Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Borodin: Off the cuff (or what I miss most about the Yel'tsin years)

Did the former Kremlin Business Manager not get the memo? In Putin's administration, apparatchiki are neither to be seen nor heard. (Until they are presented as possible "successors" and then they are to be torn to shreds.)

Apparently in response to the flurry of negative press ignited by the presidential "elections" in Belarus, but ostensibly to commemorate the ten year anniversary of the formation of the Union state, Pavel Borodin, State Secretary of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, held a press conference to discuss political and economic developments and to revive the "smack upside the head" as the preferred method of resolving political differences.

Borodin covered a broad array of topics, from the economic imperative of "imperial rules": "We have also started acting in line with the rules of the game aimed at restoring the whole of the post-Soviet space. The thing is that there is a macroeconomic law: 300 million consumers are required, energy resources are needed, and foodstuffs are needed. We have a program for that." (1)

Borodin brags that construction of the Union State—and by extension, a reformed central state in the post-Soviet space—provides a natural foundation for stable and prosperous governance, especially prosperous. By providing large-scale borderless movement of transportation, fiber optics, energy and other resources, a unified state would earn significant sums in transit costs alone. According to Borodin, Putin has seen the wisdom of this idea but has been stymied by two successive Prime Ministers: "There is an instruction to former
Prime Minister Kasyanov. A total of three, if I am not mistaken. Two instructions have been issued to Prime Minister Fradkov by President Putin. But there has been no progress." (2) This rather serious charge is repeated by Borodin later in the interview; is Putin listening?

Borodin's caustic and impetuous style provides useful insight into why he was appointed rather than elected to his loftiest posts. When he notices that Channel One is covering his press conference, Borodin asks why, after all "It never shows me." When the moderator responds that it is present for the tenth anniversary, Borodin answers (one imagines, muttering), "Unbelievable." When Ekho Moskvy (EM) poses a question, Borodin rifts on an EM reporter who wrote that Borodin had been bailed out at state expense for his Mabetex case in Switzerland. "I know your man Sheremet, I already promised to smash his face in when he wrote in his lousy book that they paid 3-million bail for me out of the national budget. I didn't take a ruble from the Union budget...." (3) Borodin is technically correct, the bail was not paid directly to him but to the authorities in Switzerland, and it likely came from the Russian, not the Union, budget.

Expanding on his theme that large unified states are more viable economically, Borodin managed to swipe a certain former Soviet President: [U]nfortunately in this country, whether in Russia or the USSR, if there is a man at the top who can get things done, everything is developing. As soon as somebody comes along with a big birthmark on his forehead, everything goes haywire. No offense meant." (4) None taken, I'm sure.

On the subject of the (proposed) constitutional structure of the Union State, Borodin contrasted the American governing system with one president—one main figure of authority—to the Russian system. Apparently, his thoughts then wandered to the drafting of the Russian constitution: "In this country, everyone has all the authority. Who wrote our Constitution? [Viktor] Sheinis. He went to America, I gave him money and he rewrote the Constitution. Well, he botched
the job." (5) It is uncertain whether or not Putin holds the Russian Constitution in the same esteem as expressed by Borodin, but that could be an important piece of information for 2008.

Borodin did drop one other nugget from his days at the Kremlin in Yeltsin's administration. By way of fleshing out economic remarks concerning the need to consider options and "variants" before making a decision, "When we bought a car for the President, we drove 16 cars into a wall. When we chose suits for Skuratov and Yeltsin, we looked at fifteen suits. And so on." (6) Perhaps "Kremlin Butler" was the right moniker for Borodin back in the day, but even at that, why was Borodin buying suits for the Procurator-General?

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this press conference is that Borodin's Press Secretary, Mr. Makuskok, stood by his side and said little, while the State Secretary of the Union State had his say.

**When is a priority only a passing whim?**

President Putin met for the second time with his Council for the Implementation of Priority National Projects on 7 April. It had been more than four months since their last meeting. (7) In the interim, apparently regional leaders and the government had gotten down to some of the tasks they were meant to do concerning education, forestry and modernization. Hard to imagine where Putin's "back-burnered" items show up on the agenda.

**Bureaucratic records bursting**

Despite Dmitri Kozak's valiant efforts to curb the growth of the Russian state administration through reform, it seems the Russian bureaucracy grew by 143,500 individuals last year to reach nearly 1.5 million. (8) According to the Russian state statistical service (Rosstat), efforts to trim the state apparatus bottomed out in 2001, and the number of apparatchiki has grown steadily ever since. After several years of significant growth in the regional organs of
government, last year's growth was most notable in the central apparatus. Personnel levels in the Legislative organs rose by only 2 percent in 2005, they leapt 20.4 percent in the Executive branch. The Federal Tax Service, surprisingly, saw a decline in size by 2.5 percent. (9)

Source Notes:

(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid
(8) Vertical of Manpower, Kommersant, 12 Apr 06 via Johnson's Russia List (JRL), 13 April 06, 2006-#88.
(9) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By John Kafer

Siloviki power structures: coordination and reform
There is little debate that Russia’s prime security threat today is that of terrorism, particularly in the North Caucasus. Russia has spared little in throwing resources at the problem, including military units of the Ministry of Defense (MOD), internal troops of the Interior Ministry, and secret services assigned to the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the General Staff's Main Intelligence
Directorate (GRU). Yet, instability and violence, previously limited to Chechnya, have spread throughout the North Caucasus.

Despite achieving tactical “success,” Russian security forces are realizing strategic failure. GRU’s Vostok military intelligence battalion raid of the Chechen village of Borozdinovskaya in June 2005, is a prime example: 70 to 80 GRU officers looted and set fire to houses, forcing 1,000 residents to flee to Dagestan; one resident was shot to death and 11 others simply “disappeared.” (1) The security services’ response to the Nalchik attack last October was another example; innocent civilians were rounded up, reclassified as terrorists, and then beaten or killed. (2) Many in the local populations deplored the terrorist attacks, but became vehemently anti-Russia following the atrocious responses of the security services.

Without professionalizing their security forces and achieving unity of effort, Russia cannot hope to “win” in the North Caucasus. Aside from the sheer brutality of the security forces, their lack of coordination and disunity continues to impede success. Each of the security structures retains separate and independent command and control systems with little information sharing.

The GRU forces, which operate separately from other MOD forces, operate special forces detachments and retain considerable prestige in Moscow. Their East and West detachments in Chechnya are staffed with ethnic Chechens and have been granted the status of Battalions, and their commanders have met with Sergei Ivanov, the Defense Minister, who promised them the most sophisticated weapons and the MOD’s continued support. (3)

The FSB utilizes Combined Special Teams and secret forces of the Special Assignment Center. The Combined Special Teams are controlled by the Regional Operational Headquarters and evidence shows they are involved in many of the “disappearances” throughout the region. It is unknown if the regional
headquarters’ geographic boundaries even encompass the same geographic boundaries as the military districts with military forces operating in the same areas. (4)

In addition to local security forces, the MVD has Provisional Special Tactics Teams, from central Russia, that operate throughout the North Caucasus. These teams do not accept orders from the Regional Operational Headquarters, only from Moscow, then operate independently once in the field. Evidence shows they also are involved in many of the “disappearances.” (5)

Not only are the special forces organized under varying chains of command with some reporting to superiors in Moscow and some regional leaders, none of them talk to each other. Operations to combat terrorism require rapid sharing of new intelligence. However, even though several disparate directorates within the FSB, MVD, and GRU collect information on terrorists, exchange of information is “practically non-existent.” While the FSB shares information with other federal and regional directorates within the FSB organization, they do not share with outside ministries and structures. (6) Instead of instilling unity of effort, the various special forces end up implementing such things as counter-hostage-taking tactics, where special forces seize the families of suspects, as well as other acts of vengeance that provide tactical success but prove counter-productive to strategic success. (7)

The recently-announced National Anti-Terrorism Committee could provide an avenue to increase unity of effort among the various security organizations. In addition to the federal committee, led by FSB Chief Nikolai Patrushev, they are supposed to establish regional structures to coordinate actions within the regions. (8) To succeed, the coordination will need to occur at the tactical level as well, to include routine sharing of information. It remains to be seen whether the National Anti-Terrorism Committee can be successful at the federal level, much less the tactical level. Meanwhile, critics charge that the creation of the
committee was politically motivated, intended to establish a shadow organization to replace the ineffective Federal Anti-Terrorist Commission headed by Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. While the new commission may achieve its political goal, there is little evidence to indicate it will be any more effective in combating terrorism.

GRU and Military Reform
The Chief of the General Staff, Yuri Baluyevsky, announced the “first ever reforms in the GRU of the General Staff.” The reform primarily affects reconnaissance structures to obtain “strict centralization of intelligence-gathering subunits under the General Staff's auspices” with reforms to be completed by June. General Baluyevsky called this the first step in the reforms, announced in December, to abolish military districts and form territorial military structures. As part of this first step, intelligence directorates of the Ground Troops, the Navy, and the Air Force will be disbanded and intelligence-gathering sections in the Airborne Troops, the Strategic Missile Troops, and the Space Troops will be reduced by half.

However, General Baluyevsky’s reforms already are encountering criticism. The same article that announced the reforms criticized the lack of “serious expert assessment” and noted the closed nature of the reform process where “only a very narrow circle of people know what changes are expected to take place.” A Reserve Colonel, Anatoli Tsyganok (candidate of military sciences) is even more critical, stating that Russia’s security threats have changed dramatically, but that the current Russian Army is not prepared and is “not capable of defending the country from contemporary threats.” He states that the Russian Federation “doesn’t need an archaic scheme that has been unchanged since the century before last: the Ministry of Defense-the General Staff-military districts-armies-corps-divisions-regiments.” Colonel Tsyganok argues that 15 years will be required to prepare the Army for reform.
So far, reform efforts, such as the GRU reforms announced by General Baluyevsky, have been modest and do not include real structural reform. Additionally, even modest reform efforts proceed slowly. The “professionalizing” of the military by moving from conscript soldiers to contract soldiers is one such example. Despite Sergei Ivanov’s oft-stated goal to have 50% of the force professionalized by 2007 when the length of conscripted service drops from two years to one, The Military Balance reports that the MOD’s own assessments anticipate only 150,000 of the proposed 1.2 million servicemen under contract by 2007. Additionally, due to numerous legal and illegal methods to avoid the draft, the military is only able to conscript 10% of eligible men and that 30% of those are found unsuitable for military service. (14)

The years following the collapse of the Soviet Union witnessed a substantial reduction in military and security forces, but little organizational reform; huge financial burdens on the state and military, combined with scarce (and devalued) rubles demanded change. Today, Russia’s new security threats demand real reform, but Russia lacks a forcing function. The increase in petrol dollars/rubles and expanding budgets enable existing security bureaucracies to expand and to centralize control. General Baluyevsky’s GRU “reform” likely has more to do with re-centralization of power than real attempts at reform. Notably, very few GRU initiatives ever make the press; recent announcements all have surfaced since Putin’s fellow FSB compatriot and Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, took over his new Deputy Prime Minister duties in December.

Source Notes:

(1) “Vostok Takes Heat for Raid on Village” by Nabi Abdullayev, Moscow times, 29 Jul 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
(3) “War on Terrorism: Liquidators” by Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, Novaya gazeta, 19 Jan 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
Eight is...too many?
Recently, reports analyzing US-Russian relations increasingly characterize them as having "soured." (1) The Washington Post asserted that in Moscow, "it's beginning to feel like a new Cold War." (2) The international edition of Newsweek asked, "Should Russia be booted out of the West’s exclusive club, the G8?" (3) And a Google search of "Russia-US relations" turned up a horde of news articles with titles alluding to a "familiar chill" or a "hazy future." (4)
Just four years ago that question never would have been asked; In 2002, President Vladimir Putin was welcomed warmly into the exclusive Group of Eight. At that time, the G8 countries approached Putin as if he was a democrat looking to build a new Russia on Western ideologies. Since then, Putin’s policies, both domestic and foreign, have been questioned intensely. The last four years built up to a kind of tipping point, which resulted in the release of two very damaging reports for US-Russian relations.

The Pentagon’s Iraqi Perspectives Project and the Council of Foreign Relations’ Russia’s Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do have caused both US and Russian leaders to question their relationship.

The 210-page Iraqi Perspectives Project, which assesses the run-up to, and the beginning of the Iraq War, contains accusations claiming that Russia provided Saddam Hussein with intelligence reports about US military plans in Iraq just before the start of the war in 2003. The report claims that an April 2006 memorandum, which was sent from the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs to Saddam, contained Russian intelligence reports received from the Russian ambassador. Russian intelligence reported US troop movement plans as well as proposed US war tactics, including possible sites to be bombed and important dates of action. (5)

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the accusations were untrue and questioned the motivation of the Pentagon for releasing the report in March 2006: “The way this was done suggests that there is a political motive here and that this could be connected with the situation in Iraq.” (6) The motive, according to Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin, was for the United States to divert attention “from the mounting real problems in post-war Iraq.” (7)
Following the accusations, Lavrov has become more vocal about his view of the US-led war in Iraq, calling the time Iraq is taking to form a new government as “regrettably becoming drawn out.” (8) It is important to note, however, that Lavrov, and other Kremlin officials are is reluctant to criticize the United States specifically, opting instead, to keep official rhetoric vague.

US-based think tank, the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), on the other hand, has been anything but vague. In its March 2006 report, which held nothing back in its title, Russia’s Wrong Direction, the CFR outlines issues of contention between the United States and Russia, including the Russian meeting with Hamas, rollbacks of democracy, the alleged “neo-imperialist” foreign policy in the CIS, nuclear policy toward Iran and G8 membership. (9)

The last two issues have become increasingly contentious due to recent developments. With the news of Iran’s success in enriching uranium, suggestions of strategic US strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities have proliferated. An article by Seymour Hersh in The New Yorker cited anonymous US government sources, who revealed advanced military planning to rid Iran of nuclear capabilities. (10) The intention behind the leak of this information (accurate or not) is unknown but clearly could be aimed at influencing either US or world opinion. Regardless, Lavrov, who alluded to Hersh’s article during a report on Vesti, that aired on state-owned RTR television, has made Russia’s position clear: “I am convinced that the problem cannot be resolved through the use of force…[force] can only create an extremely dangerous explosive hotbed in the Middle East, the regions which has [sic] more than enough hotbeds as it is.” (11)

Russia’s Wrong Direction considers how the United States should approach Russia regarding cooperation and recommends the following regarding the G8: “[T]he democratic members of the G8—the United States and its allies—need to reconstitute the old G7, as a guiding and coordinating force within the group. Even with Russia’s inclusion in the G8, the G7 has continued to meet to discuss
certain financial issues, selected political questions now require a similar format. (12)"

In other words, the CFR report suggests that Russia should not be ostracized from the West, but it should be limited in its power and influence. The United States, according to the CFR report, needs to recognize that full cooperation is not an option. Instead, US foreign policy in Russia should pursue “selective cooperation,” which entails cooperating with Russia on such strategic issues as Iran and countering Russia regarding its policy in the CIS.

In response to the CFR report, two Russian analysts—Nikolas Gvosdev, editor of The National Interest, and Dmitri Simes, president of The Nixon Center—retorted:

“Selective cooperation—the idea that the US can reap the benefits of partnership with Russia on Iran while still making efforts to roll back Russian influence in the post-Soviet space—is a chimera. America can undertake the latter if it is preparation to forego the former. Foreign policy is not a morality play—and free lunches are rarely available, especially not from Mr. Putin for perceived adversaries. Wishful boasting to the contrary will not make us safer. (13)"

Will recent developments and the input of respected individuals have an effect on the current administration’s approach to Russia? Despite the criticism, it seems Bush may still believe that he can see into Putin’s soul. After the release of the Pentagon report, Bush proclaimed, “I haven’t given up on Russia.” (14)

Source Notes:

(1) See, for example, “Kremlin takes steps to polish Russia’s image abroad, Tactic comes amid US criticism as G8 summit nears,” 11 Apr 06, Boston Globe via Lexis-Nexis.
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative
Branch

By Robyn Angley
Growing numbers of ethnic attacks

Xenophobia and crimes against foreigners have been on the rise in Russia for some time, yet seem to be escalating still further. Recent events in Saint Petersburg provide a case in point. Samba Sala Lanksar, a Senegalese student at St. Petersburg Telecommunications University, was murdered on the night of 7 April as he and some friends walked home from a weekly gathering at the Apollo club. He was shot in the head at point blank range by an unidentified assailant. His death has set off a wave of protest from the African community, which had already mobilized in December in response to the murder of a student from Cameroon, Kanhem Leon. Police detained a man on April 11 under suspicion of involvement in Lanksar’s murder. As a demonstration of national attention to the situation, the Public Chamber has sent a delegate to join in the probe about the student’s death.

The incident is the latest in a series of attacks on foreigners and those of non-Slavic ethnicity in Saint Petersburg. In 2005, the Main Directorate of Internal Affairs of St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region recorded 1,073 crimes against foreigners. (1) About 2,000 crimes against foreigners were reported in Russia in January and February of this year. The number reflects a 33 percent increase for the same time last year. (2)

The Senegalese government issued a formal protest over the murder and several demonstrations have occurred. On 8 April, approximately 300 African young people gathered to protest Lanksar’s death. (3) A few days later, on 11 April, a group of African students staged an anti-Fascist protest that massed about 3,000 people at the Cathedral of the Savior of the Spilt Blood. (4) The rising xenophobia often is linked in the media and in political discourse, with the rise of a Russian fascist movement. The Moscow Human Rights Bureau estimates that there are currently between 50,000 and 70,000 Neo-Nazis in Russia. (5)
Other serious incidents involving foreigners in Saint Petersburg in the last several months include the murder of Kanhem Leon on 24 December 2005 and the murder of a citizen of Mali on 4 February, possibly in connection with criminal activity. (6) Less serious episodes include beatings and harassment, such as the attack on two Mongolian students in the metro by Zenit soccer fans on April 16. (7)

**Church to join human rights movement**

The Russian Orthodox Church has announced a plan to establish its own human rights organization. (8) The news elicited a fairly favorable response from members of the human rights movement, although Lyudmila Aleexeva of Moscow Helsinki Group has pointed out some of the ways that the more conservative values of the church could clash with the Western liberal values of the international human rights movement. "Our human rights movement is part of the international movement to defend human rights. We defend all people whose rights are violated, not only those of sexual minorities, but also of servicemen, women, children, ethnic minorities and even law enforcement personnel if their rights are violated," said Aleexeva. (9)

The church elaborated its view of human rights at its 10th World Russian People's Convocation in Moscow. The “Declaration on the Rights and Dignity of Man,” produced by the convocation, said that there "exist values that are not inferior to human rights. They are faith, morality, sanctity, and the Homeland." It also asserted that the “realization of human rights” should not “suppress faith and moral values” or result in the “insulting of religious and national feelings." (10)

**Public Chamber activity**

The Public Chamber plans to keep an eye on the implementation of the controversial NGO law, according to Yelena Zelinskaya, deputy head of the Public Chamber's media commission and vice-president of the Media Union. (11) The NGO law is not the only issue the chamber is following. Perhaps in an
attempt to assert its relevance, the Public Chamber has issued statements on a variety of issues from the legal draft age to rising xenophobia to the media. It also is inquiring into some sticky situations: The most intriguing attempt by the Chamber to assert public oversight is in the case of the funds that have been allocated for reconstruction in Chechnya. (12) The Chamber has expressed an interest in auditing the financial activities regarding Chechnya. Such an investigation is scarcely likely to succeed, but the Chamber’s willingness to even broach the subject suggests that it might not be quite the pliant body most have expected. For now, however, the Chamber is restricting its activities to somewhat smaller arenas. The agenda for the recent meeting of the Public Chamber, for example, was limited to a few issues—how to address fascism and ethnic extremism, and military affairs.

Source Notes:

(1) “Over 1,000 crimes committed against foreigners in St Petersburg in 2005,” RIA-Novosti, 7 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via World News Connection (WNC).
(2) “Police Draw Identikit of Suspect Blamed For Student’s Murder,” ITAR-TASS, 7 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
(3) “Senegal Protests Killing of Citizen in Russia; 300 Demonstrate in St Petersburg,” AFP (World Service), 8 Apr 06 via WNC.
(4) “African students lead 3,000 on antifascist march in central St Petersburg,” Interfax 11 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
(5) “Website Examines Spread of ‘Fascist’ Extremism, Skinhead Movement in Russia,” www.gazeta.ru, 10 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
(6) “Citizen of Mali Murdered In St. Petersburg,” ITAR-TASS, 5 Feb 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
(7) “Mongolian Students Beaten Up in St Petersburg,” Interfax, 16 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
(8) “Rights Groups Hail Orthodox Rights Center, Criticize Some Initiatives,” Interfax, 5 Apr 06; FBIS transcribed text via WNC.
INTERNAL

Ivanov Strikes Back

Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has taken the upper hand in the contest to manage Russia’s military industrial complex. Last month, President Putin signed a decree creating a new military industrial commission to manage Russia’s burgeoning investment in its defense industries. The revamped commission is expected to wield substantial influence; however, it is not expected to be as powerful as the Soviet-era Military Industrial Commission which was one of the most powerful state agencies with a commanding influence on military, domestic, and foreign policy. (1) The new commission will be headed by Sergei Ivanov and will be responsible for drafting governmental rulings and presidential decrees aimed at managing Russia’s $25 billion investment in the defense industry. (2) Colonel-General Vladislav Putilin, formerly a deputy chief of the General Staff, also was named the first deputy of the new commission and given ministerial rank. He most likely will handle day-to-day operation considering Ivanov’s growing span or responsibility. (3)

Ivanov’s selection to head the commission represents a significant political victory and one more nail in the coffin for Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. Ivanov
expected to have more control over Russia's defense industry following his move to Deputy Prime Minister last year; political infighting with Fradkov however, hindered his aspirations as both men sought primacy. In December, it appeared as if Fradkov might have won a reprieve by retaining chairmanship of the prior military industrial commission and rebuffing the need for reinvigorating the institution. (4) However, Ivanov’s personal ties to Putin remain strong, and the March 2006 decree puts him firmly in charge and greatly reduces Fradkov’s powers for oversight of the defense industry. For example, the decree re-establishes the new military industrial commission as a standing committee with limited oversight from the Prime Minister. The commission’s decisions must be approved by Fradkov, but Fradkov is not part of the commission; Ivanov and his team do not have to discuss or to coordinate their deliberations with Fradkov before submitting them for approval. (5)

Putilin further elaborated on the expanded and unique role of the new military industrial commission: His new responsibilities are much broader under the new organization, and the new commission has greater autonomy than its immediate predecessor. (6) As Putilin explained, “I will not even be a member of the government apparatus. I have an absolutely independent post. If it had not been for the No. 314 decree on the separation of ministries, services and agencies, our commission would have become an executive power body. But in terms of its structure, it does not enter these ranks.” (7)

As for Fradkov, he continues to lose ground to both Ivanov and First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev. Beyond the loss of direct control of the military industrial complex, his administrative staff has been reduced from 43 to 10 personnel. (8) The handwriting is on the wall.

Ivanov may now have the upper hand for the defense industry, but numerous problems abound. The Russian defense budget has increased 400 percent since 1999, yet there is no substantial increase in the quantity of new hardware
delivered to the military. (9) The reality is that changing leadership at the top may provide some benefit, but the Russian defense industry has major problems that can not be solved without true reform and transparency. Russia’s inability to explain how a four-fold increase in annual funding over the past several years has not translated into increased production is an unsettling enigma that does not bode well.

**Nuclear primacy**

The Foreign Affairs article on nuclear primacy generated a firestorm of discussion on the effectiveness of Russia’s nuclear deterrent. US professors Kier Lieber and Daryl Press authored “The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy,” which appears in the March/April 2006 edition of Foreign Affairs and suggests that Russia is now vulnerable to a US preemptive strike. (10) The authors state that Russia no longer has a reliable strategic deterrent as, “Russia has 39 percent fewer long-range bombers, 58 percent fewer ICBMs, and 80 percent fewer SSBNs than the Soviet Union fielded during its last days. The true extent of the Russian arsenal’s decay, however, is much greater than these cuts suggest.” (11) Moreover, the authors believe the US is enhancing and modernizing its conventional and nuclear strike capability while Russia’s strategic forces are in a precipitous decline. Their conclusion is that “the United States is openly seeking primacy in every dimension of modern military technology, both in its conventional arsenal and in its nuclear forces.” (12) The Lieber and Press article also has an interesting spin as it suggests that the US missile defense program is most valuable in an offensive context to defeat a weak retaliatory strike from a devastated enemy. (13)

The Russian response to the article was prompt and focused on discrediting technical merits, questioning political motives, and dismissing the likelihood of a US attack. Furthermore, the Russian response illustrates the latent tension in the current US-Russian relationship. President Putin and Defense Minister Ivanov both publicly addressed the article and reaffirmed their belief that the
Russian nuclear deterrent is effective and will be for the foreseeable future. Ivanov further suggested that the article may even be an attempt to discourage Russia from cooperating with China: “Someone may dislike the fact that we have established good relationships with China. This leads to such publications in an attempt to unnerve us, irritate us. We should treat that calmly.” (14) Yegor Gaidar, a former prime minister of the Russian Federation, proclaimed that the article was irresponsible, uninformed, and “when addressing such a delicate issue, it would be good to understand the responsibilities that go with it.” (15)

Russia is likewise unimpressed by the arguments for the effectiveness of missile defense. Putin, Ivanov, and other Russian leaders have promoted vigorously the missile defense evading properties of the new Bulava and Topol-M ICBMs. These new missiles are designed to perform unpredictable maneuvers in boost and terminal phases of ballistic flight as well as incorporate other penetration aids to defeat missile defense systems. Viktor Yesin, former head of Russia’s Strategic Missile Troops, called the claims of US nuclear primacy "incorrect and clearly pursue covert military-political objectives." (16) Yesin further stated that the “US missile defense system will have limited capabilities for the interception of combat warheads until at least 2020 and will not be able to make much impact on the efficiency of the Russian strategic nuclear forces.” (17)

Lieber and Press’s claims of US nuclear primacy are somewhat overstated and one-sided but nonetheless provocative. The article fails to give credit for the ongoing Russian modernization and commitment to nuclear deterrence. Likewise, the US is ahead of schedule in reducing its nuclear forces to comply with the 2002 Moscow Treaty for strategic offensive reduction. The US also recently announced another ten percent reduction in its land-based ICBMs as part of the latest Quadrennial Defense Review. However, the quick and high-level Russian response indicates that this is a topic of significant concern for Russia. Moreover, the US missile defense system is still unproven, leaving much uncertainty as to its military utility in actual combat.
While the vast majority of Russian leaders contend that the threat of a pre-emptive US nuclear strike against Russia is low, there definitely remains an element of the Russian population distrustful of US intentions. In this regard, Lieber and Press have highlighted the need for Russia and the US to come to a new intellectual consensus on strategic deterrence as the rules of the game clearly have changed since the end of the Cold War.

Source Notes:

(3) Felgenhauer, Ibid.
(5) Liakhovich, Ibid.
(6) “Russian military-industrial commission’s head interviewed about new role,” Rossiyskaya gazeta, 22 Mar 06; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(7) Ibid.
(8) “Sergey Ivanov's new appointment shows PM Fradkov on wane,” Gazeta Moscow, 21 Mar 06; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(9) Felgenhauer, Ibid.
(11) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.
(13) Ibid.
EXTERNAL

Keeping a foot in the door: Russia’s military in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan

Although Russian military strategy is not formulated solely in response to moves of NATO or the west, the presence or the promise of western military influence in the countries that border Russia appears to feature prominently in the minds of Russian military planners. Tajikistan and Kazakhstan provide useful examples of success and failure as Russia tries to maintain a strong military foothold – to the exclusion of the west – in the post-Soviet space.

Tajikistan

The Russian military continues to play a strong role throughout Central Asia. Typical of this Russian involvement was a recent three-day joint Russian-Tajik anti-terrorism exercise that culminated in a reportedly impressive military display at the Lahur training range near Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The anti-terrorism exercise kicked-off on 2 April and involved some 800 military personnel, comprised of 500 Russian and 300 Tajik troops. (1) In addition to troops, Su-25 attack aircraft, Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters, and armored vehicles all played significant roles in the exercise. (2) Although the exercise took place at the Lahur training range, approximately 35 kilometers south of Dushanbe, it drew on Russian military resources from around Tajikistan. Specifically, the exercise used aircraft and helicopters based in northern Tajikistan, at the Ayni airfield, and troops and armored vehicles from the 201st Motorized Rifle Division, based in Dushanbe.
April’s exercise was neither unprecedented nor unique. Indeed, the armed forces of Russia and Tajikistan regularly train together—although Russia always seems to provide the funds, planning, and equipment necessary to conduct said training. Still, given its support of these initiatives, the Russian military seems to care primarily about projecting a visible presence outside of the Russian Federation (to the exclusion of NATO) when conducting such exercises.

If maintaining a ready military outside of Russian borders and pushing NATO out of Russia’s backyard are indeed two strategic Russian military priorities, then Russia seems to be achieving its goals in Tajikistan. In a 29 March interview, Colonel-General Sherali Khairulloyev, Defense Minister of Tajikistan, seemed to confirm Russia’s success on the first goal when he stated that “Tajik armed forces have been set up thanks to Russia’s assistance and contribution [and that] military-technical cooperation between [Tajikistan and Russia] is at a very high level today.” (3) Moreover, it seems that Russia’s visible military presence is helping to achieve a secondary goal of keeping NATO out of Tajikistan. Khairulloyev also seemed to confirm Russia’s success at this goal when, in remarks about applying NATO military standards in Tajikistan, he stated, “Soviet standards are no worse [than NATO’s].” (4) Whether Khairulloyev’s Soviet slip was Freudian or not, the implications seem clear: the Tajik military owes its existence to Russia and, therefore, Tajikistan is not going to jeopardize that relationship by seeking a partnership with NATO.

Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan appears to share with Tajikistan a desire to develop its military and has a similar dependence on Russia to assist in that development. However, where Tajikistan made public its military alliance with Russia and its rejection of NATO, Kazakhstan made public its military alliance with Russia and its courting of NATO among others (including Ukraine).
Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev’s recent visit to Russia was notable for the agreement reached by Nazarbaev and Russian President Putin to amend pre-existing bilateral arrangements on the use of military facilities and ranges in Kazakhstan. Specifically, the amendments apparently establish conditions for use of Russia’s 929th state flight testing center, Emba range, Saryshagan testing grounds and Russia’s fourth state central range, all of which are located in Kazakhstan. (5) These amendments seem to resolve earlier disagreements between the two countries about how Russia would pay for the use of facilities and ranges in Kazakhstan. With the latest agreements between Nazarbaev and Putin, it now appears that as partial payment for the use of the aforementioned military infrastructure, Russia will help train the Kazakh military—including educating Kazakh service members at Russia’s military academies. (6)

Interestingly, even as it seeks Russian military assistance, Kazakhstan also has shown an interest in military cooperation with NATO. Since 1994, Kazakhstan has participated in NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program that includes, among other items, the training of Kazakh service members by NATO. (7) Moreover, in January, Kazakhstan and NATO signed the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), promising to further the military cooperation between the two entities. (8) Indeed, in discussing the IPAP between NATO and Kazakhstan, Charles Wald, Deputy Commander US European Command, suggested that NATO and Kazakhstan might hold joint military exercises in the future. (9)

Furthermore, Kazakhstan has sought not only to be a beneficiary of military assistance, but also to be a benefactor. In April, the deputy head of the Ukrainian air force, Lt-Gen Mykola Botov, stated in an interview that his country intended to use Kazakh military training grounds in 2006. (10) Botov said the purpose of such an agreement would be for Ukrainian troops to train in the use of the Russian-made S-200 and S-300 missile systems. (11)
Russian reaction to military cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan likely will be favorable or, at least, indifferent. With the Russian Black Sea Fleet firmly in place in Ukraine for the foreseeable future and with Russian-made weapons and weapon systems as the source of Ukraine’s interest in Kazakhstan, Ukrainian-Kazakh ties should offer Russia no threat to its military presence in the post-Soviet space. By the same token, however, Kazakhstan’s willingness to court NATO likely will give Russia pause.

The existence of the west’s military forces in Russia’s backyard - in places like Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, for example - has always been cause for Russian alarm. But Kazakhstan’s unique missile testing facilities and ranges undoubtedly will make western military involvement there all the more alarming. Thus, observers of the Russian military should expect Russia to respond to deepening NATO-Kazakh ties in much the same fashion that Russia has responded elsewhere, albeit quicker. Namely, Russia will entrench further its already secure foothold in Kazakhstan. Moreover, it seems likely that Russia will look to expand its military footprint in Kazakhstan through the use of combined military exercises between Russia and Kazakhstan, expanded deployments of Russian troops and hardware to the region, or any combination thereof. Regardless of the means, the military end Russia seeks in Kazakhstan undoubtedly is the same as it is throughout the post-Soviet space: maintain a strong military presence outside of its borders, particularly if it can be done at the expense of western military alliances.

**Conclusion**

The interests of the west and of Russia will continue to collide around the world. Where the US and NATO once exerted a strong military influence in places like Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan, Russia has since reasserted itself. Russia seems poised to do the same in Tajikistan, whereas Russian fortunes in Kazakhstan seem less certain.
Source Notes:

(1) “Tajik president observes end of Tajik-Russian exercises,” DK, 6 Apr 06, RFE/RL Volume 10, Number 64, Part I.


(3) Interfax-AVN, “Tajikistan Gives Priority to Russia in Military Cooperation - Defense Minister,” 29 Mar 06; OSC transcribed text via World News Connection (WNC).

(4) Ibid.

(5) Agentstvo voyennykh novostey, “Putin signs order on using military facilities in Kazakhstan,” 10 Apr 06; OSC transcribed text via WNC.

(6) Rossiyskaya gazeta, “Russian Minister Presents Solution to Kazakhstan Military Lease Problem,” 29 Oct 05; FBIS-2005-1029 via WNC.

(7) Interfax-Kazakhstan, “NATO upbeat on expanding ties with Kazakhstan – agency, 5 Apr 06; OSC transcribed text via WNC.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Interfax, “US Commander Urges Greater NATO Cooperation With Kazakhstani Armed Forces,” 20 Jan 06; OSC transcribed text via WNC.

(10) Narodna Armiya, “Ukraine to modernize missile troops - deputy commander,” 5 Apr 06; OSC transcribed text via WNC.

(11) Ibid.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Kate Martin

NORTH CAUCASUS

It’s not easy being Adygei

While the center continues to exert as much energy and control as possible over republics, it still must cope with the power of the personality – especially when
that personality goes against the party line. Such a situation has been evolving recently in the Republic of Adygeya. President Khasret Sovmen threw everyone for a loop earlier this month when, in the middle of a parliamentary debate about allotting committee seats, he submitted his resignation to the speaker of parliament, who first refused to allow Sovmen to speak and then refused to read the letter aloud. In response, Sovmen reportedly announced his resignation himself. (1) Sovmen’s office later denied he had resigned.

This drama comes against the backdrop of a revised political scene. Despite a vocal opposition, it appears as though the much-discussed, and yet still unofficial, merger of the Republic of Adygeya and Krasnodar Kray might come to pass. The Slavs, who form almost 70% of the republic’s population, favor the idea. (2) In the March 12 regional elections, the Kremlin-supported and -supporting United Russia, to which Sovmen and the parliamentary speaker belong, garnered over 30 percent of the votes tallied. (3) Thus, it holds a majority in parliament, and likely would be able to usher through legislation making that merger a reality. However, there is strong opposition, among the minority Adygei and Cherkess population; a protest brought about 10,000 demonstrators to the streets of the capital in April 2005. (4)

Sovmen and (also popular) Krasnodar Kray Governor Aleksandr Tkachev both have stated that the merger no longer is being considered; they have gone on record as not supporting the plan. Sovmen’s recent actions likely constitute an attempt to demonstrate that, even within United Russia, citizens, and party deputies, might show a bit more disunity than the Kremlin would want or expect. If reports of reactions to Sovmen’s “resignation” are true then it would be difficult to ignore Sovmen’s popularity: not only did the parliamentary deputies issue a plea for him to stay, according to his press service (5), but what was termed an unauthorized rally was being set up for the following day. (6)
The Kremlin has not folded its cards, however; it announced that Adygeya and Krasnodar Kray are two of the holdout regions whose laws are not yet fully aligned with the Russian Federation constitution. (7) That might become the cudgel to force the rebellious parties into compliance. The argument already is being framed as an issue of the well-being of Russians: Putin said during a recent meeting of the Council of Legislators that non-conformance to federal legislation is leading to significant restrictions in the rights and freedoms of citizens. (8) So a clampdown on recalcitrant citizens can be seen as for their own good.

GEORGIA

When the caissons go rolling along
An agreement on the withdrawal of Russian bases was (finally) signed last week, with a schedule that envisages the beginning of the pullout next month, progress by the end of the summer, and complete withdrawal by 2008 – well, maybe not complete withdrawal.

Georgian State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration, Giorgi Baramidze, recently denied that the United States was seeking to position military posts in Georgia. According to Baramidze, Georgia has no intention of hosting military bases of any other country on its soil. (9) What a relief it must have been when that began to look like more than merely wishful thinking, as an agreement was signed on March 31. (10) “The closure of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki, the withdrawal of Russian heavy military hardware from Georgian territory and the transfer of control over these military facilities are to be completed before October 1, 2007, or, in the event of unfavorable weather conditions, no later than December 31, 2007,” according to the agreement titled “On Terms and Rules of Temporary Functioning of Russian Troops in Georgia, Russian Military Bases in Batumi and Akhalkalaki.” (11)
Georgian First Deputy Defense Minister Mamuka Kudava said a more specific schedule was reached in a meeting with Lt-Gen Valeri Yevnevich, deputy commander of the Russian Ground Troops. “Under the timetable a train carrying Russian military hardware will depart for Russia every week starting from 15 May,” he said. “By 15 August there will be no arms or military hardware left at the Akhalkalaki military base.” (12)

While the hardware is scheduled to be removed from Akhalkalaki this year and from Batumi in 2007, the bases won’t be closed until 2007 and 2008, respectively. (13) Most of the materiel is to be moved to the North Caucasus Military District, according to the commander-in-chief of the Russian Ground Troops, Col-Gen Aleksei Maslov. Some will be sent to the 102nd Russian base in Armenia, he added. (14)

And yet, through the euphoria, careful readers of the treaty noted something was missing: mention of another base. Former Georgian Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili noted a discrepancy between the agreement signed in March 2006 and the one she signed with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in 2005: “The document makes no mention of Gudauta. That is unacceptable from a diplomatic point of view. It means either that Gudauta is not on Georgian territory – where is it then? – or that we have omitted Gudauta from the list of bases and we are not going to ensure that the Russians leave the Gudauta base,” she told university students in Tbilisi. (15) Kudava followed that up during the next day’s parliamentary hearings, noting that, according to Georgian data, there are indeed about 300 Russian servicemen still at the officially closed base. (16)

While the Russians are working on the logistics of moving camp, the Georgians are setting up a base in Senaki, just east of the breakaway region of Abkhazia, according to Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili. The purpose of the base is clear, Okruashvili said – it will be “a decisive factor during our advance westwards.” (17)
Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Fabian Adami

Kyrgyzstan Update: Political “legitimation” of a Mafia kingpin?
Last month, celebrations were held throughout Kyrgyzstan marking the first anniversary of the “Tulip Revolution,” which removed President Askar Akaev from power. The celebrations in Bishkek were marked by a military parade, a re-
enactment of the storming of the White House, and a speech by President Kurmanbek Bakiev, promising “better times” in the near future. (1)

Although the “Tulip Revolution” was viewed at the time as “popular,” events in the last six months lead to the unpalatable conclusion that the “revolution” was deeply flawed, and both President Bakiev and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov are linked with competing organized crime groups.

First, on 21 September 2005, Bayaman Erkinbayev, a Parliamentary Deputy and Bakiev ally was murdered in Bishkek. Then in October, during the course of prison riots, a second Parliamentarian, Tynchbek Akmatbayev also was murdered. (2) Akmatbayev’s death was central in revealing the political-criminal links described above.

Akmatbayev’s killing sparked a series of protests in Bishkek led by the deceased’s brother Rysbek, reputedly one of the country’s most senior crime bosses. The demonstrator’s central demand was that Kulov should be dismissed due to his “responsibility” for the prison killings. (3)

Not necessarily clear at first, Rysbek’s motives were revealed by reports that his clan was involved in a long-running blood feud with Aziz Batukayev, a Chechen and rival mafia boss incarcerated at Moldovanovka prison. Kulov allegedly forged close ties with the Chechen while serving part of his sentence (imposed by the Akaev regime) at the same institution. Given Kulov’s position vis a vis the country’s Security Forces, his removal would have represented a considerable coup for Akmatbayev.

If there is suspicion about Kulov’s organized crime connections, the same concerns must also be applied to the President. A number of accusations and incidents seem to indicate that while Kulov may be connected to Batukayev, Bakiev is connected to the Akmatbayev clan.
In October 2005, a prominent Kyrgyz NGO claimed that only "funding from underworld figures" had brought protestors to the streets in the aftermath of the elections last spring. (4) This allegation would seem to provide an answer for the question of why it took a full five days for protests to emerge in the aftermath of the first round ballot. Secondly, President Bakiev’s reaction to the Rysbek Akmatbayev-led protest was telling. Instead of ordering Security forces to restore order, Bakiev met personally with Rysbek, who after being promised a full investigation into his brother’s death, agreed to end the demonstrations. (5) Given Akmatbayev’s position as one of Kyrgyzstan’s ‘most wanted’ criminals, Bakiev’s behavior was suspicious at the least.

Tynchbek Akmatbayev’s murder meant that a bi-election would have to be held in his Balykchy constituency. Late in March, Rysbek declared his intention to run for his brother’s former Parliamentary seat. Several days later, on 30 March, the Central Election Commission ruled that Akmatbayev could not run, because he did not meet the five-year minimum residency requirement. (6) The CEC’s decision caused a 1,000 strong protest in Bishkek (7), as well as a more serious demonstration in Balykchy, where Akmatbayev supporters blocked a four lane highway, causing a 200 vehicle, 3 kilometer traffic jam. (8)

Three days after the CEC’s decision was issued, the Kyrgyz Supreme Court, having heard an appeal from Rysbek’s representatives, overturned the decision, allowing Akmatbayev to run. Kyrgyz NGO officials responded to the Supreme Court’s decision with some criticism, claiming that it represented a move towards the legalization of “gangsterism,” (9) and that the judges had been subjected to Presidential pressure. According to this analysis, Akmatbayev will act as a “wedge” in Parliament-fighting Bakiev’s side against Kulov and the Parliament-in the brewing Presidential-Parliamentary battle. (10) Such analysis would seem to be supported in part by the fact that the March Bishkek protests only dispersed after President Bakiev, with Akmatbayev present, had addressed the crowds.
directly, asking them to maintain order. (11) Why did Bakiev again negotiate with a wanted man?

The Balykchy bi-election took place on 9 April. According to CEC observers, Akmatbayev scored a significant victory, obtaining 79.22% of the vote. (12) But his victory may not yet be secure.

Speaking after the election result had been announced, CEC Chairman Tuygunaly Abdraimov told reporters that the status of Akmatbayev’s candidacy was contradicted by two articles of the election code. Article 28 of the code prohibits a criminal case being brought against a candidate, while Article 56 states that a candidate facing criminal charges may have his or her status rescinded. (13) At present, Akmatbayev’s role in the 2004 murder of Colonel Chynchbek Aliyev, then head of the Interior Ministry’s anti-corruption squad is still being investigated, and he may yet face trial. (14)

Akmatbayev’s political career could also be short-lived if allegations aired by Abdraimov are proven. Abdraimov claims that on 11 April, a day after his press conference, he received a phone call from Akmatbayev, during which the latter “threatened to kill and destroy” him. (15) Akmatbayev’s lawyers have, not surprisingly, denied this allegation, and have argued that Article 28 of the election code is void, since Rysbek is no longer a candidate but an elected official. (16)

Akmatbayev’s intimidation tactics (if indeed he is behind the threats) may not have been limited to government officials. On 12 April, Edil Baisalov, leader of “For Democracy and Civil Society,” a prominent Kyrgyz NGO, was shot and severely wounded in Bishkek. (17) Baisalov’s recent initiative has been a political campaign to ban “figures associated with the underworld” from running for office. (18) Given the timing, it is safe to assume that the attack was carried out by Akmatbayev’s supporters, if not ordered directly by him.
Akmatbayev’s political fate must now be decided by Parliament: Both the question of the Baisalov attack and the contradictory electoral code articles have been referred there by electoral and law-enforcement bodies. (19)

At this point in time, there is no indication of when Akmatbayev’s case will be heard and debated by Parliament. It is safe to say that whatever decision is reached, it will have grave ramifications—be they positive or negative—for the “better times” promised for Kyrgyzstan by President Bakiev during his commemoration speech. It is to be hoped that Parliament will delay its decision until the investigations into Aliyev’s murder and Baisalov’s attack have been concluded.

Uzbekistan Update: Opposition sentence appealed
In late October and early November 2005, as part of a concerted anti-opposition campaign, Uzbek authorities arrested Sanjar Umarov and Nodira Khidoyatova, respectively leader and ‘coordinator’ of the Sunshine Coalition, one of the country’s major opposition groups. (20)

In what clearly was an attempt to deflect any possible criticism, Umarov and Khidoyatova were charged with and tried for economic, rather than political offences. Specifically, the Uzbek prosecutor alleged that they maliciously deprived Uzbekistan of vital financial resources. (21)

After trials lasting only a few weeks, Umarov was sentenced to 14 ½ years (reduced to 10 years under an amnesty law), while Khidoyatova received a 10 year sentence. (22)

Immediately following the trial, Umarov’s lawyer announced his intention to appeal the sentence. On 13 April, a Tashkent court “accepted” Umarov’s appeal, reducing his sentence by almost three years. (23) In no way can the judge’s ruling be described as a victory: observers at the court session have claimed that
Umarov appeared disoriented, and fear that he is being treated with psychotropic drugs. (24) Speaking for his client, Vitali Krasilovsky told reporters that Umarov’s appeal will continue, all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary. (25) But even an appeal to the country’s highest judicial body likely will fail, and continuing the ‘judicial process’ will do little but provide some measure of publicity for the opposition’s plight. Perhaps Krasilovsky believes that negative publicity will affect Karimov to the point of allowing Umarov to seek asylum abroad, in the hopes of improving his image before next year’s Presidential polls. Given the current, anti-opposition, anti-western climate, such an outcome seems highly unlikely.

Source Notes:

(2) See The ISCIP Analyst, Volume XI, Number 3 (17 November 05).
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid
(5) Ibid.
(10) Ibid.
(11) Interfax, 31 Mar 06, OSC Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(12) AKIpress, 10 Apr 06, OSC Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(13) Ibid.
(16) AKIpress, 13 Apr 06, OSC Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(20) See The IScip Analyst, Volume XII, Number 2 (16 Feb 06).
(21) Ibid.
(22) See The IScip Analyst, Volume XII, Number 3 (17 February 06).
(25) Ibid.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch
UKRAINE

Ukraine’s leaders twist and turn: Will they end up back in Kuchma-land?

How different is Ukraine in 2006 than in 2004? The result of current negotiations over the creation of a new government will provide the answer.

Although the government ran the fairest election in Ukrainian history, these negotiations, which have included what appears to be intentional intimidation by security officials, stand as a potent reminder that many of the recent gains made in Ukraine easily can be undone. It will be up to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko to ensure that this does not happen; he has a lot of work to do.

In the 26 March parliamentary elections, the Party of Regions, led by Yushchenko’s previously discredited presidential opponent Viktor Yanukovich, placed first with 32% of the vote. The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYUT) placed second with over 22% of the vote, with Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine (OU) in third at just under 14%. Armed with this significant plurality, BYUT, OU and the Socialists are now in talks to create a reconstituted “orange” parliamentary majority coalition.

The possibility that Yulia Tymoshenko could return to the prime minister’s post following these talks appears to have inspired what can only be viewed as panic in a few well-connected Ukrainian officials. Even more, it appears to have led to a return to at least one of the tactics used widely during the discredited Kuchma regime.

Why else would the State Prosecutor’s Office suddenly arrive at the home of The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc’s Deputy Leader Oleksandr Turchinov to “forcibly bring him for questioning?” (1) Why would they suddenly imply that Turchinov, as head of the Security Services (SBU) in the Tymoshenko government, was implicit in the illegal wiretapping of a journalist and in the unauthorized removal of
documents from the SBU? Why would they decide to pursue a case at the same moment that Turchinov is serving as Tymoshenko’s chief negotiator in talks to form a new government? Why all of this, when the prosecutor’s office has not extensively investigated widespread reports that the Kuchma administration regularly tapped the phones of journalists and opposition politicians – including Turchinov – and used compromising documents against them?

President Yushchenko’s press secretary didn’t answer that question. But she did tell the Mirror-Weekly newspaper that “the president called such acts politically incorrect and even provocative.” Indeed. (2)

Yet, while there is certainly no suggestion that the president condones this behavior, he has made no public comment condemning it. Meanwhile, Turchinov now is in a hospital, where he reportedly is being protected by former SBU allies, and the prosecutor’s office has announced that when he is released, they may attempt to “bring him in” again “as a witness.”

The office is quick to say that they have no intention to arrest Turchinov and will first ask him to come for questioning “voluntarily.” But as a leader of the opposition to Kuchma for four years, Turchinov no doubt is well aware that the pretext of “discussions” with “witnesses” at one time meant prolonged detention or a pattern of judicial pressure designed to wear down the “witnesses” and “convince” them to change their points of view.

Yulia Tymoshenko, at a press conference on 18 April, called the charge of illegal wire tapping “incomprehensible,” and praised her deputy – and closest advisor – for his “honor and conscience.”

She suggested that the warrant to detain Turchinov for questioning was supported by Petro Poroshenko, the former head of the National Security and Defense Council, one of the leaders of Our Ukraine, and Tymoshenko’s biggest
political competitor. She noted that the order was signed by Deputy Prosecutor Viktor Shokin – a close associate of Poroshenko, originally hired during Kuchma’s administration. On Ukraine’s Channel 5 television following Tymoshenko’s remarks, Poroshenko vigorously denied the charge.

Nevertheless, Tymoshenko forcefully claimed that the action “was done to destabilize us” and to “undermine a coalition of democratic forces,” pointing to the “curious” timing of the attempt to “question” her deputy. (4) In fact, according to several reports, Turchinov actually was notified during a negotiating session to create a coalition that the security services were searching for him.

The coalition is on razor thin ice. On 13, April the three former Orange Revolution allies signed a preliminary protocol to form a government. As a new parliamentary-presidential republic, the parliament now will choose the cabinet and, with the president's approval, the prime minister.

But just one day later, Our Ukraine reneged on one of the protocol's points, refusing to recognize the item that would allow the largest party in the coalition to choose the prime minister (Tymoshenko) and would exclude negotiations with the Party of Regions.

The incident with Turchinov, when combined with comments from outgoing Prime Minister Yuriy Yekhanurov praising Regions, underscores the fact that there is localized but significant resistance within Our Ukraine to a reconstituted orange coalition. At the same time, a few within the party – in particular Yekhanurov – are reaching out to Yanukovich.

Despite the fact that Regions voted against just about every economic measure introduced by both the Tymoshenko and Yekhanurov governments (including the vast majority of WTO reforms), the prime minister is upbeat about working with
the party. “Our position on the economy coincides with that of the Party of Regions by 75%,” he told Interfax. (4)

A possible reason for this new fondness for a party previously accused of vote rigging and separatism, and the rejection of Tymoshenko, may be found when one remembers that, as head of the SBU, Oleksandr Turchinov investigated the gas trading firm RosUkrEnergo. He attempted to secure arrest warrants, reportedly for money laundering and embezzlement, against at least two Ukrainian officials who had been involved with the company, but those warrants were never approved or carried out by the prosecutor’s office. Eventually, according to Turchinov, he was told to stop his investigation by Yushchenko. (It should be noted that the current head of the Security Services claims no arrest warrants were ever requested.)

RosUkrEnergo has just increased its share in the Ukrainian market, thanks to the disputed January 2006 gas deal approved and promoted by Yekhanurov, and the firm’s ownership, profits and fee structure remain unknown. Russia’s Gazprom, which owns 50% of the company, says Ukrainian officials own and receive significant profits from the entity.

When asked who owns and profits from RosUkrEnergo, President Yushchenko replied, “I don’t know. They may be Ukrainians, but I really don’t know who these people are.” (5)

The company’s non-transparency has caused concern in Western energy circles. Charles Tannock, a British Conservative member of the European Parliament, in particular has been very critical of the “opaque” way in which the gas deal was reached and the use of the RosUkrEnergo company as a “middleman,” saying it leaves itself open to suggestions of “a possibility of political corruption here as a result.” (6)
Even more important, Tymoshenko has vowed to undo the gas agreement and complete the investigation into RosUkrEnergo’s activities. She has called the deal bad for Ukraine, but good for a few officials. Turchinov would be her primary weapon against RosUkrEnergo, thanks to his knowledge and connections.

Our Ukraine has denied any knowledge of the warrant to detain Turchinov for questioning and there is no doubt that the majority of members would never support such seemingly Kuchma-like tactics. Some suggest that it is nothing but a “last gasp” by Kuchma loyalists. But even if this is true – and that remains to be seen – it is troubling nonetheless.

Our Ukraine this week reiterated its support for a coalition with Tymoshenko and the Socialist Party, but still did not support the point in the preliminary agreement that would exclude negotiations with the Party of Regions and allow the largest party in the coalition to name the prime minister. (7)

The Socialists responded by calling on Our Ukraine to support Tymoshenko’s bid for prime minister, as leader of the largest party in the coalition by far, and to remove this “stumbling block” and “open the way for substantial negotiations on the forming of a coalition.” (8)

The question remains, however, whether a few of those with power inside Our Ukraine – those who may have the most to lose because of a Prime Minister Tymoshenko – want this stumbling block removed. And whether President Yushchenko will ensure that it is done.

**MOLDOVA**

**Wine, whine and Mother Russia in Moldova**

Moldova may be one of the smallest former Soviet republics, but it sure does get a lot of attention from Russia’s leadership. In fact, in recent months, the Kremlin has spent a great deal of time on the problem of Moldova—or more specifically,
what to do about this little country’s continuing insistence that Russian troops leave its soil, that Russia stop supporting separatists there, and that it be given the freedom to conduct independent foreign and domestic policies.

Russia’s solution recently has involved increased support for the independence of Moldova’s separatist region, accusations against Moldova’s ally, Ukraine, of attempts to start a famine in the region, and a boycott of Moldova’s chief export, wine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s first step was to support the independence aspirations of all separatist enclaves on former Soviet soil. In January, he suggested that he would support full independence for Kosovo if the international community also supports full independence for these enclaves. “If someone considers that Kosovo can be given full state independence,” he said, “then why must we refuse this to the Abkhazians or the South Ossetians?” (9) Implicit in this statement, of course, were all separatist regions, including Moldova’s Transnistria.

Transnistria’s self-styled leader Igor Smirnov, who reportedly met with Putin in January, has followed on the Russian president’s statements by increasing his calls for the international community to recognize his region’s independence. Moreover, Transnistria’s “parliament” recently voted – again – to request entry into the so-called Russia-Belarus Union State and to hold a referendum on independence. “Over the years of its existence,” said the nominal speaker of the region’s parliament, Yevgeny Shevchuk, “the Dniester region has proved its independence and self-sufficiency.” (10)

Well, not really. Throughout the years of its existence, Transnistria has received virtually free energy, subsidized products, and occasionally direct monetary aid from Russia. Additionally, the region’s existence always has depended on revenues from the vast smuggling network that has developed in the country –
filling “state” coffers with undocumented cash from undocumented goods. These “goods,” according to Council of Europe investigators and human rights groups like Human Rights Watch, have included weapons illegally manufactured at plants on the territory and women being trafficked between Eastern and Western Europe.

On 3 March, Transnistria’s dependence on smuggling was exposed dramatically when Ukraine implemented new EU-approved customs standards on its border with Moldova. As a result of new procedures – and a new commitment to follow these procedures – all goods entering Ukraine from Transnistria must carry a Moldovan customs stamp. Previously, Ukraine had recognized Transnistria’s stamp.

Following the change, Dmytro Tkach, Ukraine’s special envoy to the Transnistria settlement talks, told Inter television that 354 companies from the Transnistria region were registered with Moldovan custom’s officials. He said these companies had the right to export products. All others would be turned back, unless they also registered. (11)

Smirnov and Russia’s leadership immediately began public protests and criticism. Crowds of people bussed to border points blockaded Ukraine’s trucks and railway cars heading into Transnistria. Traffic was stopped for over two weeks at some checkpoints.

As traffic lined up, filled with food and products that should have gone to Transnistria’s shops, Smirnov incredibly appealed to the international community for “humanitarian aid” to stem possible starvation, as well as death from not receiving needed medications. Ukraine, he said, was blockading Transnistria. Most of the international community ignored him.
But Smirnov also sent a special letter to Putin to ask for immediate aid. "Tiraspol relies on Moscow's help and support," he wrote. (12)

Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov was the first to respond—loudly. "The cargoes, including medicines and foodstuffs, currently in short supply due to the blockade, are a vital necessity for the people of the Dniester Region," he announced. "We shall go ahead with our support for the region with humanitarian aid." (13)

Russia’s state-owned Centre TV brought the news of the “humanitarian emergency” in Transnistria. “Day by day supplies of food, fuel and medicine are running low in the Dniester region. ... Firstly, it will affect diabetes and cancer patients,” television “journalist” Maksim Sazonov explained. Further, “It's been a week since newborns in the republic's Centre of Mother and Child have been given TB injections. This has happened for the first time in 20 years. ... Relatives of cancer patients buy expensive medicine in Ukraine and Moldova. Not all have the necessary medicine. Pensioners are the first to be affected.”

And then, to complete the picture, a man said to be a disabled veteran in Transnistria, obviously in distress, says, “There is no medicine. I took part in liberating Ukraine but Ukraine has rejected us.” A cancer patient adds, “Of course we rely on Russia very much. We have nobody else to help us. Let it not abandon us.” (14)

Ukraine and the EU reacted with dismay. The food and products were lined up in trucks by the dozens – clearly shown on European and Ukrainian television – blocked by protestors from entering the region. While Transnistria could not export goods to Ukraine without Moldova’s stamp, Ukraine continued to try to send goods into Transnistria.
This did not seem to matter to Russia’s permanent representative to the OSCE, Aleksei Borodavkin. Without the slightest bit of irony, Borodavkin told a meeting of the organization’s Permanent Council that Ukraine’s new customs laws were “an unacceptable attempt to put pressure on one of the parties to the dispute, namely the Dniester region, using economic levers.” Further, “Vulnerable sections of the region’s population - the poor, the elderly, the disabled and children - are worst affected.” (15)

Clearly, Transnistria and Russia hoped that claiming Ukraine’s new customs regulations caused a humanitarian crisis would force Ukraine to back down. They were wrong. Ukraine maintained its position, backed strongly by an EU concerned about stopping smuggling. Slightly over two weeks after the new regulations came into effect, a humanitarian crisis truly was about to develop, and the borders were reopened to allow Ukrainian food and medicine into the region.

Within days, on 27 March, in what can only be seen as retaliation, Russia announced an embargo on all Moldovan and Georgian wines (but has reportedly excepted those produced in Transnistria). Gennady Onishchenko, chief of Russia's Federal Consumer Protection Service, suggested that laboratory tests had found traces of the pesticide DDT and heavy metals in samples of wine from the countries. (16) He said the ban would be lifted after Russia determined the wines were safe. He refused, however, to make the results public of any tests done on the wines.

The Director General of the Moldova-Vin agency, Valeriu Mironescu, disputed Onishchenko's claim. "The Moscow central laboratory Rostest has confirmed that Moldovan wines meet all sanitary requirements," he said. “Forty-three wine samples taken from bottles which have been removed from Russian shelves have received certificates of the Russian laboratory.” But, Mironescu said he was unable to discuss this with Onishchenko since neither he nor his deputy
would meet with him when Mironescu visited Moscow to try to discuss on the issue. (17)

According to Moldova Finance Minister Mihai Pop, wine exports generally make up 30% of the country’s GDP, and 80% of its exports were to Russia. (18) That income is now gone for the foreseeable future.

Transnistria likely will not feel the effects of the loss of almost one third of Moldova’s GDP. On 12 April, the Russian government announced a monetary aid package of $50 million to Transnistria to overcome the effects of Ukraine’s “blockade.” (19)

Source Notes:

(1) Ukrayinska pravda, 1355 CET, 18 Apr 06; via www.pravda.com.ua.
(2) “Another day, another protocol,” Zerkelo tyzhnia, No. 14 (593) 15-21 April 2006.
(3) Press conference, Yulia Tymoshenko, 18 Apr 06; some excerpts found on www.tymoshenko.com.ua.
(6) “EU: Questions Linger about Russian-Ukrainian Gas Deal,” RFE/RL, 12 January 06.
(7) Press conference, Our Ukraine, 18 Apr 06.
(8) Statement, Socialist Party of Ukraine, 1530 CET, 18 Apr 06; via www.spu.org.ua.
(9) “A Long and Winding Putin Session,” Los Angeles Times, 1 Feb 06; via Lexis-Nexis.
(10) ITAR-TASS News Agency, 0457 EST, 6 Apr 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(11) Inter TV, 1800 GMT, 20 Mar 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(12) RosBusinessConsulting Database, 21 Mar 06.
(13) ITAR-TASS, 520 EST, 24 Mar 06; via Lexis-Nexis.
(14) Centre TV, 1650 GMT, 22 Mar 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(15) RIA Novosti, 0640 GMT, 7 Apr 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(16) Chicago Tribune, 17 Apr 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(17) Infotag news agency, 1545 GMT, 12 Apr 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
(19) RosBusinessConsulting Database, 12 Apr 06 via Lexis-Nexis.

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