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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Yel'tsin address broadsides Duma

President Boris Yel'tsin chose to mark a particularly grim anniversary, the confrontation at the Ostankino Television Station, with a renewed verbal assault on the current Duma. In the 1993 confrontation between the executive and legislature, Ostankino signaled the descent into armed conflict to resolve the dispute. Yel'tsin acknowledged the weighty symbolism of the timing of his remarks, but his decision to "speak about the Duma precisely on this day" suggests the threat of dissolution underpins his critique. (Official Kremlin International News Broadcast, 3 Oct 97; NEXIS.)

The president's specific criticisms include the Duma's adoption of the Land Code, which does not permit private ownership of agricultural land; lack of parliamentary action on social legislation and the 1998 budget; and interference in foreign policy. While certain Duma actions have certainly merited presidential concerns, it is astonishing that Yel'tsin would choose to react by threatening a return to one of the ugliest chapters in current Russian political history. It is also indicative of the tenuousness of Russian democracy that Yel'tsin would rely on forced dissolution of the parliament, rather than the appropriate institutional recourse. With a functioning Constitutional Court, the Duma's Land Code could be overturned as unconstitutional as the right to private ownership of property is enshrined in the current constitution. Perhaps President Yel'tsin can yet be persuaded to turn his attention to building up democratic institutions, rather than tearing them down.
GOVERNMENT

Corruption probes target reformers
The Moscow City Prosecutor's Office has opened an investigation into the financial affairs of former Privatization Committee Chief Alfred Kokh. Investigators focused on Kokh following allegations that his handling of the Svyazinvest auction was prejudicial. The issue under investigation is a $100,000 book advance paid to Kokh for a forthcoming economics text. The company involved in the transaction allegedly has ties to the winner of the Svyazinvest bid, Uneximbank. (The St. Petersburg Times, 6-12 Oct 97)

Also under investigation is former St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoli Sobchak. Sobchak had previously been described as only a "key witness" in an ongoing probe into corruption in his administration. (St. Petersburg Times, 6-12 Oct 97) Last week, however, he was detained and interrogated by the St. Petersburg MVD/FSB and suffered heart problems during questioning, which required his hospitalization. (Agence France-Presse, 4 Oct 97; clari.net)

President Yel'tsin has made the fight against corruption a central theme in his new initiative to reform the economy. It is unlikely, however, that he anticipated the first publicized targets would prove to be such high-profile reformers. These investigations will undoubtedly cause First Deputy Prime Minister Chubais some distress as well, as they are both close allies. The Kokh inquiry is potentially quite dangerous, especially if the probe widens to include the conduct of previous state property auctions.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger

Primakov will use NATO-Russia council to protect Serb war criminals
Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov has said he will use a new NATO-Russia working commission on peacekeeping to slow down the alliance’s pursuit of war criminals in the Serbian enclave of Bosnia.

The first ministerial-level meeting of the NATO-Russia Joint Permanent Council established a new working commission on joint peacekeeping missions, including the mission in Bosnia. The commission will pass on its first recommendations to the next ministerial meeting, scheduled for December 17 in Brussels. (ITAR-TASS, 1929 GMT, 26 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-269)

"Russia continues to be supportive of the Dayton accords and has an interest in having them implemented," Primakov told the Washington Post before the council met. "...But I think that the move to arrest war criminals through the use of force is not part of the mandate of the multinational force. " (The Washington Post, 21 Sep 97).

Following the meeting, Primakov told the German newspaper Bild am Sonntag that he intended to use a new working group on peacekeeping missions to prevent the arrest of accused Bosnian Serb war criminal Radovan Karadzic as long as he remains on the territory of his own ethnic enclave.

"According to the wording of the present mandate," Primakov said, "he can only be arrested if he crosses a border that is protected by the troops. I do not think that he will do that. . . The SFOR mandate that applies now does not include the right to arrest persons by force, even if they have been accused of war crimes." (Bild am Sonntag, 28 Sep 97)

Primakov's statement flatly contradicts the findings of a report issued by the Center for International Programs at The University of Dayton earlier this year.

"Unequivocal legal authority exists for the United States military personnel to engage in operations in Bosnia to apprehend indicted war criminals," the reports
states. "Article 29 of the substantive law of The Hague Tribunal mandates the arrest or detention, as well as the surrender or transfer, of any accused individual to the International Tribunal... Under Rule 40, the Prosecutor is also permitted in urgent situations to request the provisional arrest of a suspect even before he or she has been formally accused by the International Tribunal. To further the success of the International Tribunal's mandate, the Prosecutor, in such situations, is also given the power to request 'all necessary measures to prevent the escape of a suspect or an accused, injury to or intimidation of a victim or witness, or the destruction of evidence.' " (Bringing War Criminals to Justice: Obligations, Options, Recommendations. Center for International Programs, University of Dayton, 1997)

**Primakov claims that neither Russia nor NATO has veto over NATO actions**

In several instances, Primakov's words following the NATO-Russia meeting could be taken to mean that he believes the Permanent Joint Council has considerably more power over the alliance's affairs than Western diplomats have yet admitted. The English-language account of ITAR-TASS's interview with Primakov, for example, reported in indirect speech that he believes the Founding Act signed in May 1997 gives neither Russia nor NATO a veto over the Council's work. (ITAR-TASS, 1929 GMT, 26 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-269) American diplomats had insisted at the time of the Founding Act's adoption that it gave Russia a "voice, not a veto" over NATO affairs. In denying that NATO itself could unilaterally reject the council's work, Primakov appears to have suggested that Russia has, de facto, a veto over a NATO veto.

In the same interview, Primakov offered Russia's assistance in the presumed modification of the Alliance. "We are trying to help the transformation of the Alliance with our participation in the Council," he was quoted as saying.

There was no report of NATO extending a request for such aid, but neither was Primakov's offer refused.
Primakov also frankly portrayed his own country's interest in the council. "Those who think that Russia is participating in the NATO-Russia joint standing council in order to save its face, are mistaken," he said. "Russia is taking part in the work of the Council in order to protect its interests." (RIA Novosti, 27 Sep 97; Johnson's Russia List #1240)

**In Moscow, French president signs Iranian oil deal**

Visiting Moscow, French President Jacques Chirac signed an economic cooperation deal with Russian President Boris Yel'tsin that will help to finance a natural gas pipeline from Iran. (The New York Times, 5 Oct 97)

Chirac signed the pipeline deal despite growing evidence that Russia is helping the Iranians to develop a long-range ballistic missile that could threaten Israel, Saudi Arabia and US troops stationed in the Persian Gulf. (Please see ISCIPEditorial Digest, vol. II, no. 17)

As Boris Yel'tsin called for Europe to take a leading role in its own security, and blasted "interference from outside Europe," Chirac noted only that his position on the Europeanization of NATO lies "somewhat midway" between those of Moscow and Washington." He did not object either that the presidents' joint statement addressed the issue of Bosnia without mentioning the arrest of suspected war criminals. (Liberation, 27 Sep 97; FBIS-WEU-97-272)

**Russia, US agree extension of deadline for START-II compliance...**

The United States and Russia agreed on 26 September to extend the deadline for compliance with the START-II Treaty by five years, from the beginning of 2003 to the end of 2007. The two countries also agreed that START-III, a treaty on further reductions, must be signed before January 2003.
The START-II Treaty sets the reduction ceilings at 3,000 to 3,500 warheads for each side, while START-III sets them at 2,000 to 2,500 warheads.

START-II has not yet been ratified by the Russian Duma. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev and Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov met with heads of Duma factions on 17 September, in an effort to convince them that Russia could not in any case afford to maintain the current arsenals. (Rossiyiskiye vesti, 17 Sep 97; FBIS-TAC-97-260)

Sergeev also assured the commanders of the Moscow military garrison that Russia's strategic arsenal would remain the guarantor of the nation's security. (Interfax, 1051 GMT, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-267)

A spokesman of the Strategic Missile Troops said that the extension of the START-II deadline would allow Russia to keep its arsenal of SS-19 rockets until the end of their usefulness, and will allow Russia to deploy the Topol-M missile, now in development, at the moment of its readiness. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0907 GMT, 25 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-268)

Meanwhile, the United States, Russia, and three ex-Soviet republics on 26 September signed amendments to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that had been drafted in August (Please see ISCIP Editorial Digest, vol. II, no. 16). (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1 Oct 97; Johnson's Russia List #1247).

Russian mafia: a threat to the West...
Normal relations with the Russian government will become impossible if a network of criminal gangs and corrupt officials succeed in creating "an emergent Russian criminal-syndicalist state," a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) predicts.
"In many respects such a criminal-syndicalist state already exists in Russia today," said the CSIS panel, citing government, business and academic leaders. Corruption pervades "every level of Russia's bureaucracy," the report said, and is the major obstacle to defeating organized crime. (Reuters, 29 Sep 97; Johnson's Russia List, #1243)

...and active in Colombia

Russian organized crime groups are establishing alliances with Colombian drug traffickers that will allow delivery of narcotics to Europe and sophisticated weaponry to Latin American criminals, according to The Washington Post.

The Russian criminals have already attempted to sell the traffickers a submarine, helicopters and surface-to-air missiles, the Post said.

"The Russians, along with the Nigerians, are the most threatening criminal organization based in the United States," White House drug policy director Barry R. McCaffrey told the newspaper. (Associated Press, 29 Sep 97; Johnson’s Russia List #1241)

Meeting Mubarak, Yel'tsin decries Israel's "rigid stance" on Middle East

Following meetings with Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Russian President Boris Yel'tsin complained that the crisis in the Middle East was largely the result of "the rigid stance of Israel."

Accusing Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat of staging acts of terrorism, Yel'tsin said, was "ridiculous." (Interfax, 1035 GMT, 23 Sep 97)

In a joint statement that repeated the rhetoric of the Russian foreign minister, Yel'tsin and Mubarak argued that overweening influence of the United States upset the balance of power in the world. Speaking afterwards, Yel'tsin elaborated
in comments that reflected the doctrine of "multipolarity" frequently advanced by his foreign minister.

"As for the idea that one country preaches to several others, telling them what to do -- no," Yeltsin said. "There is the United States, one region; Africa with Egypt, another region; Latin America, another; Asia, Japan, China, a world of many regions." (NTV, 1500 GMT, 23 Sep 97)

**Comment:**

**Who are Russia's criminals?**

In both the popular imagination and in most of the scholarly community, post-Communist Russia is portrayed as a typical case of "primitive capitalism." A weak government struggles in vain against unscrupulous gang leaders, who, being half Al Capone and half J.P. Morgan, write the rules of post-Soviet life to suit their accumulative appetites.

In The Peacemaker, Hollywood's latest attempt to grope through the wreckage of the Cold War, George Clooney and Nicole Kidman chase "rogue elements" in the Russian military who are trying to sell nuclear warheads. In the latest study from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the next threat to world order is forecast to be a "criminal-syndicalist" state that binds the Kremlin to international drug cartels.

All of which brings to mind the answer that a Polish philosopher gave when asked if the growth of crime in his native land after the collapse of Communism bothered him.

"What you don't understand," he replied, "is that the Communist state itself was a criminal conspiracy, one that had a complete monopoly on all the activities that have since been spread among mafiosi. The amount of crime has not increased -
- if anything, it has decreased, now that the main criminal gang, the Party, has been broken up."

Given the recent activities of Russia's foreign minister, it is perhaps time to abandon our search for a sexy new enemy, and return to the dull work of fending off plodding, yet persistent, foes. The Peacemaker portrays a Russian general who inadvertently helps a Balkan terrorist. As they used to say at the New York Times, "interesting, if true." Back in the real world, we find that the Russian foreign minister, representative of the supposedly weak state itself, is working consciously to protect Radovan Karadzic, Balkan Terrorist Number One.

Yevgeni Primakov has made his intentions clear. He will use his influence in Western organizations, especially the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, to subvert attempts to arrest Bosnian Serb war criminals. He will sell missile technology to the mullahs of Iran. He will woo European governments away from the trans-Atlantic alliance. And he will do it all to "protect Russia's interests."

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Michael Thurman

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
Luzhkov faction said to be emerging in the Duma
Supposedly, the faction will include more than 35 deputies representing the Moscow Region in the lower house of parliament according to Sergei Kalashnikov, chairman of the State Duma Committee for Labor and Social Policy. Kalashnikov noted that there are no real (that is, ideological) parties in contemporary Russia that would represent the interests of specific social groups and that there only is a "constellation of prominent political leaders." Seen in this
light, a Luzhkov bloc is unsurprising and, arguably, overdue (Trud, 1-7 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-216)

**REGIONS**

**Presidential appointments to the regions continue**

At the end of July the president appointed Valeri Sychov to the post of plenipotentiary representative in the Ulyanovsk region (ITAR-TASS, 0659 GMT, 3 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-215). Yeltsin also appointed Vladimir Ilyich Gaydukov to the same post in the Bryansk Region (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1130 GMT, 8 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-220). Aleksandr Vladimirovich Orlov was similarly appointed in the Kaliningrad Region a few weeks later (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0820 GMT, 13 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-225)

The role of the president's regional representatives continually evolves. At first, represented by the regions as evidence of Moscow's heavy-handed politics, it has become clear to many regional leaders that having a direct line of communication to the Kremlin could be beneficial. The regional representatives are in a difficult position since they must concurrently please the president while needing to cooperate with the region's leaders if they are to be useful. Functioning effectively as the president's ambassadors to the regions, these representatives are in a position to be of great help -- especially now while center-region relations are in such flux.

**Irkutsk has a new governor**

Boris Yeltsin sent a telegram to Irkutsk Region's Governor Boris Govorin. The president congratulated Govorin on his "convincing victory" and noted that the election was an indication of the voters' desire for continued "economic reform and [the] strengthening of its social orientation." A governor welcome to Yeltsin in the independence-minded East must be comforting, however, such independence will also limit Moscow's influence. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1724 GMT, 4 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-216).
MEDIA

Leftists form their own news agency

During a news conference marking the first anniversary of the establishment of the People's Patriotic Union of Russia (NPSR), journalists were introduced to the Patriotic News Agency (Agentstvo Patrioticheskoy Informatsii-API).

The decision to set up the API was made by the NPSR. The agency has already begun operations, according to the NPSR press service. Gennadi Zyuganov is, not surprisingly, very supportive of the development -- perhaps unaware that he is conceivably as likely a target of the API's partisan wrath as anyone.

Zyuganov claimed that parties of the left and "patriotic" forces were publishing at present some 300 newspapers and magazines and running three radio stations (Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service, 1300 GMT, 8 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-220)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Dwyer Dennis and CDR Curtis Stevens

Suitcase "nukes" issue will not go away

General Lebed's repeated accusations that the former Soviet Union manufactured over 100 suitcase-size nuclear weapons and that some of these weapons are unaccounted for will not go away. Although some skeptics point out that Lebed may be using his accusations to bolster his year 2000 presidential bid, others believe there may be some cause for concern.

Aleksei Yablokov, a prominent environmentalist and former environmental advisor to President Yeltsin, said the bombs were built for the KGB and were never under the control of the military. The defense ministry has consistently claimed there are no such weapons in its nuclear arsenal and that all nuclear
weapons are accounted for and under strict controls. At a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Maastricht, Defense Minister Sergeev told his American counterpart that he would be glad to have General Habiger, Commander of the US Strategic Command, come to Russia and inspect the way nuclear weapons are stored.

Despite all the official assurances from both Moscow and Washington that Russian nuclear weapons are under tight control, doubts persist in both capitals. Senator Lugar stated "The Russian inventory system is so antiquated and inefficient that the Russians do not have an accurate count of nuclear weapons or materials." (Reuters, 1344 PDT, 2 Oct 97; clari.net) Both the Defense Department and the FBI have stated there is no evidence of missing nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists or rogue states. (Agence France-Press, 21, 26 Sep 97, 1-2 Oct 97; clari.net; ITAR-TASS, 1313 GMT, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-265)

**Nuclear weapons workers get paid**

In addition to answering concerns over nuclear weapons, the Russian government has grappled with problems at two of its leading nuclear weapons laboratories. At Arzamas-16 in the city of Sarov, layoffs have been reported and crime has been increasing in what was once a crime-free city. The average worker's wage at Arzamas-16 had dropped below the subsistence level and most workers have not been paid since 1996. On 30 September the Russian government announced that it had transferred sufficient funds to Arzamas-16 and Chelyabinsk-70 to settle all the wage arrears at the two nuclear centers. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin said the actions taken would settle nearly 80 percent of the wages owed for the first nine months of 1997. The shortfall in paying workers at the two nuclear facilities developed as money was only available to make partial payments to the military. (Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye, 29 Aug-4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-262; ITAR-TASS, 0854 GMT, 30 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-273)
Revelations made at Sputnik anniversary

October 4 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Sputnik launch. At a NASA conference marking the anniversary, Sergei Khrushchev, son of the late Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, said his father had decided to accept President Kennedy's 1963 invitation to participate in a joint US-USSR mission to place a man on the moon. Although the Khrushchev government rejected Kennedy's proposals, Khrushchev began having second doubts and reversed himself in early November 1963, according to his son. Kennedy's assassination and Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 prevented any public announcement of the decision. (Christian Science Monitor, 30 Sep 97; clari.net)

Baturin to travel in 1998

In other space news the Russian government announced that Yuri Baturin would travel to the Mir space station in 1998. Baturin is an advisor to President Yeltsin and serves on the Defense Council. Although a lawyer by trade, he studied aerophysics and space research at the Moscow Technical Institute in the early 1970's. (Agence France-Press, 2 Oct 97, clari.net)

Border troops train to fight illegal migration

A summation of the recent "Baltic Guard '97," a wide-scale international operation to fight illegal migration in the Baltic Sea, was provided in an Strazh Baltiki interview with Lieutenant General Yevgeni Bolkhovitin. Bolkhovitin is the commander of the Kaliningrad Border Group. He stated that the operation was supported by eight countries of the Baltic region. Both the coast guards and corresponding border services of Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and Poland took part. He pointed out that illegal migration was a serious issue for all participants, adding that "shipping Asian, African, and Latin American citizens to Europe is a wide-scale business among mafia structures."
According to Bolkhovitin, more than 3,000 people were involved, including 250 border troops and two ships, and the operation consisted of identifying and inspecting approximately 100 fishing ships. Revealing no specific head-count on detained illegal immigrants, Bolkhovitin stated that besides identifying the routes and scale of migration, the operation signified the cooperation between Baltic states' border services. (Strazh Baltiki, 9 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-260)

In an apparent effort to further this cooperation, Andrei Nikolaev, Director of the Russian Federal Border Service, and Marie Hastrom, general director of the Swedish Coastal Guard Service, signed a protocol on 19 September which seeks to deepen cooperation in fighting illegal migration and smuggling, protecting the environment, monitoring navigation, and observing fishing regulations. This type of cooperation is seen as fundamental in forming a system of non-military security in the Baltic Sea region. (ITAR-TASS, 0751 GMT, 19 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-263)

**Russian-Moldova-Transdniestre discussions on military hardware continue**

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Valeri Serov held talks with the leaders of Moldova and the Transdniestr Moldovan Republic on 22-24 September to determine the disposition of Russian military and engineering hardware amassed in the Transdniestr region. The equipment cache is a result of Russian troop withdrawal from Germany and Poland and the assets of the former 14th Russian Army. (Interfax, 1732 GMT, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-265) Serov called for an urgent evacuation of "special assets" from the region. Serov was quoted as saying, "The presence of such large amounts of special military assets on such a small territory as Moldova is inadmissible, and we must do the best we can to withdraw them as soon as possible." (Basapress, 1900 GMT, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-266)

The arsenal of hardware and munitions includes: 54 railroad carloads of guided anti-tank missiles, 83 pieces of artillery, over 1200 tons of explosives, 119 tanks,
43 infantry combat vehicles, 112 armored personnel carriers, 220 anti-aircraft mobile missile systems, 33 mobile anti-tank missile systems, carloads of munitions, 30,000 assault rifles, machine guns, and sidearms, and 35 carloads of non-military material, according to an unnamed Interfax source in the Russian government. Transdniestr leaders have wanted control over most of the assets and some pressure groups plan to block the withdrawal of military hardware from the region. (Interfax, 1732 GMT, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-265)

Additionally, the future of the arsenals of the limited contingent of Russian troops currently deployed in the region is still a point of discussion. Moldova's Defense Minister, Valeriu Pasat, described the situation (of the contingent's presence) as "getting more and more difficult." (Basapress, 1900 GMT, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-266)

The meeting closed with no accord, but Serov appeared positive, directing that specific implementation proposals be developed within the next ten days. The Moldovan president was reported to be satisfied with Moscow's position. Igor Smirnov, a Dniestr leader, while still maintaining that the equipment is the property of the Dniestr people, stated that the issue amounted to an economic question. His position is that, after Russia takes what it needs, the surplus should be sold and profits plowed into the Dniestr's economy. (Basapress, 1700 GMT, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268)

With the current track record of privatization embezzlement in Russia, it will be very interesting to see where the market is for the sale and how the profits will get into the economy. The issue of maintaining a Russian troop contingent is still open.

**Greece hosts Russian warplanes for first time**

On 16 September, an air wing of the Russian Air Defense Troops consisting of two Su-30s, two Su-27, and an Il-76 arrived in Greece at the Tangara air force
From a NATO member perspective, it is unclear where Tsokhatzopoulos sees any shortfall in security. While Russia may fear NATO expansion, it is unclear what security is gained by a NATO country having unilateral joint exercises and arms sales discussions with Russia. One result of this event will likely be a feeling of lessened security on the part of another NATO member, Turkey.

**Newly Independent States: CIS**

By Mark Jones

**CIS presidents comment on relations within the Commonwealth**
Several CIS presidents made disparaging remarks concerning the commonwealth in recent days. Although this is nothing new for the presidents of Ukraine and Belarus, it is a shift from the tacit approval the Uzbek leader has until now given the organization. Uzbek President Islam Karimov reserved his harshest words for Moscow. "Not everyone in Russia has renounced the imperial vision with regard to the former USSR republics, and it is still being witnessed even among the (Russian) leadership," he noted. He went on to say that relations in the CIS have been built "according to Russia's desire" and not based on the principal of parity originally called for in the CIS Charter (Interfax, 17 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-260).
Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine was more prognostic in his statements. Referring to Russian dominance of, and the low level of cooperation in, the commonwealth, he said, "If it goes on like this, I do not believe in the future of the CIS" (Interfax, 27 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-270).

Alyaksandr Lukashenka of Belarus had similar thoughts, commenting that the CIS may break up in two or three years if no changes in policy are made. His solution to rejuvenate the organization includes developing "machinery to implement decisions" of the CIS bodies. In other words, he wants a supranational enforcement arm for the CIS Heads of State, Government, and Parliamentary Assembly to use (Interfax, 1 Oct 97: FBIS-SOV-97-274).

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Mark Jones

Kiev, Minsk reach border demarcation accord
A joint Ukrainian-Belarusian commission hammered out an agreement on delimitation and demarcation of the countries' common border. The accord will govern "the behavior of the sides in carrying out work on the border." The demarcation, which may be completed as early as 1999, will include the emplacement of marking poles at 1 km intervals along the length of the boundary. Both sides expressed optimism that the agreement, which must be signed by both governments, will "definitely settle all problematic questions of the border between the two states" (Belapan, 25 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268).

Ukraine, Moldova to "exchange territories" for 99 years
According to a Basapress report (24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268), Moldova and Ukraine will exchange territories for a period of 99 years. The agreement was reached in Odessa by Moldovan President Lucinschi and the leadership of the
Odessa administration. Under the accord, Ukraine will administer a portion of the Odessa-Ismail thoroughfare which lies close to the Moldovan village of Palanca. In exchange, Moldova will administer the area near the Basarabeasca offices of Moldova's railways.

BELARUS

Bad news for Belarus...

The European Union Council of Ministers decided to limit political and economic ties with Belarus. Belarus' foreign ministry released a statement condemning the decision and stating that it puts "direct pressure on the development of internal political processes in a sovereign country" (Interfax, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-265).

...And for its leader

President Lukashenka was informed that he will not be invited to represent his country at the Summit of the Council of Europe to be held on 10 October in Strasbourg. France is hosting the event and currently has the chair of the Council of Ministers. Explaining the snub, the French delegate minister for European affairs pointed out that the "trend of developments in Belarus gives no grounds for reinstating ... its special guest status." The only other European country denied representation was Yugoslavia (Belapan, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-267).

Lukashenka was snubbed further when his planned visit to the Russian regions of Lipetsk and Yaroslavl, scheduled for October 2-4, was canceled by the Kremlin. President Yeltsin ordered the Russian air control system to deny access to Lukashenka's plane. Explaining his action to journalists, Yeltsin claimed that Lukashenka had failed to "coordinate" the visit with him and then added: "Let him first release [Russian ORT TV correspondent] Sheremet. So there!" (Monitor, 3 Oct 97).

Official travels to Iran
Belarusian Leonid Rachkov, Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission for International Affairs and Ties with CIS States, met with Deputy Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Hasan Rowhani, in Tehran recently. The officials discussed economic issues and elaborated on the expansion of relations between Tehran and Minsk since the breakup of the USSR. Rachkov called for the formation of a parliamentary friendship council between the two countries.

UKRAINE

NATO-Kiev information link established
An information system linking Kiev to NATO's information network has been established. The purpose of the link is to ensure proper coordination within the framework of the "Partnership for Peace" program and peace-keeping operations. The system includes a satellite station, a central computer-server and terminals linked to NATO's PIMS center. The system was installed in the Verification Center of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (Interfax, 23 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-266).

MOLDOVA

Symbolism in Dniestr
The leader of the unrecognized Dniestr republic signed documents adopting the flag of the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, complete with hammer and sickle, as the official emblem of the region. He also adopted a new national anthem, the lyrics of which are written in Russian. Smirnov promised, however, that versions written in Moldovan and Ukrainian will soon follow (Basapress, 20 Sep 97: FBIS-SOV-97-263).

Serov leaves without accord on arms division
Russian Deputy Premier Valeri Serov traveled to Moldova to meet with Petru Lucinschi and Igor Smirnov. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the status of the 14th Army's equipment currently stationed east of the Dniestr river. Serov was not able to broker an agreement amenable to both sides. As the discussions
broke up, Smirnov insisted he would block the removal of the equipment and further said he expected the issue to be resolved only through Tiraspol-Moscow negotiations (Basapress, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268). The value of the arms was estimated at $4 billion two years ago. In addition to tons of outdated ammunition, at least 83 artillery pieces, 119 tanks, 43 infantry fighting vehicles, 112 armored personnel carriers, 220 anti-aircraft systems, and 14 Grad multiple rocket launchers are stored in the unrecognized Dniestr republic (Interfax, 22 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-265).

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

KAZAKHSTAN
Kazakhstan, China sign their own "deal of the century"

On 24 September, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng and President Nazarbaev witnessed the signing of an agreement which the Kazakh president has called the "contract of the century." According to the terms of this contract, the China National Petroleum Company (the company which won the tenders to two of Kazakhstan's oil fields last June -- see Editorial Digest on Central Asia for July 1997) and Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy will cooperate in the development of three of Kazakhstan's hydrocarbon deposits located in Aktyubinsk Region (the fields of Aktyubmunaigaz hold approximately 130 million tonnes of oil in proven reserves) (Interfax, 1600 GMT, 26 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-269) and in the Uzen oil field (Kazakhstan's second largest oil deposit) on the Mangyshlak Peninsula. In conjunction with the development of the three deposits, the China National Oil Company will undertake the construction of two new pipelines. One pipeline will need to be built from Aktyubinsk Region to China's western border (approximately 3,000 km) (ITAR-TASS, 1834 GMT, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-267), and the second pipeline will reach from Kazakhstan to the Turkmen border (250 km) for eventual extension to Iran. Starting and ending dates for the
pipelines' construction were not given in the agreement, however, the construction of the Aktyubinsk-China pipeline is to begin immediately and should be ready for full operation by 30 June 2005. The Chinese oil company representatives agreed to include a statement in the contract, whereby they pledge to complete the actual building of the pipeline by 1 January 2005 (Interfax, 1405 GMT, 24 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-267).

According to the agreement, the China National Oil Company is allocated five years for the pipeline's construction, with an additional 2.5 years in case of unforeseeable delays. If the pipeline is not finished within this amount of time, all of China's investments will remain in Kazakhstan. The construction of the pipeline between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is expected to require only one year and will be carried out by a consortium including China, Kazakhstan, and possibly Turkmenistan and Iran, according to Kazakhstan's Acting Prime Minister, Akhmetzhan Yesimov. The total cost of the pipelines' construction, as well as the development of the oil deposits themselves is estimated at $9.5 billion (Interfax, 0958 GMT, 25 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268).

Comment
Once these two pipelines are completed, Kazakhstan will have two additional access routes to the international oil market (assuming that the Kazakh-Turkmen pipeline is connected to Iran), and will no longer need to depend solely on Russia in order to export oil. Thus, President Nazarbaev's efforts to establish good relations with a country strong enough to provide a counterweight to Russia's still considerable influence may finally be coming to fruition, especially when one considers reports that the Chinese government also wants to increase its military cooperation with Kazakhstan. Of course, there are still potential obstacles to the further development of Kazakh-Chinese relations. The Russian government may try to hinder the implementation of the pipeline projects and exert pressure on the Kazakh government to distance itself from China. A second issue to consider is the Uighur separatist movement in northern China, which also has supporters in
Kazakhstan. The Chinese government's conflict with its Uighur population has intensified in recent months and although the Kazakh government has officially declared its opposition to all separatist movements, it has not made any real efforts to crack down on Uighur separatist groups in Kazakhstan. This has caused some anger among various Chinese officials, although it has not yet affected Kazakh-Chinese relations at the highest level. Furthermore, should the Aktyubinsk-China pipeline pass through any part of Xinjiang (the province where most of China's Uighur population still lives), the Uighur separatists' leverage over the Chinese government would increase dramatically.

Kazakhstan, Italy to sign oil agreement
In a press release issued by Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry, President Nazarbaev and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi confirmed their governments' commitment to finalize the contract between the Italian National Oil Company (AGIP), Texaco, British Gas, and Kazakhstan for their joint development of the Karachaganak oil field (located in northern Kazakhstan). The contract is scheduled to be signed by 30 October 1997 and, according to Prime Minister Prodi, all remaining difficulties regarding the contract concern the logistical problems of transporting the oil across a number of other countries to the sea, and not from any obstacles in the Kazakh government's relationship with AGIP. Once the Karachaganak oil field is fully operational, it will be able to produce over 20 billion cubic meters of gas and 10 million tons of crude oil and byproducts per year. The finalization of this oil contract was one of Prime Minister Prodi's main goals during his September visit to Kazakhstan (Il Sole-24 Ore (Internet Version), 17 Sep 97; FBIS-WEU-97-261).

Kazakhstan will protest Russian development of Caspian reserves
In an interview with Nezavisimaya gazeta, Kazakh Foreign Minister Qosymzhomart Toqaev stated that the Kazakh government would make an official protest to Russia's Ministry of Natural Resources over its planned development of a number of offshore oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Sea.
Part of these reserves fall under Kazakhstan's jurisdiction, and although Toqaev stated that he would be willing to allow Russian companies to develop the Kazakh sector of the Caspian reserves, a violation of Kazakhstan's sovereign rights would not be tolerated (Interfax, 1636 GMT, 18 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-261).

TAJIKISTAN

Refugee repatriation partially completed
7,000 Tajik refugees have been repatriated thus far, leaving at least another 7,000 still in Afghanistan. The repatriation process began on 17 August, under the terms of the General Agreement on Inter-Tajik peace. Three checkpoints were established to handle the returning refugees: one at Nizhnyi Pyandzh (located on the Tajik-Afghan border), one in Ishkashim (a town in Gorno-Badakhshon Oblast', close to the Afghan border), and one near the Kampe-Sahi (Afghanistan) - Termez (Uzbekistan) passage. Half of the refugees have returned to Tajikistan via the Nizhnyi Pyandzh checkpoint; the last group crossed the border on 25 September. Another 7,000 are waiting in Kampe-Sahi. Their return home is prevented by a new outbreak of fighting between the Taleban and General Abdumalik's (General Dostum's former ally) anti-Taleban forces. Repatriation via the Ishkashim checkpoint also has not yet begun. The National Reconciliation Commission hopes to have the repatriation process fully completed by the end of December, including the return of the UTO troops who still remain in Afghanistan (Interfax, 1051 GMT, 25 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268). Their return has been the subject of considerable controversy among Tajik military commanders, even leading to acts of mutiny against the government (see Editorial Digests on Central Asia for July and August 1997).

Comment
Although it is certainly a positive sign that so many refugees have returned to Tajikistan over the past two months, their repatriation is only the first step of what will undoubtedly prove to be a long and difficult process of reintegration into
society. Many of the refugees will need immediate shelter, food, and medical care, as well as permanent housing (many houses were destroyed during the war), jobs and schools in the long run. Tajikistan's budget does not appear to be able to meet even these needs, judging by President Rahmonov's recent appeal for additional funding at a 25 September meeting in Dushanbe with deputy envoy of the UN secretary-general in Tajikistan Paolo Lembo. President Rahmonov particularly stressed the need for outside financial support to aid in Tajikistan's socioeconomic development, as well as continued support of the inter-Tajik peace process. A UN-sponsored international conference is planned for the end of October, to discuss what type of economic aid to provide for Tajikistan now that the civil war has ended. The UN has already asked donor countries to contribute $64 million in development aid to Tajikistan (Interfax, 1559 GMT, 28 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-268).

In addition to the financial strain that the refugees' return poses for the Tajik government, it could also result in considerable social strain. Those refugees who choose to return to their home towns and villages may come into conflict with the current inhabitants of those communities. Many of the houses abandoned by the refugees when they fled during the war were appropriated by others, who will probably not be inclined to return their new homes to the original owners. Furthermore, a large number of the refugees were driven out of their communities because of acts of violence committed against them by other members of the same community. Reestablishing normal relations between the refugees and those responsible for causing them to flee will be very difficult and could lead to further violent incidents.

**UZBEKISTAN**

**Afghan missiles strike Uzbekistan**

On 18 September, 10 rocket shells fired in clashes between the Taleban and anti-Taleban forces led by General Dostum's former ally, General Abdumalik, landed in the Uzbek city of Termez, leaving three people seriously injured (ITAR-
On 19 September, a spokesman for the Uzbek Foreign Ministry flatly denied rumors that Taleban forces had actually crossed over into Uzbek territory during their attack on the Afghan town of Hairaton (located across the Amudarya River from Termez). The spokesman further stated that Uzbek border guards were in complete control of that section of the Uzbek-Afghan border (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1216 GMT, 19 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-262). This portion of the Afghan-Uzbek border was subsequently sealed by Uzbekistan's border guards, an action no doubt intended as a safeguard to keep the violence from spilling over onto Uzbek territory, but which has also had the unfortunate consequence of cutting off the Tajik refugees waiting in camps near Mazar-i-Sharif from their planned route of return to Tajikistan (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 2 Oct 97). The original plan was for this group of refugees to return to Tajikistan through the Kampe-Sahi (Afghanistan) - Termez (Uzbekistan) corridor, but now an alternative route must be sought.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

Governments just say "no" to Russia's offer for protection

During the international forum on "Peaceful Coexistence of Nations and Good Neighbour Relations" held in Vilnius in early September, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin once again offered to provide security for the Baltic states. In his speech, Chernomyrdin explained what he saw as the benefits of Baltic isolation: "[I]n our opinion, the non-alignment of the Baltic nations will give Russia a chance to make new additional and concrete steps towards strengthening trust and security in the region." (ITAR-TASS, 0708 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248). Alas, the presidents of the three Baltic states were quick to point out that their views on NATO membership differed significantly from that of Russia. However, Lithuania's Algirdas Brazauskas was pleased to note that Chernomyrdin's proposal demonstrated "the peace-loving mood in Russia
regarding neighbouring countries." (Interfax, 1857 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248)

ESTONIA

Training tragedy leads to resignations
Estonia's three top defense leaders have tendered their resignations in the wake of the training tragedy that ended with the deaths of 14 soldiers on 11 September (Agence France-Presse, 1401 PDT, 16 Sep 97; clari.net; Monitor, 18 Sep 97). Defense Minister Andrus Oovel, Maj. Gen. Johannes Kert, the commander of the army, and Toomas Kitsing, the defense ministry's chancellor, submitted resignations after 14 members of the Estonian contingent to the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion drowned while on maneuvers. The soldiers were undergoing training exercises off the coast of Paldiski when bad weather caused conditions for crossing the strait to change dramatically. Eight soldiers of the 22-man reconnaissance team survived. (Agence France-Presse, 1421 PDT, 11 Sep 97; clari.net) The drowning incident was not the end of the military's woes. The following week, 18 Estonian soldiers went absent without leave for over 24 hours, reportedly for a drinking party. Later, three soldiers from an Estonian peacekeeping platoon, serving in Bosnia with a Danish platoon, were sent home due to "disciplinary problems." (Monitor, 18 Sep 97) Col. Oskar Mark, acting chief of staff of the military, subsequently denied that there was any crisis in the defense forces. (Estonian Television Network, 1845 GMT, 18 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-261)

Rights of non-citizens under revision
The treatment of non-citizens in Estonia continues to garner attention and has begun to prompt action, although apparently not sufficiently for some. President Lennart Meri has promised that the country will have implemented OSCE recommendations on human rights by year's end. (Radio Tallinn Network, 1600 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248). In an address to the Paasikivi Society in Finland, Meri promised that citizenship requirements would ease, and noted that
some requirements of the qualifying examinations already had been loosened. (Radio Tallinn Network, 1200 GMT, 4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248) The parliament began to institute changes shortly thereafter, first by extending the amount of time until Estonian becomes the official language in what are now Russian-language schools (the original deadline of the year 2000 has been amended to 2007) (Radio Tallinn Network, 1700 GMT, 10 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-253), and then exempting some Russian-language television programs from regulations which required an Estonian translation accompaniment (Radio Tallinn Network, 0900 GMT, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-254).

These changes do not meet the expectations of some observers, notably Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who alluded to alleged continued rights violations in the Baltic states during the Vilnius conference on "Good Neighbourly Relations," and EU parliamentarian Jorn Donner, who proposed in August that Estonia establish Russian as an official language and ease up on citizenship requirements. Donner's bilingualism proposal set off uproars in his native Finland and, not surprisingly, in Estonia as well. The Russian-language media in Estonia, on the other hand, welcomed the proposal by Donner, who was described in one publication as a "person with a wide vision." (Helsingin Sanomat, 9 Aug 97; FBIS-WEU-97-240)