Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY
Yel'tsin discloses assets
In compliance with a recent decree on the disclosure of personal assets by federal officials, President Yel'tsin issued a declaration of his income and property values. According to the report published by Rossiyskiye vesti (31 May 97), President Yel'tsin earned 243 million rubles in salary and interest and owns property valued at 1.2 billion rubles.

APPARAT
Kremlin move on parliament imminent?
At the founding meeting for a broad-based political coalition called the Union of Progressive Forces, former Yel'tsin associate Vladimir Shumeiko declared that the State Duma would be dissolved within two weeks. (RTR, 30 May 97) While Shumeiko has previously called on the president to dissolve the Duma, these remarks were more pointed and cause concern in the context of statements by other leading officials on the possibility of early parliamentary elections.

At the same meeting, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, whose NDR political movement joined with Shumeiko's Reforms -- New Course and Sergei Filatov's Union of People's Homes to form the coalition, claimed that the impetus to dissolve the Duma would "not come from us." (Interfax, 30 May 97) In response to a direct question on whether or not the Duma would be dissolved, Chernomyrdin said: "Does our economy need this?" He later added however, "We must be prepared for State Duma elections any time but we will be best prepared in 1999."
First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoli Chubais, who is currently acting prime minister while Chernomyrdin takes vacation, has recently been attacking the Duma and insisting that it approve the government's revision of the 1997 budget and the new tax code. In an interview with Kommersant Daily (3 Jun 97), Chubais raised the threat of dissolution of the Duma. "It's not me who dissolves the Duma...That right, according to the constitution, belongs to the president of Russia, Boris Nikolayevich Yel'tsin," he said. "Whether the president will deem it necessary to make use of this right, I will not take it upon myself to predict."

In a more nuanced assault on the Duma, presidential adviser Georgi Satarov suggested that the current electoral procedure had failed to foster the development of political parties. In a recent visit to Saratov, where local legislative elections were held according to the "first past the post" system, Satarov praised the regional leaders and expressed interest in their electoral experience. His visit and comments are interpreted as a signal that federal election rules may be adjusted to minimize or abolish the role of party lists in future Duma elections. It is doubtful that the real target of this reform would be a greater cohesion of political parties, indeed the opposite is more likely. An undermining of the position of political parties in the electoral system would presumably hamper the campaign efforts of Zhirinovsky's LDPR and Zyuganov's CPRF, if not the less popular NDR of Chernomyrdin.

It is possible that the veiled threats to dissolve the current Duma are simply a heavy-handed ploy to emphasize the importance of the budget and tax reform issues, although the possibility remains that it is part of an effort to shift responsibility for wage and pension arrears to a recalcitrant legislature. In any event, it is hard to conceive of the rationale for such a radical maneuver. Without solid popular support for dissolving the Duma (something unlikely to build up around a Chubais-led initiative), the next round of elections would surely produce a more contentious crop of parliamentarians. Whether it is dissolution or reform...
of the Duma, strong signals from the Kremlin imply a new approach in executive-legislative relations is on the horizon.

**RF GOVERNMENT**

**How does Chubais define ‘free press’?**

In an interview on TV31 (31 May 97), the editor of the government-sponsored political magazine "Rossiyskaya Federatsiya" Yuri Khrenov, claimed that Anatoli Chubais accused him of publishing an "anti-government, anti-president" journal and told him to resign. According to Khrenov, Chubais was apparently displeased by a cover story by Dmitri Rogozin, one of the leaders of the Congress of Russian Communities, a political party affiliated with Aleksandr Lebed.

Khrenov refused the first deputy prime minister’s call to step down, bouncing the ball back into Chubais’ court by claiming he was appointed by a government order and it would take a government order to be rid of him. At present, he remains in his post but Chubais' willingness to pressure "unfriendly" journalists has surfaced before (one can recall Eduard Sagalev’s remarks upon his resignation from VGTRK), so Khrenov may soon be job-hunting.

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

*By Chandler Rosenberger*

**Russia and Ukraine sign friendship treaty**

The presidents of Russia and Ukraine signed a treaty on 31 May under which Russia promised to respect the borders and territorial integrity of its southern neighbor. The agreement also gives Russia control of contested naval ports in the Black Sea, and relieves most of the debt Ukraine had incurred since independence in purchasing Russian energy.
Russian president Boris Yeltsin signed the treaty on his first trip to Ukraine as Russian president. A draft of the agreement had been completed for two years, but disputes between the two nations had delayed its adoption. (Agence France Presse, 31 May 97)

Under the treaty, Russia will lease the Black Sea Fleet's facilities in Crimea for 20 years at a cost of 100 million dollars a year. The money will be taken off Ukraine's debt, estimated by some sources to be as high as $4.3 billion. (Rossiyskiye vesti, 28 May 97)

Yeltsin also promises to defend Ukraine's "in extreme situations," but Ukrainian diplomats stressed that they had never requested Russian military and were unlikely to. (The New York Times, 1 Jun 97)

**Primakov complains of Estonian snub**
Russia is on the verge of settling its border disputes with Estonia but is regularly snubbed by Estonian leaders, Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov told a Tallinn daily newspaper on 25 May.

Estonian leaders refuse to accept advice on how to treat its Russian minority offered by the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), Primakov said. The OSCE had suggested that Estonia grant citizenship to all born on its territory; it had also advised replacing an exam on the country's constitution now required by Russians seeking citizenship with obligatory lectures on constitutional principles. (ETA, 25 May 97)

**NATO-Russia accord, signed in Paris, to be reviewed by Duma**
The "Founding Act on Russia-NATO Relations" will be submitted to the Russian Duma for review, according to Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov.
Speaking at a press conference on 24 May, Primakov said he "hoped document will be approved by the State Duma, adding that "the Russian government will consider" any reservations "very seriously." (ITAR-TASS, 24 May 97) American proponents of the accord had argued that the "Founding Act," an "agreement," did not require legislative review granted to treaties.

Duma deputies who had met Primakov behind closed doors the day before said he had been persuasive about the agreement's merits. Duma Deputy Chairman Aleksandr Shokhin said acceding to NATO expansion into Central Europe meant Moscow must use its new powers under the accord to block membership for ex-USSR republics. (ITAR-TASS, 23 May 97)

**Chorus of commentators demand more attention to Taleban problem**

Articles in journals such as Sovetskaya rossiya have condemned the lack of an "Eastern policy" in Russian foreign affairs. While deferential to Foreign Minister Primakov himself, the articles insist that Russia must shift its focus from NATO expansion to the threat that the Taleban poses to Central Asian states newly independent of the USSR.

A "direct threat has arisen to the security and territorial integrity of the Central Asian republics of the CIS," writes Sovetskaya rossiya, which blamed the United States for supporting Taleban as part of an anti-Russian policy. The article insisted that "it is not yet too late in the interests of Russia and the CIS to undertake extraordinary measures to afford political, military, and economic aid to the anti-Taleban coalition so that it can withstand the Taleban onslaught." (Sovetskaya rossiya, 27 May 97).

**Russia hears Syrian side of Middle East disputes**

Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', in Moscow on 21 May, told his Russian counterpart that the blame for the collapse of mid-East peace talks lay entirely at Israel's feet. Primakov, while not endorsing the Syrian position, said he believed
Israel must give up the Golan Heights as part of any settlement. The two sides did not discuss Syria's debt to Russia. (Radio Rossii Network, 21 May 97).

**Comment**

**Primakov and the Duma**

For a man who has overseen the loathed NATO-Russia accords, Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov remains remarkably popular among members of the Duma. His 24 May meeting with deputies, held behind closed doors, ended in accolades from parties as diverse as the former communists and the liberal Yabloko group.

There seems to be a simple trade in the works. In an interview on 25 May, Primakov promised that he would submit the NATO-Russia agreement for review even after it had been signed in Paris. Primakov promised that concerns of the deputies would be given "serious consideration." But since the deal is supposedly done, the only voice Primakov could give Duma doubters would be through the "Permanent Joint Council" to be established between NATO and Russia. Here Primakov could work to assuage the Duma's greatest fear—that NATO membership will be offered to states of the former Soviet Union.

Thus is a new line drawn in Europe. It is the old line of the borders of the Russian empire. Primakov will ensure that Moscow has a free hand in former republics, from Central Asia to the Baltic Sea; should the West object, Primakov need only cite concerns of Russian legislators in his monthly meetings with NATO representatives. From his foothold in Brussels Primakov will be able to play NATO members off one another, slowing down any reaction to Russian steps.

The agreement may also be a landmark in Primakov's own career. Rumors of a split between Yeltsin and the foreign minister served to distance Primakov from the current government. Close cooperation with legislators on dealings with the West will allow him a chance to forge ties to political parties. Perhaps the
unencumbered ascent of Russia's greatest political survivor has not yet reached its plateau.

**Russian Federation: Political Parties and Legislative Branch**

By Michael Thurman

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Duma overrides Yel'tsin's veto on WWII art**

On 4 April, the Russian State Duma overrode a presidential veto by approving a controversial bill that would prevent the return of artwork taken from Germany by the Red Army during World War II. President Boris Yel'tsin vetoed it last month, saying it was one-sided and "disregards commonly accepted rules of international law." The Federation Council overrode the veto with the requisite two-thirds vote on 9 May. Under the Russian Federation Constitution the president has seven days to sign the bill or bring it before the Constitutional Court. (RFE/RL, 9 May 97)

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

**May Day rallies turn into anti-government protests**

To no one's great surprise, the Yel'tsin government was accused of all sorts of incompetence and evil when tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through central Moscow. Most citizens of the city, however, were less politically active, content to exit the city for visits to garden plots, relatives, or dachas. (RFE/RL, 1 May 97)

**Zhirinovsky causes brawl at May Day ceremony**

Russian media say ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky assaulted two TV journalists on 9 May after they tried to film him being refused entry to a wreath-
laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown soldier outside the Kremlin. Zhirinovsky, who apparently was late for the ceremony, was barred from the memorial by presidential guards just as President Boris Yeltsin was laying flowers. It is perhaps a very good thing that Zhirinovsky possesses less political acumen than his popularity would suggest. (RFE/RL, 9 May 97)

MEDIA

Luzhkov begins new television station
In a political end run around the established media, Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov will begin a new nationwide television network. The new network, named TVCenter, comes to life with the financial support of the Moscow city authorities. Observers in television circles are already calling it "Luzhkov's television," openly connecting the presidential ambitions of the populist Moscow mayor with its appearance. In so doing, Luzhkov allows himself political access to the nation financed by the City of Moscow. (RFE/RL, 15 May 97)

St. Petersburg Channel 5 to be next nationwide TV station
With a nod to the highbrows of his country, President Yeltsin noted the low quality of television and claimed that a more "uplifting" station was required. To this end, St. Petersburg has been chosen as the site for the next Russian television station. Its form of ownership is currently under discussion. (RFE/RL, 14 May 97)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Cathy Dreher and CDR John G. Steele

Yeltsin fires senior officials during a recent council meeting
During live coverage of the council meeting on 22 May 97, Yeltsin dismissed both Defense Minister Igor Rodionov and Chief of the General Staff Viktor Samsonov. Reports indicate that Rodionov, irritated at being told he had to limit
his presentation to 15 minutes, said nothing could be reported in that amount of
time. Samsonov announced his report was a continuation of Rodionov's.
Therefore nothing was presented by either. Both subsequently were dismissed.
Numerous reports discount this moment of pique as the reason for the firing,
stating that "differences in the approach to critically needed military reform" was
the real reason. (Rossiyskiye vesti, 23 May 97; ITAR-TAA, 22 May 97; Interfax,
22 May 97)

Other reports cite the firing of senior officers as the "beginning of military purges."
Another senior official recently dismissed is Gen. Konstantin Kobets, deputy
defense minister and chief military inspector. Kobets is charged with taking
bribes in the form of property benefits (he is said to own over 30 residences), as
well as "abuse of office which resulted in serious consequences, and illegal
possession of firearms." One could wonder if purges are underway as Kobets
also disagreed with the handling of military reforms. More realistically, however,
no one can argue against the pitiful state of the Russian armed forces. Yel'tsin is
struggling to find and make necessary reforms in minimal time. At the same time
he is confronted with dissent.

Biography on acting Defense Minister Sergeyev
Igor Dmitriyevich Sergeyev was born in the town of Verkhnyy in the
Voroshilovgrad region in 1938. He graduated from the Nakhimov Higher Naval
College, where he specialized in "reactive weapons." After the creation of the
strategic rocket forces, Sergeyev served in rocket units. He later graduated with
high honors from the command department of the Dzerzhinskiy Military and
Engineering Academy. He then served in several engineering and military
command positions. After graduating from the Military Academy of the Armed
Forces General Staff, he served in departments of the strategic rocket forces
culminating in his appointment as commander-in-chief of the strategic rocket
troops in 1992. (ITAR-TASS, 23 May 97; Interfax, 22 May 97)
This is an interesting appointment given that the strategic rocket forces are the Russian elite troops. They are not in the same state of turmoil and disarray as is the Russian army. Similarly the ballistic missile resources and their targets are the subject of much controversy these days. Is this appointment made with an eye of having some stable troops available if needed by Mr. Yel'tsin not to mention the seeming credibility gained when the former head of the SRF speaks regarding warhead targets, and maintenance and control of these weapons.

**Distinction drawn between former Pact members & Soviet republics**

Having signed the "NATO-Russia Founding Act," the Russians appear to be attempting to draw a distinction between former Warsaw Pact members (Russia is not happy about their potential NATO membership, but can live with the idea), and former Soviet republics (Russia can't live with their membership, and would have to "redefine the relationship" should they be invited to join). (RFE/RL Newsline, 20 May 97)

**Comment**

Regardless of this document, any expansion will be met with resistance by the Russians—the farther east, the more shrill the rhetoric. The West can expect talk of war (from at least some Russians) should an attempt be made to include any former Soviet republic. Since the bulk of the Russian conventional forces are in a state of near collapse, the sabers being rattled will most probably be nuclear.

The Russians have made it clear that they reserve the right to use nuclear weapons first in the event of attack, or if they are "driven into a corner and have no other option." (RFE/RL Newsline, 26 May 97). This should come as no surprise—given the state of the Russian conventional forces, they would draw attention to their still formidable nuclear capability. Large segments of the Russian political elite have said that they are threatened by their own weakness, by NATO expansion, by their inability to control events in their former spheres of influence. The poverty of this stance will be evident the first time the Russians
find themselves "driven into a corner," but they will ride this horse for whatever intimidation effects they can glean.

**Yeltsin reverses reorganization order**

Yeltsin overturned the previously ordered reorganization (reduction) in the airborne troops that had been reported in the last ISCIP Armed Forces Editorial Digest. He did so the day before he met with the Defense Council and fired Defense Minister Rodionov and the chief of the General Staff for the slow pace of military reforms. (RFE/RL Newsline, 21 & 22 May 97; Monitor, 21 May 97).

**Comment**

It is ironic, to say the least, that Rodionov is fired immediately following the only substantive reorganization effort undertaken in the context of the numerous reform proposals on the table, and the rationale for the firing is the slow pace of reform. It appears that any military reform requires the prior, public approval of the Russian president.

This incident only underlines the difficulties associated with formal reductions in an entrenched military with powerful sponsors, and it can't encourage much creative thinking or aggressive action when approaching future reform efforts. The news for the Russian military could hardly be worse.

**Sergeyev named defense minister**

General Igor Sergeyev, the former head of the Strategic Rocket Forces, has been named the new defense minister. (Reuters, 23 May 97).

**Comment**

The choice of General Sergeyev is consistent on at least one count—the only element in the Russian military which has any credibility at all is the nuclear force. This choice can't bode well for the other branches of service, already at rock bottom in terms of morale, manpower and materiel.
Newly Independent States: CIS
By Mark Jones

Kazakhstan not upholding the CIS party line
Although most CIS officials are pushing for the removal of all customs controls between Commonwealth states, Kazakhstan is tightening restrictions on its airlines and railways. According to ITAR-TASS (15 May 97), customs officers are now inspecting the baggage and hand luggage of travelers from CIS member-countries at 26 railway terminals and a number of airports.

In a related story Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev didn't help foster harmonious relations when he stated that "imperial ambitions" in the statements and actions of some Russian politicians "scare other states away from Russia." To sum up the state of CIS relations, he said. "There is absolutely no trust among the states comprising the Commonwealth today." How would he make things better? According to an article in Interfax (19 May 97), the president called for ridding the Commonwealth structures of bureaucrats with "a pro-communist mentality."

True Russian aspirations in Belarus revealed
Interfax reported on 20 May that the Russian president's representative in the Constitutional Court, Sergei Shakhrai, told a round-table conference that the "goal of the Russian-Belarusian Union is still unclear even on the eve of the signing of the Union Charter." He then went on to say that Belarus "has rejected Russia's proposal of the eventual creation of a single state as the goal of the union." This statement contradicts earlier public declarations by officials from both countries that each state would retain its independence and sovereignty. Shakhrai may have spoken out of turn but Russia's true endgame is clearly revealed in his announcement.
Gearing up for a fight

Recent events in Afghanistan have caused a flurry of activity in all areas of the CIS security apparatus. The northward movement of the Taleban forces spurred Duma Security Committee Chairman Viktor Ilyukhin to call for a heightened state of readiness of all forces in the Central Asian border region (Interfax, 26 May 97), caused an "extraordinary" or emergency meeting of officials from the member-countries of the Collective Security Treaty (ITAR-TASS, 27 May 97), and even provoked Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Tarasov to warn that, "if CIS borders are violated, the mechanism of the CIS collective security treaty will be put into action" (Interfax, 27 May 97).

Interfax confirmed on 26 May that border troops and "the forward deployed units of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division based near the Tajik-Afghan border" had been put on a higher state of alert, and later reported on the results of the Security Treaty meeting. The member-country representatives were concerned enough to begin meetings at the "level of deputy foreign and defense ministers." No specific proposals were discussed in the 27 May article but it is obvious that the situation in Afghanistan is providing the first external armed threat to the CIS since its inception and is therefore helping Russia do what it has only been partially successful at in the past—unify military command of forces in the Central Asian republics.

Is it January 1992 again?

According to Colonel-General Valeri Manilov, a deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, "the building of the CIS single armed forces within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty is a thing of the future." This proposal is oddly reminiscent of the official 1992 Russian policy of converting the Red Army into a single CIS armed force—under Moscow's control. Although the other Commonwealth members rejected the idea and formed their own national militaries, it now appears that Russia has developed a mechanism (the Collective
Security Agreement) and a threat (the Taliban) to realize their initial goal, at least with respect to the Central Asian States and Belarus. (ITAR-TASS, 15 May 97)

Manilov claimed that since the initial stages of military reunification have now been accomplished, "it will be possible to go over to the next phase—the formation of coalitions of troops in strategic directions and the drawing up of plans for their possible use."

The third phase, Manilov said, will result in the completion of the formation of a collective security system, and the creation of the CIS single armed forces "is not ruled out within the boundaries of the third phase."

Executive secretary discusses future CIS security structure
CIS Executive Secretary Ivan Korotchenya said that the conclusion of the agreement on the Russian-Belarusian Union "may in the future give new content to the CIS Collective Security Treaty." Korotchenya's remarks were reported by Interfax on 19 May after the signing of a protocol on cooperation between the CIS Executive Secretariat and the Secretariat of the CIS Collective Security Council—the council set up after the March Heads of State summit.

Korotchenya has consistently favored CIS reintegration and a Russocentric union. Linking the Union Treaty to the Security Treaty while at the same time more closely coupling his secretariat to the CIS Security Council shows more clearly the direction the CIS Executive Secretary wishes to go.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Alex Kim

UKRAINE
**A sufficient compromise?**

Ukraine has accepted the CFE "flank" agreement. The signing of the document on special partnership between Ukraine and NATO has been set for 9 July in Madrid. As the negotiations continue on the text of this agreement, President Kuchma has made it clear that the partnership must meet Ukraine's request for security assurances. On 9 May, Kuchma told Kiyevskiye vedomosti, "The agreement between Ukraine and NATO should contain provisions which would explicitly confirm that Ukraine's security is important for Europe in general and NATO in particular, and that NATO will not remain a passive observer if situations develop where Ukraine's security will be threatened."

Ukraine has been protesting the flank document, which could technically provide legal grounds for the stationing of Russian troops in the territories of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and of course, Ukraine. Before meeting U.S. President Clinton and Vice President Gore, Kuchma told Interfax on 14 May, "We are not going to build relations of strategic partnership only on one-sided concessions." However, Ukraine conceded by reluctantly signing, on 15 May, the flank agreement after receiving US assurances that countries must agree to any stationing of foreign troops. President Kuchma spoke to Interfax on 16 May and called the flank document "a sufficient compromise," and that "not a single country must have the right to station nuclear weapons and military equipment on Ukrainian territory without Ukraine's consent."

However, such assurances will depend on Russia's actions within NATO, and it is unlikely that Yel'tsin will deviate from his stance on the NATO expansion. Russia will continue to take advantage of the Western media to portray itself as a superpower still, having its sphere of influence over the former republics. NATO's acceptance of Russia may, Yel'tsin hopes, aid in perpetuating the old image of Russia in the West. As for Ukraine, it may have to continue to make "one-sided concessions" to NATO, which will portray Ukraine as a subordinate nation. Also,
at home, President Kuchma must continue to combat the public perception that NATO was "our main enemy for half a century."

President Kuchma told Interfax that the future security of the CIS countries "depend on whether Russia will become a society based on lawful and democratic principles or another kind that would make other countries seek external protection." Thus, during his official visit to the United States with President Clinton and Vice President Gore on 14 May, Kuchma discussed Ukraine's need to have medium-range and short-range missiles to protect its borders. Although Kuchma is willing to destroy the remaining SS-24 missiles, he stressed that Ukraine will continue to manufacture missiles that are not covered in the strategic arms reduction agreements. Russia's power politics seems to have influenced Kuchma's decision to seek extra measures of security in addition to its partnership with NATO.

BELARUS

Charter obliges Lukashenka to focus on improving democracy in Belarus

On 23 May, the Belarus-Russia Union Charter was finally signed in the Kremlin Palace's Vladimir hall. After his two-day visit to Moscow, President Lukashenka told ITAR-TASS that the result of his visit was "a full and unreserved victory of those in Russia and Belarus who wanted unity of two peoples." However, for Lukashenka the charter does not address the issues that he had hoped for, a provision for common currency and a union citizenship. Yel'tsin stated that the provision for a unified federal state has been removed from the original document, although it can be broached later "when the time is right." Unlike the original charter which envisioned a formation of a common state, federation, or confederation, the signed charter does not mention such an idea. Lukashenka earlier stated that Belarus was ready to give up its sovereignty if a "single state on an equal footing" can be formed, but when this did not seem plausible, he repositioned himself and stated he wanted to keep the sovereignty of Belarus. Although the text of the charter is not available yet to the public, Interfax states,
"Both countries are obligated to guarantee the inviolability of private property, [to] form conditions for free competition and [to] offer legal protection of investors' rights within the boundaries of the union." Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov told Interfax on 23 May, "We believe the countries should strictly observe primarily those charter provision that concern their commitments to guarantee human rights, freedom of speech and assembly, and political pluralism." Also the charter states that the union will be opened to other CIS countries. The Russian Duma will consider a ratification of the Belarus-Russia Union Charter on 6 June.

Now that the charter is signed, Lukashenka is encouraged to follow the provisions in the document. Accordingly, he needs to make structural changes in his government to promote democratic policies, including a free-market economy. In order to encourage economic growth, Belarus needs to liberate state-regulated prices and encourage privatization. On 19 May, the IMF suspended talks on the $70 million loan to Belarus unless Belarus change its economic policy. Also by fining the Belarus Soros Foundation (BSF) $3 million for an alleged tax discrepancies, and freezing the BSF's bank account in May, Belarus will lose $6 million in aid that would have been given to science and cultural organizations in Belarus. If President Lukashenka does not make efforts to change Belarus' image as a grave human rights offender, he will continue to lose financial benefits in the forms of aid and investments, and isolate itself not only from the West but also Russia.

MOLDOVA

Smirnov rules out Dniester voting in Moldovan parliamentary elections

Despite Moldova's invitation to the Dniester inhabitants to participate in the 1998 Moldovan parliamentary elections, Smirnov continued to say that Moldova and Dniester are two different states, and Dniester's participation in the upcoming elections is "impossible." After the Normalization Memorandum was signed on 8 May with 80-percent support from the people of Dniester, Igor Smirnov, the
president of the self-styled Dniester republic, stated on 14 May to Infotag that the best model for the Dniestre-Moldovan relations is found in the Russia-Belarus model, which maintains the independence of both states. According to Smirnov, Dniester republic's interpretation of the building of relations "in the framework of a common state" consists of two independent states working together "without losing any of [their] attributes—own armed forces, currency, state symbols." On 17 May, Vladimir Atamanyuk, first deputy chairman of the Dniester Supreme Soviet, defended his refusal to take part in the 1998 parliament election by stating to Basapress, "Considering the fact that we have experienced an armed conflict, Moldova and Dniester must build up their relationships as two equal subjects of law for a long period. Any sudden move can cut the fragile wires that link us now."

**Newly Independent States: Caucasus**

*By Miriam Lanskoy*

**ARMENIA**

*Turkey lodges diplomatic demarche to the Russian Foreign Ministry*

In the aftermath of the revelations that Russia transferred over $1 billion in weaponry to Armenia, Turkey has officially complained about the presence of substantial numbers of long-range missiles in Armenia. Armenia has neither confirmed nor denied the arms transfers, but according to the figures released by the Russian Duma and confirmed by the Defense Ministry the number of SCUD missiles and T-72 tanks violate CFE ceilings and pose a potential security threat to Turkey. A source in Turkey's Foreign Ministry suggested that the best solution of the problem is to withdraw the missiles and tanks from Armenia. (Anatolia, 27 May 97)

**AZERBAIJAN**

*US pushes Azerbaijan to ratify the CFE treaty...*
After years of opposition to the revision of CFE flank limits, Azerbaijan gave in to US demands at the last minute and communicated its assent two hours before the deadline of midnight on 15 May. After Ukraine and Georgia agreed to the amendments, Azerbaijan became the last remaining holdout. Had that country failed to signal its approval, the treaty would not have come into force.

Azerbaijan resisted the upward revision of ceilings on heavy arms in Russia's southern flank which threatens the Azeris by concentrating forces close to their border. Moreover the ambiguous language of the treaty, by increasing Russia's quota in its southern flank (before the dissolution of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan was part of the Caucasus Military District, a part of the southern flank) seemed to imply that Russia could station heavy arms in Azerbaijan without explicit Azeri permission. The last-minute change of heart is attributed to active US lobbying which included a call on the 15th from Vice President Gore, who invited President Aliyev to Washington for a meeting with President Clinton.

On the 15th the local media reported that the US Senate included a section dealing with Russia's illegal arms transfers to Armenia in its resolution on the ratification of the CFE flanks document. This section asks the president to report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee "on the compliance of Armenia and other signatory states of the Caucasus" by 1 August 1997.

Though parliamentary ratification was not required by the terms of the treaty, the Azeri parliament ratified the CFE on the following day in a vote of 87 to five, with one abstention. (Turan, 16 May 97) Given that the matter had been sealed the previous day by the president, the deputies probably did not wish to waste political capital on what had become a non-issue.

...But adds sweetener to the deal

On 19 May a joint US-Azerbaijan statement on flank limits was issued. Although the statement came too late to counteract the damage done by the CFE treaty, it
nevertheless contained US support for the Azeri interpretation of the treaty, in particular stating that:

"The United States recognizes that there are no foreign military bases on the territory of the Azerbaijani Republic, and supports Azerbaijan's stand that foreign troops may be temporarily present on Azerbaijani territory only on the basis of an agreement to that effect.

The United States and Azerbaijan assert their "concern" over conventional weapons which are not accounted for by and not controlled under the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. The United States supports Azerbaijan's sovereign right to take up a position whereby paragraphs two and three of the flank agreement (on temporary deployment and redistribution of quotas) will not apply to the Azerbaijani Republic." (Turan, 19 May 97)

On the 23rd Azerbaijan's Prime Minister, Artur Rasizade, met with Vice President Gore to discuss President Aliyev's upcoming visit. Rasizade also met with World Bank President Wolfefhnson and several Congressmen. To the latter, he renewed Azeri appeals to repeal Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act, which prohibits US government agencies from delivering humanitarian assistance to Azerbaijan.

GEORGIA

Turkish terrorist involved in '95 attempt to kill Shevardnadze

Abdullah Cetin, who was arrested for the murder of an Istanbul journalist, Ugur Mumdzhu, confessed to taking part in an attempt on the life of an Armenian minister of tourism in 1993 and on President Shevardnadze of Georgia in 1995. "We wanted to kill Shevardnadze so as to stop the aggressive actions against the Abkhazians," Cetin told the police. (Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye, 17-23 May 97) Shevardnadze held his pro-Russian security chief Igor Giorgadze responsible for that crime.
Shevardnadze makes new proposal for Abkhaz settlement

On 27 May Shevardnadze unveiled a comprehensive plan for settling the Abkhaz conflict in his annual report to the parliament. He reiterated Georgia's position that Abkhazia be granted the fullest autonomy within a federal Georgian state. The return of refugees would be gradual but should begin as soon as possible. Russian peacekeepers would be withdrawn following the 31 July expiration of their mandate if they do not begin enforcing the expanded mandate adopted at the last CIS Council of Heads of State. In their place Georgian and Abkhaz authorities can maintain the peace in the region. The last provision as well as the one on refugees represent concessions since in the past Georgia has sought an immediate repatriation for refugees and has opposed legitimating Abkhaz armed units. Other concessions include an amnesty for all the combatants of the 1992-1993 war (presumably including those charged with ethnic cleansing), a revision of the recent policy of directing Abkhaz telephone connections through Georgia, and allocating a portion of Georgia's international aid for Abkhazia.

Shevardnadze also proposed a peacekeeping conference that would include representatives of the United Nations, the OSCE, the CIS, and "Friends of Georgia," (a group which includes the US, Germany, and Britain). He took care to emphasize that Russia can still participate in organizing the conference. (Interfax, 27 May 97) Of course, should such a conference take place it would certainly diminish what has been since 1993 Russia's complete monopoly on peacekeeping in Georgia.

Georgian parliament attaches conditions to CFE treaty ratification

On 13 May the Georgian parliament ratified the CFE treaty with the provisions that South Ossetian and Abkhaz forces not loyal to Georgia should not be counted towards Georgia's quota and that the treaty "in no way can be interpreted as legitimizing the presence of another state's forces in Georgia." The last refers to Russian bases, and border guards whose presence in Georgia has
been repeatedly condemned by the parliament. The body also objected to the gathering of forces on Georgia’s frontier without explicitly naming Russian forces concentrated in Armenia. (Interfax, 13 May 97)

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN
Tajik government's authority challenged in second hostage crisis
An independent armed group led by Bahrom Sodirov and based in the village of Qalai Nav, near the town of Obi Garm (located approximately 84 km northeast of Dushanbe), seized five UN military observers hostage on 4 February 1997 and brought them to Qalai Nav to hold them there. Sodirov's group then demanded that in return for the hostages' release, the Tajik government create a corridor from northern Afghanistan to Qalai Nav to allow Bahrom's brother Rezvon and at least 40 of his 136 supporters to join Bahrom's group in Tajikistan safely (ITAR-TASS, 4 Feb 97).

The following day Bahrom's supporters took a number of Russian journalists and Red Cross personnel hostage and then issued the additional demand that the Tajik government send official representatives to Qalai Nav in order to begin negotiating a solution to the hostage crisis (ITAR-TASS, 5 Feb 97). In a radio broadcast on Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvy on 6 February, one of the journalists being held in Qalai Nav stated that Bahrom Sodirov had informed them that they were not considered hostages but were being held in order to provide accurate and objective news coverage of the situation (Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvy, 6 Feb 97).

Also on 6 February, the day before negotiations were scheduled to begin between the Tajik government, representatives of Rezvon Sodirov, and Bahrom
Sodirov, an additional four hostages were brought to Qalai Nav. Members of B. Sodirov's militia entered Dushanbe and seized four UNHCR employees along with their two vehicles (ITAR-TASS, 6 Feb 97). Samadin Satarov, deputy commander of politics for B. Sodirov's militia, then threatened the Tajik government with a series of terrorist attacks on prominent political figures if the negotiations failed to meet the group's demands, and boasted that more than 100 mines had been placed in Dushanbe, implying that the militia had the capacity to destroy the capital (NTV, 6 Feb 97).

The negotiations did begin on 7 February as planned, and seemed to result in a small degree of success, because two of the Red Cross workers were released. Representatives of the Tajik government included Tajik Security Minister, Saidamir Zuhurov (Interfax, 7 Feb 97) and Afghan General Ahmad Shah Mas'ud's brother, Muhammad Soleh. B. Sodirov's group took both of these men hostage shortly after the negotiations had begun. Perhaps the Red Cross workers' release was meant as some sort of compensation for the seizing of Zuhurov and Soleh. Soleh was released the next day in order to return to Afghanistan and persuade both General Mas'ud and Rezvon Sodirov to participate in the negotiations. The same day Lt. Gen. Pavel' Tarasenko, commander of the Russian border guards in Tajikistan, announced that because of the hostage crisis, all checkpoints on the Tajik-Afghan border had been closed to travelers (ITAR-TASS, 8 Feb 97).

On 9 February President Rahmonov and General Mas'ud held their first face-to-face meeting in the southern Tajik city of Kulob in order to discuss what measures should be taken to resolve the hostage crisis (ITAR-TASS, 9 Feb 97). That morning it was also announced that B. Sodirov had changed his original demands to ask that the Tajik government transport Rezvon Sodirov and his supporters directly from northern Afghanistan to Qalai Nav, instead of just providing them with a safe corridor (Interfax, 9 Feb 97).
Rezvon Sodirov and four of his bodyguards arrived in Qalai Nav on 10 February, in order to join forces with Bahrom. However, if this turn of events generated any willingness on Bahrom's part to release more hostages, it was soon dispelled by the movement of Tajik government troops near his base of operations. Bahrom issued a statement on 11 February calling for the troops to cease their actions or all of the hostages would be killed, and demanding that 40 of Rezvon's supporters be transported to Qalai Nav by the next morning, or two of the first hostages taken would be executed (NTV, 11 Feb 97). This deadline was extended to 1600 hrs. on 12 February, once Bahrom learned that two helicopters carrying Rezvon's supporters were already underway to Tajikistan (ITAR-TASS, 12 Feb 97). In fact, he promised to begin releasing the hostages as soon as the helicopters landed in southern Tajikistan. On 13 February the Russian journalists were duly set free (ITAR-TASS, 13 Feb 97) and on 16 February five more were permitted to leave the Sodirovs' base. A day later President Rahmonov and Bahrom Sodirov began face-to-face negotiations in order to resolve the situation completely (OMRI Daily Digest, 17 Feb 97).

On 19 February Bahrom and Rezvon Sodirov declared their loyalty to President Rahmonov, denied all claims to leading positions in the Tajik government, expressed their support for the inter-Tajik peace process, and gave up an earlier demand to be treated as a third force in the inter-Tajik peace negotiations. However, despite the Sodirovs' pledges of loyalty, the government troops (units of the Presidential Guard) were not removed from their positions surrounding the Sodirovs' base (Interfax, 19 Feb 97) and on 25 February both the government troops and United Tajik Opposition (UTO) units launched an attack on the militia base and succeeded in driving the Sodirovs out of the Obi Garm area. Their complete defeat was expected to require more time, due to the area's mountainous and difficult terrain (OMRI Daily Digest, 28 Feb 97).

Comment
This was Bahrom and Rezvon Sodirov's second attempt to use hostages as a means of achieving their aims. In December 1996 the Sodirovs held a number of members of the cease-fire monitoring committee hostage in order to pressure the UTO into releasing two of their supporters who were being held as prisoners of war. Their tactics were effective—the UTO agreed to release both prisoners and Rahmonov's government did not attempt to penalize the Sodirovs and their supporters in any way once the hostages were set free. The Sodirovs' political affiliation is fairly ambiguous. Rezvon at one time was a UTO commander, but was demoted and expelled in December 1994 (Interfax, 5 Feb 97) after executing some of his own men. It is also rumored that he was responsible for the murder and torture of Tajik civilians during the civil war. He joined the government forces two years later, but was unable to attract enough supporters in Tajikistan, and so moved to northern Afghanistan (close to General Mas'ud's territory), where he apparently was able to find enough recruits to form his own militia (Interfax, 5 Feb 97). The Tajik and Russian governments have been accused of allowing Rezvon and his militia carte blanche in the Tajik-Afghan border area, as long as they continued to fight against the UTO. There have been reports that Rezvon was working with General Mas'ud, but since Mas'ud has been a staunch supporter of the UTO since the opposition leaders first fled to Tajikistan in early 1993, this seems very unlikely. Other reports state that when Bahrom took the UN observers hostage in early February, Mas'ud's troops had Rezvon's militia surrounded and pinned down in a village in northern Afghanistan. In any case, the Sodirov brothers are a sterling example of the type of criminal, renegade forces that have developed over the course of the civil war in Tajikistan and which pose a serious threat to the stability of the Tajik government and to the success of the inter-Tajik peace process.

**Typhoid epidemic in Tajikistan**
A typhoid epidemic that began spreading in Dushanbe during the last half of January (Radio Tajikistan Network, 13 Feb 97) had infected 4,000 people in the capital, and a total of 26,000 throughout the republic by late February. The
epidemic was blamed on contaminated drinking water; shortages of proper medication and hospital space were cited as the most likely reasons for its rapid spread. In 1996 18,000 people were infected with typhoid (Clandestine Voice of Free Tajikistan, 20 Feb 97).

Government and opposition forces destroy Sodirov militia group
After having been driven out of their base in Qalai Nav, near Obi Garm, in late February 1997 the Sodirov brothers and their followers fled to the Romit Gorge, which is located in a very mountainous area controlled by the UTO (United Tajik Opposition). A UTO unit under the control of Qosimjon Ismati (his command is based in Kofarnihon) then launched a series of attacks on the Sodirovs and managed to drive them back to Obi Garm, which is under the control of government forces, in early March. Thirteen Sodirov supporters were killed, including one of their best commanders (Clandestine Voice of Free Tajikistan, 11 Mar 97).

On 15 March Bahrom Sodirov and 19 of his supporters were captured in Obi Garm in a joint government-UTO operation. This left Rezvon Sodirov and approximately 45 of his followers still at liberty (ITAR-TASS, 16 Mar 97). They were able to escape from Obi Garm to another mountain gorge in the Vakhshskii Ridge, located about 80 km southeast of Dushanbe between the towns of Rogun and Nurek. The Tajik government did not immediately try to rout Rezvon and his supporters from their new hiding place, but instead gave them the opportunity to surrender. The deadline for their surrender was set for 1900 hrs on 19 March (ITAR-TASS, 19 Mar 97). When Rezvon and his men failed to comply with this ultimatum, the Tajik Presidential Guard and special units of the Security Ministry began preparing a final assault (Interfax, 20 Mar 97). These government units were reinforced by UTO troops from the Komsomolobod area, led by Mullah Abdullo (Interfax, 22 Mar 97).
Government paratroopers landed on the Vakhshskii Ridge between 24 and 25 March, and with the support of other government and UTO forces, attacked Rezvon and his remaining supporters. Several more of Rezvon's men were killed and another five were taken prisoner. Gafur Mirzoev, commander of the Presidential Guard, estimated that the rest of Rezvon's group would be destroyed within the next two days (Interfax, 25 Mar 97). By this time Rezvon was left with no more than 10 supporters and it seemed that they were planning to flee from the Vakhshskii Ridge gorge to a village further south called Sholut. Meanwhile, UTO and government troops were attempting to seal off all possible exits from the gorge (Interfax, 28 Mar 97).

Rezvon and his remaining supporters were unable to escape from the gorge, and by 29 March only he, his younger brother (who was wounded), and a few others were left as the joint UTO-government manhunt continued (ITAR-TASS, 30 Mar 97).

**Sixth round of peace talks successfully concluded, despite UTO walkout**

The 6th round of the inter-Tajik peace negotiations, which began on 26 February 1997 in Moscow, ended successfully with the signing of a military protocol by both sides on 8 March, despite an earlier five-day walkout by the UTO representatives (Interfax, 8 Mar 97). The UTO delegation left the negotiations to protest the arrest of five opposition members from Kofarnihon Field Commander Qosim Ismati's unit on 24 February. The five opposition members were charged with engaging in terrorist acts against Russian servicemen which resulted in the deaths of 42 people over a period of two years (Interfax, 3 Mar 97). One of the arrested members, Aziz Nurov, was killed, allegedly while trying to escape. However, according to Prof. Abdunabi Sattorzoda, a UTO member and head of a commission which was appointed to investigate the men's arrest, Nurov's body showed signs of physical abuse—traces of blows, a fractured skull, a severed toe, and deep cuts on one foot (Novoye vremya, 23 Mar 97). The UTO condemned the men's arrest as unjust and as an act of persecution by the Tajik
government. A joint commission consisting of representatives from the Tajik government delegation in Moscow, the UTO delegation, UN observers, and International Red Cross personnel and led by Prof. Abdunabi Sattorzoda (leader of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and a member of the UTO delegation at the peace talks) left for Dushanbe on 3 March, in order to interview the four remaining opposition arrestees and make sure that they were not being physically abused by government law enforcement officials (Clandestine Voice of Free Tajikistan, 4 Mar 97).

After some delays, the commission was allowed to meet with each prisoner individually, but only in the presence of government law enforcement officials, and the UN physician who had accompanied the commission was not permitted to examine the prisoners for signs of physical abuse (ITAR-TASS, 7 Mar 97). Prof. Sattorzoda recommended that the resumption of the peace negotiations be suspended until the prisoners had been sentenced by the Tajik State Prosecutor's office (Clandestine Voice of Free Tajikistan, 6 Mar 97), but both the UN envoy to Tajikistan, Gerd Dietrich Merrem, and the Tajik government called for the negotiations to proceed as quickly as possible, and so the peace talks resumed in Moscow on 7 March (ITAR-TASS, 7 Mar 97).

The military protocol which the two sides signed was drawn up by a UN delegation, based on proposals made by both UTO and Tajik government leaders. The protocol creates a process for the disarmament and integration of the UTO's troops into the Tajik government's armed forces. The process will proceed in stages. The first step will be to bring those opposition troops still stationed in Afghanistan back to Tajikistan, where they will be required to surrender their weapons under UN supervision. These opposition troops will then be formed into regular army units, which are to be gradually merged with the rest of the government's armed forces over a period of about one year. This merging process is to be completed by 1 July 1998 (Interfax, 8 Mar 97).
The protocol also provides for the quartering of a small UTO force in Dushanbe one week before the National Reconciliation Commission takes up its duties, to guarantee the security of the UTO members on the commission. The precise size of this force is still undetermined and has become a very thorny issue for the Tajik government and the UTO. UTO leaders have proposed that the force consist of 600 troops, but President Rahmonov has stated that this number is much too large and would actually constitute a security risk. The issue will have to be resolved fairly soon because the National Reconciliation Commission is due to begin functioning two weeks after the protocol on the legalization of the three main opposition parties is signed at the next round of inter-Tajik peace negotiations. These negotiations are scheduled to begin on 9 April in Tehran (Interfax, 8 Mar 97).

Comment
The arrest of the five opposition members has been hailed by UTO leaders, including Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, as an indication that President Rahmonov and the members of his government are still attempting to portray the UTO as violent terrorists, in order to discredit them in the public's eyes. One also wonders whether the government is still only too willing to give in to the temptation to use UTO members as scapegoats for the rash of assassinations that have been plaguing Dushanbe. Since the cease-fire took effect, the almost weekly shootings of Russian servicemen in Dushanbe have begun to attract a great deal of attention in both the Tajik and Russian media. The Tajik government seems to have a very limited ability to bring those responsible for the shootings to justice, and this undermines its authority even within Dushanbe. Blaming UTO members for these murders is an easy way of reestablishing the government's authority, as well as casting doubt on the ability of the UTO leaders to maintain control over their supporters. Another theory, suggested by Arkadii Dubnov in an article published in the 23 March issue of the Novoye vremya (cited above), is that the arrest of these five opposition members was an attempt to split the UTO by discrediting one of its most prominent leaders, Haji Akbar Turajonzoda. Dubnov
states that all five of the arrested men were from Turajonzoda's home village, and thus were regarded as "his men." By accusing them of terrorism the government was also able to cast suspicion on Turajonzoda, and if enough of the other UTO leaders, including Said Abdullo Nuri (the official head of the UTO and also its main director of military operations), could be persuaded to doubt Turajonzoda's integrity, then the UTO itself might disintegrate. Whatever the government's intentions were in arresting these five opposition members, it was a very clumsy act and has only resulted in tarnishing President Rahmonov's reputation. Fortunately, the UTO has not fallen apart and the peace process is still on track.

**UN mission and CIS peacekeeping mandate in Tajikistan extended**

On 14 March 1997, the UN Security Council voted to extend the mandate of its observer mission in Tajikistan to 15 June 1997, as long as both the UTO and the Tajik government continue to implement the terms of all the agreements that they have signed thus far (ITAR-TASS, 15 Mar 97).

Approximately two weeks later, on 27 March, the Council of CIS Heads of State voted to extend the mandate of its joint peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan for another six months (until 31 December 1997), and approved Boris Diukov as the new commander of the peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan (Interfax, 28 Mar 97).

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