (a sector that is notoriously underdeveloped in Russia), theorizing that those entities are more likely to be interested in politics at the regional level. Among the challenges SPS faces are a lack of unified and well-organized support in the regions; Belykh admitted that links between regional branches of SPS are weak, as are connections between the regions and the party's central organization. (12)

**New head of press service**

Yevgeni Revenko, first deputy director of the government press service and former host of NTV's Vesti Nedeli, has been appointed deputy director of the department of mass communications, the media, culture and education as well as head of the press service. According to Revenko's boss, Denis Molchanov, one of Revenko's primary responsibility's will be "developing and conducting unified informational government policy." (13)
Source Notes:

(1) Electricity Boss Chubais Blames 'Wear and Tear' for Moscow Blackout," ITAR-TASS, 20 Jun 05 via World News Connection.
(2) "ITAR-TASS Carries 'Full Text' of Putin's Speech on Moscow Blackout," ITAR-TASS 4 Jun 05 via WNC.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) "Interfax Financial & Business Report for 01 Jun 05," Interfax, 31 May 05 via WNC.
(6) "Moscow mayor doubts conclusions of Duma investigation of power outage," ITAR-TASS, 14 Jun 05 via WNC.
(7) "Duma wants to know incomes of UES top management," ITAR-TASS, 8 Jun 05 via WNC.
(8) Natalia Slavina, "Communists, Left-wing Parties Demand Chubais' Resignation Report," ITAR-TASS, 7 Jun 05 via WNC.
(9) "Interfax Financial and Business Report for 27 Jun 05," 24 Jun 05 via WNC.
(10) Sergey Varshavchik, "Kremlin's Approval of REN TV Sale to Severstal, RTL Groups Surmised," Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 7 Jul 05 via WNC.
(11) "Russian radio program interviews head of liberal party on ideology," Mayak Radio, 30 May 05 via WNC.
(12) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Kyle Colton

The battle for Central Asian security
On July 5, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held its first summit since the Kyrgyz revolution and the suppressed uprising in Uzbekistan's city of Andijan. The presidents of all member countries, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, took part with observers from Mongolia, Iran, India and Pakistan. Their joint declaration called for coalition forces to set a date for leaving Central Asia.

Currently, Uzbekistan hosts approximately 800 U.S. troops at the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) airbase. Kyrgyzstan is home to about 1200 coalition forces located at the Manas airport, while approximately 200 French Air Force troops are stationed at the Dushanbe airport in Tajikistan.

The SCO joint declaration reiterated the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression and non-interference. These concepts have formed the basis of China's "New Security Concept" since they were introduced by then Premier Zhou Enlai at the 1955 Bandung Conference and have been included in other SCO declarations. Additionally the declaration indirectly criticized the U.S. stance on democracy, saying that it is the "countries' right independently to choose ways of development based on their specific characteristics." (1) In post summit press conferences, most SCO member presidents highlighted this element rather than the call for coalition troop withdrawal. Chinese leader Hu Jintao said "the fate of Central Asian countries is in their own hands and they are wise and capable enough to sort out their domestic problems on their own." (2)

In regard to the coalition troops, the SCO declaration specifically stated, "Considering that the active combat phase of the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan has been completed, the SCO members deem necessary that the coalition countries involved should set the final dates for their temporary use of those infrastructure installations and stationing of their troops on SCO member countries' territories." (3) The SCO assessment of Afghanistan's security
situation seems politically, rather than militarily, based, since this year has been
the costliest for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since the start of combat operations in
2001. Thirty-five U.S. military personnel have been killed in the increasing
violence leading up to Afghanistan's parliamentary elections in September. (4)
On 28 June 2005, a U.S. helicopter providing support for a U.S. Special Forces
reconnaissance team was shot down, killing all sixteen personnel onboard.
Three members of the four-man team were also killed in the same battle. The
losses were the heaviest in a single combat incident for U.S. forces in
Afghanistan since 2001.

The assessment also represents a fundamental change in Moscow's position. In
late June, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the NATO-Russia Council (NRC)
that "We [Russia] know that the single-minded and plan-based training of
terrorists for their future export continues in Afghanistan at this time. The recent
events in Uzbekistan are graphic evidence of this. We have sufficiently reliable
information that all that occurred in Andijan was inspired from the territory of
Afghanistan. A group of armed militants of Islamist organizations, the Taliban
included, had long been preparing an invasion of Uzbekistan." (5) Foreign
Minister Sergei Lavrov echoed this claim in late June. At the same NRC
meeting, Defense Minister Ivanov alleged that the situation in Afghanistan
currently is not significantly better than it was under Taliban rule, and that the
operation had not yet approached the "culminating phase." (6)

**Coalition Response**
The United States immediately rejected the proposal to set a deadline for troop
withdrawal. U.S. State Department spokesman Scott McCormack told reporters
that the military presence in the region "is determined by bilateral agreements,
under which both counties have concluded that there is a benefit to both sides
from our activities." (7) U.S. Defense Department spokesman Lawrence Di Rita
said that regarding the base in Uzbekistan, "It's a decision the Uzbek government
has to make as to whether or not we would continue to operate from that." (8)
The French military attaché in Tajikistan commented to Interfax that "the situation in Afghanistan is far from being ideal despite certain democratic changes, including the parliamentary elections." (9) He added, "France does not seek domination in Central Asia. NATO does not think that the CSTO is an enemy, and the CSTO should feel the same."(10)

**Political convergence**

While not an ultimatum, the declaration represents a convergence of interests of all SCO member countries. In the wake of the allegedly Western-sponsored Kyrgyz revolution, the uprising in Andijan in May and Western requests for an outside investigation, it has become clear to Central Asian countries that their multi-vested foreign policy may no longer be an option. Their "all encompassing" definition of counter terrorism is significantly different than the Western definition. The once muted Western criticisms of human rights abuses and limited political participation in Central Asia are now mounting. With the Kyrgyz Revolution still fresh in their minds, the Central Asian leaders do not see this as a time to embrace democracy or human rights. Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov said some outside forces were joining radical Islamists "to create instability and undermine the region economically in order to impose their own development model." (11)

Russia would also like to see an end to the western military presence in Central Asia. Moscow has lost influence in other post-Soviet regions due, in part, to the "color revolutions" and does not want to see that trend continue. Russia has made several political and military maneuvers to strengthen its influence in Central Asia since the deployment of U.S. forces into the region: It opened Kant Airbase in Kyrgyzstan in October 2003; resolved the basing issue for the 201st Motorized Rifle Division; and established a new permanent base in Tajikistan. Russia also established a Collective Rapid Deployment Force in Central Asia based on forces in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the legislature passed
increasing incentives for bilateral relations with Central Asian countries. Apparently, this SCO declaration represents the next logical step for Russia.

China does not want to see an ongoing Western military presence in Central Asia; it is interested in assuring its own influence in the region in order to utilize the major oil and gas resources in the future. China also is looking to strengthen the security apparatus of the SCO, where it has a significant voice.

Potential versus reality
While considering the security aspects of this summit, the question lingers as to whether the SCO could, or would, fill the U.S.'s military position in the event of a coalition withdrawal. Iran, India and Pakistan joined the SCO as observers. If they become full-fledged members, the group will represent half the world's population, which suggests its significant potential, at least quantitatively.

Mohammed Khoshchehreh, an adviser to Iranian president-elect Mahmud Ahmadinezhad, said on 8 July, "the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may become stronger militarily than NATO." (12) On 14 July, Duma Deputy Speaker and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia Vladimir Zhirinovsky proposed transforming the SCO into a military alliance that could be "a counterweight to NATO." "In 10 years, an allied army of such an alliance will have both a qualitative and quantitative edge over NATO," he projected. (13) The president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, Leonid Ivashov, went even further saying that, "at this stage the SCO is fully able to assume responsibility for security in this area". (14)

The deputy director of the Strategic Research Center in Tajikistan, Sayfullo Safarov, offered a differing view. On 7 July, he said that "the pace of mutual cooperation between the SCO member states would not enable them to counter international terrorism and the increasing flow of drugs on their own. ... Moreover, the latest events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have shown that the SCO and
the Collective Security Treaty Organization member-states lack effectiveness and precision in tackling military and political issues. I am therefore ready to say that it is premature to impose such requirements on the U.S. and NATO military, because the SCO member states have not created appropriate conditions for maintaining security in the Central Asia region." (15) Safarov believes that no one can guarantee the Central Asian states protection against the drug and arms trades, human trafficking and the infiltration of religious and extremist organizations into the Central Asian states.

The SCO's future position in Central Asia also may depend on member country ideas about military forces and security. At the G8 summit, President Putin stressed that the SCO was not a military bloc. He added that all practical military issues in Central Asia were considered in the format of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. (16)

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Sergei Razov said, "Military cooperation does not rank among the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's priorities." (17)

Conclusion
The Central Asian authoritarian governments' inclination to resolve domestic political problems under the guise of combating terrorism will only lead to more harsh criticism from the West. Whether this criticism will lead eventually to the end of U.S. forces in the region remains to be seen. The Central Asian governments will continue to find open arms and loud support from both China and Russia, but it is questionable whether this verbal support will translate into tangible security or even military action.

Coalition forces brought down the Taliban, marginalized the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, killed its leader Dzhuma Namangani, and established a secular regime in Afghanistan. Neither China nor Russia is capable of achieving that level of success with its current force structure. Neither the SCO nor CSTO has
resources in the Central Asian theater to reliably defend borders against Islamic extremist incursions. Moscow and Beijing always appear to Central Asian leaders as far more palatable security options than Washington or Brussels, due, in part, to the Western push for democratic and market-oriented reforms. Therefore, the SCO member countries' desire to maintain the political status quo most likely will undermine regional security in the long term.

Source Notes:

(2) Ibid.
(3) Interfax, 5 Jul 05 via Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 2, Issue 130, 6 Jul 05.
(5) "NATO Has Been Asked To Leave Central Asia," Gazeta.ru, 6 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0706 via World News Connection.
(6) Ibid.
(7) "U.S. Rejects Setting Central Asia Withdrawal Date," AP, 6 Jul 05 via www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/07/c45124d5-1ee7-4aa1-8bad-46edc8f9e56c.html.
(9) "Tajikistan France Servicemen NATO-CSTO Opposition is Wrong," Interfax, 14 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0714 via World News Connection.
(10) Ibid.
(12) "Russia: Iran Views Shanghai Body as Counterbalance To NATO," Interfax, 8 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0708 via World News Connection.
(13) "Zhirinovsky Calls for Military Alliance of Russia, China, and Central Asian States," strana.ru, 14 Jul 05 via RFE/RL Newsline, Vol. 9, No. 132, Part I, 15 July 05.


(16) "Russian Leader Says SCO's Request on Afghanistan Coalition Troops Normal," ITAR-TASS, 8 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0708 via World News Connection.


Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

Yushchenko undercutting Moldova in Transnistria?
On 15 July, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko met with the self-proclaimed leader of the separatist republic of Transnistria, juridically part of Moldova. Following the talks, Yushchenko's press office released a glowing review of the meeting. "The parties agreed to act conjointly to settle the Transdniester conflict," the communiqué said. Further, the president's press service noted, "Mr. Smirnov fully supported Ukraine's action plan [to end the separatist conflict]," and "said it was the first time this topic was discussed professionally." (1)

Mr. Yushchenko's Moldovan counterpart, President Vladimir Voronin, could not have been pleased. This private meeting with Yushchenko provides Smirnov with a sheen of legitimacy repeatedly rejected both by Moldova and the
international community. To date, the only other head of state who has met individually with Smirnov is Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose tacit support for the separatist republic has been criticized by everyone from Moldovan officials to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and to the Council of Europe.

But not by Yushchenko. Apparently, during his meeting, Yushchenko shied away from the topic of Russian troops on Transnistrian territory. The country reportedly still maintains between 1,300 to 2,000 troops and a significant stockpile of ammunition and armaments in the separatist enclave, and has made no attempt to live up to previously signed international agreements to withdraw.

Instead, Russia has renamed its troops "peacekeepers," and claimed that they are there to stabilize the situation in the enclave. Moldova, however, claims that the troops do little more than prop up Smirnov's administration, while facilitating smuggling of goods and women between Eastern Europe and the West. Human rights organizations and the OSCE have generally supported Moldova's contentions on this issue, particularly regarding what has become known as the Transnistrian "black hole" of smuggling. In fact, the region has developed such a reputation for smuggling that the Economist recently referred to Transnistria as "a big, ugly smuggling racket with a piece of land attached." (2) Yushchenko does not appear to have spent considerable time in his meeting with Smirnov on this issue, however, judging from Smirnov's support following their talks.

The meeting between Smirnov and Yushchenko came at a time when tensions over the status of Transnistria are particularly high. Just days before his warm meeting with Yushchenko, Smirnov announced that he had approved the creation of a "public militia," organized "for the purpose of cooperating with the Transdnister Armed Forces in state defense." At the same time, Smirnov asked Russia to increase the number of its troops within the territory to 2,400. These moves were necessary, he said, because of possible "provocations from
Moldova." During the same interview, Smirnov reiterated that Transnistria "won't become a part of Moldova, and such a variant is excluded." (3)

One wonders then to what Smirnov agreed during his meeting just days later with Yushchenko.

While most observers welcomed Yushchenko's initiative to jumpstart talks that have been stalled since 2003, the president's plan seems unlikely to resolve the frozen conflict and may even exacerbate the situation by angering both Romania and Moldova. In fact, since the plan's public unveiling, Moldova's position has hardened considerably. The country's leadership reportedly is concerned that Ukraine's plan may lead to the de facto partition of the country with permanent intervention in Moldova both by Russia and Ukraine.

Moldovan officials express particular concern about the absence in the plan of a requirement that Russia's troops be withdrawn from Moldovan territory. Moldova's stated position is that there can be no settlement of the Transnistrian issue until these troops are removed. Yet, this point is passed over in Ukraine's plan, which instead calls for a vague "internationalization" of "peacekeeping" operations.

Additionally, Ukraine's proposal would allow Transnistrian officials to have input into, and perhaps veto power over, international agreements signed by Moldova. Moldovan officials fear that this would forever end their goal of joining both NATO and the E.U., since Tiraspol is ardently opposed to both ideas.

The plan also calls for Transnistria's status within Moldova to be determined by this fall, with "Elections to be held soon to Transnistria's Supreme Soviet, the representative body of the Transnistria region of Moldova, on the basis of a legal status of Transnistria." (4) National Security and Defense Council Secretary Petro Poroshenko, the man who drafted Ukraine's plan, has suggested that such
elections could be held as soon as November of this year, conveniently overlooking the fact that there is no internationally accepted legal basis for them. Tellingly, Smirnov eagerly agreed to these elections. He has already invited "international observers" to monitor the poll, which as yet has no set date. (5)

Moldova has reacted strongly to the idea of quick elections within Transnistria. In its response to Ukraine's suggestion, Moldova's parliament wrote, "It is impossible to conduct free and democratic elections in the Transnistrian region, given that the Moldovan constitution's norms and international democratic standards are not observed, that political pluralism and freedom of speech is missing, and heterodox beliefs are repressed." (6)

Moldovan officials rightly suggest that, should an election be held in this type of environment, it runs the risk of legitimizing an entrenched authoritarian regime, blunting international pressure on Smirnov (who would be the recognized elected leader), and freezing the Transnistrian conflict for years. Alternatively, should the election not be recognized as valid by international observers, Smirnov would be given yet another pretext to reject future international cooperation.

Yushchenko himself should be intimately aware of how elections are conducted in Transnistria, thanks to seven polling stations set up for Ukrainian citizens during the recent Ukrainian presidential election. Oksana Biloizir, the godmother of Yushchenko's children and the current Minister of Culture, served as a coordinator of monitors in Transnistria. She returned to Kyiv with a litany of complaints.

She said, "We anticipated the possibility of rigging, which is why we sent two journalists and one foreign observer to each polling station. All cars were stopped, people were arrested, video cameras with which they were supposed to record violations were broken. Journalist Klebanskyy was deported within an hour, and when he crossed the Ukrainian border he was followed by the warning
that he would be killed if he decided to come back." Bilozir also reported that the head of the Dniester Ukrainian Association, who was serving as an official Yushchenko observer, was severely beaten by being kicked in the face, while numerous other observers were detained and deported. (7)

Yushchenko's plan has spurred a barrage activity within international organizations involved in the issue. Most of the activity has angered Moldovan officials, as—like Ukraine's plan—it has often occurred without consulting them.

On July 7, the country’s representatives walked out of a meeting of the parliamentary assembly of the OSCE after a resolution on the issue failed to refer to Transnistrian representatives as "separatists." According to Christian Democratic Party Leader Iurie Rosca, the resolution "put at equal terms Chisinau's legal authorities and the criminal Transnistrian separatist regime." (8) Officials also responded angrily when the OSCE resolution did not predicate Transnistrian elections on the withdrawal of Russian troops and the eradication of Transnistria's intimidating and omnipresent secret services. After the meeting, Moldovan officials were said to be concerned that the OSCE seemed more responsive to Russia's suggestion of a federalized Moldova with Russian troop presence since the Yushchenko plan was released. (9)

On June 9, Moldova's parliament overwhelmingly passed a package of documents in response to Yushchenko's plan. Although the documents diplomatically state that the parliament "highly appreciates Ukraine's offer," they clearly do not embrace the main tenets of the plan. The parliament states clearly that it is in support of future elections in Transnistria, but in exchange, demands the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria by the end of 2005. (10)

Here, Moldova may be attempting to emulate the tactic used by Georgia in forcing Russia to promise to withdraw its troops. However, because Russia provides virtually free energy directly to Transnistria and because the enclave
can procure its supplies through illicit channels, Moldova has less leverage over its separatist republic than Georgia has over its own separatists. As such, Moldova's demand is likely to be dismissed.

In June, Voronin traveled to Strasbourg for talks on implementation of the new E.U.-Moldova Action Plan, and asked for assistance in removing Russian troops from his country's territory. "Russian troops have no official status. They are in the territory of the republic of Moldova illegally," he said. (11) He reiterated the position in July. "We can't see any political or geopolitical reasons for the presence of Russian troops on the territory of Moldova," he said. "The place of troops in the security zone in Moldova must be occupied by observers, acting under an international mandate." (12)

Since Yushchenko's plan was released, most international organizations have responded gingerly such requests for assistance. Although the E.U. has agreed to assist minimally in the monitoring of a portion of the Transnistrian border, a large-scale mission by the E.U. or OSCE seems unlikely. The E.U. has shied away from such large-scale bordering missions in the past, and the OSCE bureaucratic system means it would need Russian support for such an idea. It appears that the international community may be collectively sighing with relief that Ukraine has taken over leadership on this thorny issue, and are happy to allow the country to do so. Discussions are continuing over whether the E.U. and the US will participate in talks over the situation, as Yushchenko has suggested, and Smirnov reportedly has agreed. Indications at the moment are that they will not.

Yushchenko must know, however, that Chisinau will never—perhaps politically can never—agree to his plan as proposed, and as accepted by Smirnov and Russia. Yet, the plan was announced, placing Yushchenko's supposed ally Voronin in an awkward and difficult position. So then, what is the purpose of this plan? Was this a carrot to Russia, which has announced its wholehearted
support? Perhaps it was a bone to the Donbass business entities that are said to profit from the Transnistrian smuggling trade? Or perhaps Yushchenko truly believed that this plan was the best option.

Moldovan newspapers, rallying around their president, have suggested that the plan was designed to benefit businessmen surrounding Yushchenko – in particular Poroshenko, who, Flux claimed, "has business interests in the Dniester region." (13) While not impossible, this claim seems questionable. But, it clearly demonstrates the emotional and unyielding response of many in Moldova to Yushchenko's proposals. Unfortunately for the Ukrainian president, the almost unanimous response to his plan within Moldova has been to unite against it.

Regardless of why the plan was offered, the dynamic of the Transnistria conflict has changed as a result. Is it any surprise, then, why Igor Smirnov was so happy to embrace Yushchenko's plan?

Source Notes:

(1) Official website of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, 14 Jul 05; via www.president.gov.ua.
(2) The Economist, 29 Jan 05.
(3) Novie izvestia, 11 Jul 05; What the Papers Say, Part B via Lexis-Nexis; ITAR-TASS, 12 Jul 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) Eurasia Daily Monitor, 27 Apr 05.
(5) ITAR-TASS, 15 July 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(7) Ukrayina Moloda, 23 November 05; via Lexis-Nexis.
(8) Reporter.MD, 7 Jul 05 via Politicom.moldova.org.
KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz elections: arise President Bakiev

Almost three months ago, in what amounted to a popular rebellion rather than an organized revolution, the government of President Askar Akaev collapsed. Ten days ago, on 10 July, elections to choose a new President were finally held in the Kyrgyz republic.

In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, the Kyrgyz Parliament appointed an interim government consisting of Former Interior Minister Feliks Kulov, opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiev and former Foreign Minister Rosa Otunbayeva. (1) The Parliament's leadership selection was an extremely prescient move based on the situation in the country at the time. Many of the demonstrations against Akaev had started and been at their strongest in the Southern regions, especially in Bakiev's strongholds of Osh and Jalalabad; Kulov's center of support lies in the North, around the capital Bishkek. As such, the new leadership served to provide an image of national unity.
Initially, it seemed that both Bakiev and Kulov would stand for the Presidency. Bakiev announced his own candidacy within days of the creation of the interim government, while Kulov came forward somewhat later—having been forced to wait until the Supreme Court nullified the charges levied against him by the Akaev regime. (2) The prospect of a potentially (nationally) divisive Presidential race was averted on 13 May, when Kulov announced his withdrawal from the campaign. Under the terms of an agreement reached with Bakiev, Kulov was appointed Acting First Deputy Prime Minister, and guaranteed the post of Prime Minister—with increased powers of appointment—in the event of a Bakiev electoral victory. (3) It is important to note that the Bakiev-Kulov alliance also was geared towards the broader regional situation, namely the unrest in Uzbekistan, and its potential effects on Kyrgyzstan through that country's considerable Uzbek minority. (4)

The "interregnum" period in Kyrgyzstan has not been entirely peaceful. The country has witnessed several high profile murders, including those of Usen Kudaibergenov (a film director and ally of Kulov) and Member of Parliament Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev. There have been several attacks on Bakiev's campaign headquarters by opponents (5), while on 17th June, after several days of protests, demonstrators stormed the Parliament building in Bishkek to protest the exclusion of Urmatbek Baryktabasov from the election. Apparently, authorities discovered that Baryktabasov holds Kazakh not Kyrgyz citizenship, a fact which, if true, would provide legitimate grounds for exclusion. (6) Of deeper concern to authorities—if the allegations are proven—is that an investigative reporter claims to have discovered that Baryktabasov, a close friend and ally of former President Akaev, may have been using funds funneled by the latter to pay protestors to disrupt the electoral process. (7) In any event, the interim government was quick to re-take the Parliament building, ordering some 1,000 riot police officers to the scene to clear the building. Reports indicate that law enforcement officers were armed only with riot shields and batons, not firearms, and that the protestors were flushed from the building with teargas. (8) The fact that police officers were
only lightly armed may indicate that the government had decided to minimize violence as much as possible in the run up to the polls.

The registration of candidates for the election officially ended on 7 June. By the end of the day, a total of seven candidates had accumulated the required 50,000 signatures. Bakiev's main competitors were: Zhusupbek Sharipov (former governor of Jalalabad), Tursunbay Bakir-uulu (former Kyrgyz Ombudsman), Keneshbek Dushebayev (former Interior Minister), Akbaraly Aitikeev, Jypar Jeksheev and one female, Toktayym Umetalieva. (9)

Campaigning for the polls officially began on 14 June, and ended a day before the election, on 9 July. (10) In the week since the polls, the OSCE has released its preliminary observations of the election. Compared to previous election reports, on Kyrgyz and other Central Asian elections, this report was quite favorable. The OSCE noted that: campaigning had been free of government interference; there had been a real exchange of ideas between candidates during live televised debates; the Central Election Commission had, at the very least, attempted to show impartiality by moving out of Government House for the duration of the process; freedom of congregation and expression were respected throughout the process and finally, the government had taken account of the considerable Uzbek minority by having the debates broadcast with Uzbek language dubbing in the Southern part of the country. (11)

According to the preliminary results issued by the CEC, voter turnout reached record levels with 74.6% of the country's population voting. (12) Bakiev reportedly received 88.9% of the vote, with the second placed candidate, Tursunbay Bakir-uulu receiving just under 4%. (13) The OSCE did note some irregularities during the election, including an inflation of the turnout figures. These irregularities likely served to inflate Bakiev's poll numbers to their reported levels. It should be noted however, that the OSCE believes that Bakiev would still have carried the election by a considerable margin without turnout inflation. (14)
The improvements in Kyrgyzstan also have been noted internationally, with the U.S. State Department praising a "calm and peaceful" vote and noting that Kyrgyzstan had made "tangible progress" towards meeting OSCE and other international commitments." (15)

Bakiev's first action as President-elect was to sign a decree in line with their agreement, appointing Kulov as Acting Deputy Premier. Kulov is expected to become Prime Minister when Bakiev officially is inaugurated President—probably early next month. (16) A cabinet has not yet been formed, and the government has not made any serious policy decisions, save to state (as a participant in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's recent joint declaration) that it requires clarification from Washington on a timetable for closure of the U.S. base near Bishkek. (17) It is important to note that the Kyrgyz government has not indicated that it wishes to end its cooperative relationship with the United States. On a recent visit to the U.S., Acting Foreign Minister Otunbayeva stated that Kyrgyzstan wished to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries (18), while also noting that Russia remains an "important strategic ally" to the Republic. (19) These statements would seem to indicate that the new Kyrgyz government will seek to assess each policy anew—on its merits and weaknesses, rather than simply to continue the policies of its predecessor without question or consideration.

UZBEKISTAN
Andijan redux
Throughout early May, protests—largely peaceful in nature—had been occurring in the Uzbek town of Andijan. The demonstrations were held to protest the innocence of several local men held on charges of membership in Islamic extremist groups. On 12 May, large crowds began to gather in the center of Andijan, calling for President Karimov's resignation, as well as railing against the government's economic policies, which keep a large percentage of the rural population languishing in extreme poverty. (20)
Throughout the day, government forces were observed moving into position around the town's central square, effectively sealing the protestors into a "controllable" area. Early on the morning of 13 May, these troops began firing indiscriminately into the crowds, making no attempt to separate innocent bystanders from protestors. As the crowds tried to exit the square, troops moving in vehicles pursued them, firing as they moved. (21) In a new detail documented by the OSCE in its report of the incident, evidence emerged that witnesses had spotted snipers on rooftops, using high powered rifles to kill victims missed by the roving troops. (22) The troops involved apparently were Special Forces Units (Bars & Skorpion) belonging to the Interior Ministry. (23) The day after the forced dispersal of the demonstrators, government forces initiated a massive cleanup operation, moving bodies to mass graves in the environs of the town.

President Karimov's immediate assertion during a press conference on the morning of 14 May was that the demonstrations had been orchestrated by Islamic extremists, linked to the Taliban in Afghanistan, for evidence of which he cited "recorded" telephone conversations between the "terrorists" and their controllers. (24)

Since the Andijan incident, the Uzbek government has stuck to its story. The Uzbek Prosecutor General's office announced that an investigation had "established" that Hizb-ut-Tahir had sent "armed" and "trained" detachments numbering some twenty people into Andijan with the specific goal of causing unrest and violence. (25) The official Uzbek version of events has been supported by the Russian government. On 29 June, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov stated during a meeting that Russian intelligence had known of the planning for Andijan, and that it too had evidence that the "terrorists" had ties to Afghanistan. (26)
As is to be expected, the regime in Uzbekistan is using events in Andijan as an excuse for a broader crackdown. Reports from various sources indicate that multiple Uzbek human rights activists, including those working for foreign organizations (such as the London based Institute for War and Peace Reporting), and journalists have disappeared, been publicly arrested or are subject to visible surveillance and harassment by the Secret Services. (27)

Karimov's assertions regarding the incident in Andijan have been the target of some skepticism internationally. As a result, several world leaders, including President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair, have attempted to persuade the Uzbek President to allow an independent international investigation. (28) Senior legislators from the United States have added their voices to pressure Karimov, notably Senator John McCain, who in an Op-Ed piece in the Financial Times, urged reform and an investigation. (29) Karimov—with Russia's support—has flatly rejected the possibility of an inquiry.

The Uzbek President's behaviour since Andijan could be described as somewhat schizophrenic. On the one hand, Karimov has rejected calls for an independent investigation; he is apparently the prime force behind the SCO's request for a timetable of U.S. base closures in Central Asia (30), and has intimated, conspiratorially, that Western journalists were secretly in Andijan prior to the protests, in order to give negative coverage to the regime's response. (31) On the other hand Karimov has issued an invitation for any members of the U.S. Congress or human rights activists who "spoke about the Andijan tragedy so unceremoniously" to attend the trial, (32) promising that it will be "open" and fair. (33) Clearly, such "promises" are designed to attempt to ensure that Uzbekistan remains a valued friend in the Global War on Terror—and as such, the recipient of millions of dollars in aid—while also "preempting" what Karimov sees as "Western meddling" designed to provoke or foment a "color" revolution in Uzbekistan, and to remove him from power.
Source Notes:

(1) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume, X, Number 7 (8 Jun 05).
(2) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 6 (28 Apr 05).
(3) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 7 (8 Jun 05).
(4) Ibid.
(13) Ibid.
(16) AKIpress News Agency website, Bishkek in Russian, 12 Jul 05; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(17) INTERFAX, 11 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0711 via World News Connection.
(18) INTERFAX, 15 Jun 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0615 via World News Connection.
(19) ITAR-TASS, 14 Jun 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0614 via World News Connection.
(20) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 7 (8 Jun 05).
(21) Ibid.
(23) Eurasia Insight, 13 Jul 05 via Eurasianet www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071305_pr.
(24) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 7 (8 Jun 05).
(26) ITAR-TASS, 29 Jun 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0629 via World News Connection.
(27) TCA-Uzbekistan, 7 Jun 05; The Times of Central Asia via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(28) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 7 (8 Jun 05).
(29) "When Decency and Expediency Clash," Senator John McCain, 14 Jun 05; The Financial Times.
(30) AGENTSTVO VOYENNYKH NOVOSTEY, 6 Jul 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0706 via World News Connection.
(31) UzReport Daily, 29 Jun 05; UzReport via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(33) INTERFAX, 29 Jun 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0629 via World News Connection.

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