1997-03-05

The ISCIP Analyst, Volume II, Issue 4

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/11898

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PRESIDENCY

Yel'tsin finally begins his second term

Debates over the health or incapacity of President Boris Yel'tsin have subsided as leading officials and analysts attempt to forecast the policy initiatives and personnel reorganization expected from Yel'tsin later this week. In the days leading up to his much-anticipated speech before the Federal Assembly, President Yel'tsin has at last addressed some of the critical problems facing the Russian Government. The President's recovery and re-engagement with governance highlight not only the possibility for effective action to confront wage arrears and military reform, but also the stagnation endemic to a presidential system in the absence of the executive.

In the case of military reform, mixed signals from Yel'tsin have caused a marked escalation in the continuing struggle within the Defense Council between DC Secretary Baturin and Defense Minister Rodionov. On February 17, President Yel'tsin met with Rodionov (apparently for the first time in several months) and announced his support for the Defense Minister. Apparently assured that he had won Yel'tsin's endorsement, Rodionov launched attacks against the government for non-payment of funds, against 'new Russians' for ruining the Armed Forces, and against Baturin for soft-peddling the dire circumstances of the military.

Yel'tsin, in response to Rodionov's invective, told his Defense Minister to "stop whining," and in a radio address on February 28 announced military reform objectives which closely followed Baturin's proposals. As speculation began over the possible dismissal of Rodionov, Yel'tsin met with the commander of the Far
East Military District, Colonel General Viktor Chechevatov. While Chechevatov was thought to have been a candidate for Defense Minister last summer, it seems unlikely that Yel'tsin is considering him as a replacement for Rodionov at this junction. In the previous week, Rodionov had made the condition of the Armed Forces in the Far East an issue in his struggle with Baturin: Rodionov claimed Baturin returned from his tour of the Far East and reported that all was well, but that the commander had cabled that he needed help. (Radio Rossii, 23 Feb 97) Yel'tsin probably called in Chechevatov to hear his analysis in person. It is interesting to note that Chechevatov met first with Baturin before seeing the President.

Whether Rodionov will be dismissed or rather called upon to take up his rival's reform proposals will have to wait for Yel'tsin's final word. In the meantime, Yel'tsin has made quite clear that a personnel reorganization is in store for the Government and possibly his Administration. In a televised appearance with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Yel'tsin criticized the Government for its inability to pay pensions and wages and to alleviate social conditions. Citing public opinion polls, Yel'tsin noted "Many Russians are not satisfied with the Government, its chairman, and consequently the President." While Chernomyrdin pointed to problems at the regional level in disbursement of federal funds, Yel'tsin called for changes to the structure and personnel of the Government in Moscow.

Speculation over the possible variants of this 'cadre-letting' have run the gamut from the dismissal of Chernomyrdin, the transfer of Chubais back to the Government, or the re-appearance of Gaidar in the Prime Minister's seat. It may prove more fruitful, however, to look to the First Deputy Prime Ministers to consider the ramifications of this upcoming reshuffling. In the long absence of the President, the First Deputies represented a careful balancing of personal and institutional interests. Now, as the President seems poised to re-assert his authority, the fate of the First Deputies may shed light on the influences and officials closest to the President.
Alexei Bolshakov, the 'senior' First Deputy who deputizes for Chernomyrdin, has oversight of the industrial sector and represents the interests of the former 'Red directors.' His removal would be a rebuke to Chernomyrdin, especially if the banking interests represented in the government are left in place. Vladimir Potanin, former president of Oneximbank, oversees the economy as First Deputy and represents the banking/financial sector. He is closely linked with Presidential Chief of Staff Anatoli Chubais and was instrumental in the Chubais-led prong of Yel'tsin's re-election campaign. His dismissal has been often suggested, but if he remains in the Government it would provide testimony to Chubais' continued influence. The third First Deputy is Viktor Ilyushin, the former first assistant to President Yel'tsin. At the time of his appointment, he was considered the (pre-Chubais) Kremlin's eyes in the government. Other reports suggest however, that Ilyushin's government post was his parachute out of the Presidential Administration. In any event, Ilyushin was given oversight of social policy and therefore is a highly likely target for 'restructuring.' Given his long service to the President, however, it seems likely that yet another new position will be found for him.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger

WEST
Primakov claims NATO-Russian relations will be legally binding
In talks in Moscow on NATO expansion, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright agreed that the treaty or document to be signed by Russia and NATO must be binding for both sides, Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov told a February 21 news conference.
"From Russia's viewpoint the agreement or document which is supposed to be signed with NATO must be binding," Primakov said. "As far as I understand, the Secretary of State agreed with that."

Albright did not deny the statement of her Russian counterpart. She spoke of very significant progress at her talks with Primakov but admitted there remained quite complicated matters and said very much would have to be done on them. (Interfax, 21 Feb 97)

The results seemed to confirm the wisdom of Primakov's decision to take a hard line before the talks. "Russia has been and will be negative about NATO enlargement, and negotiations we have with our partners do not aim to find a compensation for a change in our stance," Primakov told correspondents in Moscow on Tuesday, February 18. "The Russian stance won't change." Russia would only be satisfied with a "binding treaty" to be "obligatory for the sides," Primakov said. (ITAR-TASS, 18 Feb 97)

Albright, on the other hand, had prepared the ground for her Moscow visit with a speech in Brussels in which she proposed the creation of a joint Russian-NATO force and a "NATO-Russia" joint council on which Russia would have a vote but not the right of veto. The secretary of state also said the U.S. had persuaded its allies to accept a reduction in troops on the territories of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 20 Feb 97)

After the talks a Russian analyst listed the following further U.S. proposals. "The United States is prepared to carry out a unilateral reduction of NATO armed forces in Europe, so that the fact that the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary are joining the alliance will not increase its military potential;" the analyst wrote. "It is proposed to revise the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces with due regard for Russia's new interests; to set up a consultative council on questions of European security, which Russia will join along with the 16 NATO states; and,
finally, to form a Russian-NATO brigade to conduct chiefly peacekeeping operations." (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 22 Feb 97)

EAST AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Polish interior minister claims Russia will sabotage NATO bid

Polish interior minister Zbigniew Siemiatkowski raised hackles in Warsaw and Moscow on February 16 when he accused Russian intelligence agencies of attempting to sabotage his nation's bid for NATO membership.

"Simultaneous attempts are being made to seize strategic sectors of the Polish economy with the capital of the Russian secret services, as exemplified by the recent Gavrilov affair and the establishment of strong links between the Polish and Russian economies which could provide an alternative to Poland's joining the EU," Siemiatkowski said in an interview with the Polish daily Rzeczpospolita.

Influential individuals from the West -- publishers, editors, congressmen, senators, European Parliament deputies -- had been invited to visit Russia in order to influence their opinions, Siemiatkowski said.

"This bears the trademark of the coordinated activities of the Russian secret services," Siemiatkowski says. "Huge provocations staged by them may be expected in the nearest future." (Rzeczpospolita, 15-16 Feb 97)

The Russian Foreign Ministry quickly issued a statement condemning Siemiatkowski's comments. "The conjectures, unsupported by any evidence, show that someone in Poland is interested in launching an anti Russian campaign and a spy hunt. . . Our negative position on NATO expansion is known very well. This, however, does not mean that we are conducting any activities running counter to international standards and the spirit of our relations with Poland," the statement read. (Rzeczpospolita, 19 Feb 97)
Baltic representatives tangle with Moscow
Alfreds Cepanis, Chairman of the Saeima and leader of a Latvian delegation to Russia, said on his return that Russian politicians condemned discrimination against Russian speakers in our country and the poor efforts at naturalization. (Radio Riga Network, 19 Feb 97)

The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in turn denounced attempts to delay the concluding of an Estonian-Russian border agreement and to link it to other unrelated issues, such as Tallinn's desire to join NATO. (Radio Tallinn Network, 19 Feb 97)

SOUTHWEST AND SOUTH ASIA
Russia asserts itself in Middle East, Asia
While Western diplomats and journalists were preoccupied with Albright's visit to Moscow, Russian parliamentarians and foreign ministry officials were assiduously wooing Middle Eastern and Central Asian nations.

Palestinians
Three days before meeting Albright, Russia's foreign minister and president hosted Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat. Arafat said that President Boris Yel'tsin had "touched his innermost feelings," and that "the meeting even went beyond the bounds of protocol." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 18 Feb 97)

Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov said Arafat had assured him that the Palestinian side wanted Russia to be more involved in the Mideast peace process and that he hoped that "in a number of years Russia will have more opportunities to develop economic cooperation with what will already be the Palestinian state."
"Our policy for the settlement in the Middle East and stronger friendship with the Arab world is not only traditional but also strategic," Prime Minister Primakov said. (Interfax, 19 Feb 97)

**Kurds**

Even as Albright was in town to discuss the expansion of NATO, a conference of Kurds and sympathizers was meeting to denounce NATO-member Turkey. Delegates (including Representatives from the Russian Foreign and Internal Affairs Ministries, Liberal Democratic Party, Communist Party, KGB, and the Armenian Dashnak Party) pledged to struggle against pan-Turkism and to pressure Istanbul to reach a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. It was also decided at the conference to launch work to set up a Kurdish radio. (MED TV Television, 22 Feb 97)

There were no reports of concern expressed for Kurds in Iran and Iraq. The two nations, however, were hardly being ignored.

**Iran**

On February 24 Sergey Belyayev, the head of the nominally-centrist 'Russia Our Homeland' party in the Duma, met with Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati. Belyayev said the Caspian belonged to the five littoral nations (Iran, the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, and Turkmenistan) and called for a legal regime which would encompass and define political, economic and legal aspects of the world' largest inland sea. (IRNA, 24 Feb 97) Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs Mohammad Hadi NejadHoseynian had announced the previous week that foreign companies could participate in Iran's gas transfer and export projects. (IRNA, 17 Feb 97)

A high-ranking official from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation had even hinted at a possible military or military-political union with
Iran and other nations, but Primakov said he has "not heard such proposals from our military." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 20 Feb 97)

Iraq
On February 25 Dimitri Yudin, first deputy chairman of the International Organizations Department at the Russian Foreign Ministry, received a warm welcome in Baghdad from Iraq's acting minister of foreign affairs, Hamid Yusuf Hammadi. The Iraqi diplomat stressed the importance of cooperation with Russia in efforts to have sanctions against Baghdad lifted. (INA, 25 Feb 97)

Kazakhstan
Pointing to the clash between Afghanistan's government and the Taliban insurgency, Primakov and Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasymzhomart Toqayev called for a greater collective effort by Russia and the Central Asian CIS states to limit the effect of the conflict. The foreign ministries of both Russia and Kazakhstan called for joint activities by the two countries intended to implement the UN action to end the violence. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 19 Feb 97)

Comment
Bait and Switch?
The U.S.-Russian talks on the expansion of NATO revealed how effectively Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov plays on American guilt. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has offered gestures of cooperation, such as a joint NATO-Russian task force, in the hope that Moscow would not turn away from the West in frustration. The State Department seems unaware that Primakov has already charted a non-Western course for Russian foreign affairs and that such mea culpas merely make his indignation more credible.

Interviewed by NTV television on the eve of talks with his American counterpart, Primakov said that Russia's size and strategic interests precluded close cooperation with a strong Western alliance. He denied being anti-Western but
said he could not "concentrate just on relations with the West and believe that at all costs these relations should not assume the form of a strategic alliance." In particular, Primakov said, it would not suit Russia to join a military alliance with the West, since "any alliance presupposes the possibility of fighting against someone, victories, national interests, and so on. Why should Russia join NATO? To fight China or Iran? It is not in our interests." (NTV, 16 Feb 97)

Given such a frank admission of Russia's new 'Eurasian' tilt, the State Department ought to feel free to cement bonds with the democratic states of Central Europe and to criticize Russia's deepening ties to dictatorships in Dushanbe, Tehran, Baghdad, and Beijing. It will not help Primakov critics (such as the outspoken Duma deputy Konstantin Borovoi) to agree that the West's support of democracy is a terrible threat to Russia. Albright has shown signs of resolve. One would wish that her coworkers in Washington and her critics in the American press would stop offering condolences on the death of postwar cooperation to a Russia that no longer grieves.

Russian Federation: Regional Elections and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Viktor Anpilov sets up new communist party

As he has been expelled from the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP), Anpilov established yet another party of the left. Within only two months the name of his group has been changed three times: from the RKRP(b) ('b' stands for Bolshevik) to the Communist Party of the Home Country of Soviets (KPRS) and finally to Communists--Working Russia. During a television show just before the New Year, Anpilov managed to squeeze 1.2 million rubles out of none other
than Zhirinovskiy himself. Viktor Ivanovich solemnly promised to television viewers to spend the money he had raised to achieve the dream of his life: people's television. The further splintering of the "workers' movement" is in keeping with the present political tendency toward party de-alignment, or disintegration. Whether the parties will re-coalesce for future electoral purposes is unclear. (Moskovskiy Komsomolets, 11 Jan 97)

Maj. General Nikolay Stolyarov claims return to Cold War possible
As the deputy chairman of the Russian Duma's Committee for International Affairs, his statements warrant attention. Stolyarov threatens that NATO's expansion plans may lead to the curtailment of Russian programs for reducing the stockpiles of nuclear, chemical and other weapons, which in turn will increase ideological confrontation between East and West. And in an inventive interpretation of NATO's mandate, Stolyarov asserts that economic interests in fact stand behind NATO's military plans. The West's movement to the East should therefore be viewed as an attempt to broaden the spheres of its influence. Going one better, Georgiy Tikhonov, the leader of the Duma committee on CIS Affairs, argued that Russia, "...must conclude a strong military treaty, a proper one, with China. Then [NATO] will pause to consider whether it is worth advancing its borders or not." (Interfax, 13 Jan 97).

Political intrigue surrounding Yel'tsin's illness
Not surprisingly, opposition members of the Federal Assembly have been attempting to remove Yel'tsin from office. Success is doubtful. The presidential envoy in the Duma, Aleksandr Kotenkov, described as legally meaningless a suggestion by Security Committee Chairman Viktor Ilyukhin to include a draft resolution on the early termination of powers of the President. The idea was forwarded to the Duma Legal Committee which rejected the resolution by claiming that Part 2 of Article 92 of the Russian Constitution which covers the impeachment of the president needs to be clarified. The constitution only provides for the grounds on which the president may be impeached. It does not
specify how impeachment and removal is to be conducted. Legislation should be
drafted which stipulates who will appoint the medical commission, on which
parameters the president may be recognized as incompetent, etc. While frivolous
attempts at removing the President are not promising, the legal or constitutional
construction of the debate is. (Interfax, 15 Jan 97).

Russian Federation: Chechnya
By Miriam Lanskoy

Start of "northern" route oil pipeline operations postponed
The Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) has again postponed
the start of operations of its Northern route (Baku-Makhachkala-Grozny-
Nevinnomyssk-Novorossiysk) from February 1 to April 1. Though the Chechen
government has guaranteed the safety of the pipeline, the magnitude of the tariff
is currently under discussion. The Russian agreement with the AIOC calls for a
$15.70 per ton tariff, whereas the Chechen side, represented by the Southern Oil
Company (YUNKO), requests $20.00 per ton. (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 8 Feb 97)

Russia and Chechnya resumed talks on the pipelines which had been postponed
due to the elections in Chechnya. The November 23 interim agreement had
called for the sides to finalize an agreement on the transportation, processing
and production of oil by December 1.[See Editorial Digest, Volume I, Number 3
(December 4, 1996)]

New government to be formed
Yanderbiyev's government, though it has formally resigned, continues to work
until new members are appointed by Maskhadov. Thus far little has been
announced about the composition of the new government. The president will act
as Prime Minister and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. (TASS, 14
Feb 97) Movladi Udugov has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and charged
with managing relations with Russia. His party the Islamic Order Union, won six seats to the republic’s parliament. (TASS, 20 Feb 97)

Second round of parliamentary elections fails to fill all the seats
Only five candidates were elected to the Parliament in the first round of the parliamentary elections held on January 27. The second round was held on February 15 to fill the remaining seats. According to the Chechen Central Electoral Commission, a district must have 50% turnout for the elections to be deemed valid. If this rule is applied only 32 deputies will have been added as a result of the second round, and 31 districts will have to have a third round. Russian electoral observers, individual candidates, and the National Independence Party have appealed the law, arguing that at this rate the process of electing a legislature will take too long, lead to voter fatigue, and ultimately fail to create a strong legislature. (TASS, 18 Feb 97)

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

Arms Sales
The Russians continue to pressure Ukraine to stay out of the international arms sales business (i.e., as a competitor to Russia). The Ukrainian sale of T-80 tanks to Pakistan is a much-publicized case in point. Even so, the two nations have signed an accord allowing Russian use of cold-war era early warning radars in Ukraine.

NATO Expansion
U.S. Secretary of State Albright offered a joint NATO/Russian brigade as part of a package aimed at easing Russian apprehensions about NATO expansion. Also offered were adjustments to CFE troop levels, which many say the Russians are
disregarding already.

**Russian Military Woes**

Personnel issues focus on manpower, training, and morale. Yel'tsin has ordered a 200,000-man reduction in armed forces manpower by the end of the year. In the meantime, many in the military have noted training and supervisory confusion: Ground Forces chief General Semenov continues to work even though Defense Minister Rodionov fired him. Yel'tsin countermanded the order and Semenov's status remains in limbo; Rodionov's star may be waning on part due to his public statement expressing serious doubts about the effectiveness of the controls over the Russian nuclear arsenal. He has also indicated that he may ground MIG-31 flights because the pilots are not getting enough flight time to safely operate the aircraft.

Amid these reports comes information that desertions and suicides are up in the Russian Armed Forces, 25 percent and 35 percent respectively. In other news, the Russian Federation reportedly has begun arming Cossacks in the regions bordering the north Caucasus republics. The leadership of these republics see this development as threatening.

**Arms Control**

Numerous stories have surfaced of the U.S. sale of high speed computers (sales of questionable legality) for use in the Russian nuclear weapon testing programs. Russia is reported to be moving ahead with a plan to build a facility to dispose of her large stockpiles (40,000 metric tons) of chemical weapons. Prior to the Mirzayanov case Russia had claimed she was already destroying the stocks. Mirzayanov disputed that claim in a fairly convincing manner, and was imprisoned for a time as a result.

**International Incidents**
Deserters from former Soviet military units (about 600 still in Germany) have requested and have been granted (over Russian objections) what amounts to asylum. Many have cooperated with western intelligence services and fear repercussions should they return to Russia or the former Soviet republics.

**Defense Ministry**
Rumors persist Rodionov may be sacked as defense minister. One Colonel General Vicktor Chechevatov, commander of the far east military district, was recently summoned to Moscow for consultations with Yel'tsin -- fueling speculation he may be in line for the top defense job.

**ARMED FORCES**
Key articles on the status of the armed forces recently have focused on underpaid and underfed troops as well as potential cuts of personnel. Yet this bleak picture is hardly surprising and there is not much hope being offered. The armed forces are disintegrating without pay, clothing and food. The situation continues to worsen. It appears that one solution being implemented is to reduce or drawdown the number of troops. "Either the country will get down to the problems of its army by reforming or modernizing it -- or else, possibly, it will make an important political move by reducing it unilaterally (because it cannot afford to feed it anyway)," according to at least one observer, Viktor Loshak (Moskovskiy Novosti, 9-16 Feb 97). There is no indication that as this is accomplished these troops are paid the arrears. If not, they add to the instability of the situation. There is little doubt why crime is on the rise in Russia. "...The disintegration of the army into armed groups, which will earn their living by trading in weapons and by robbery, is quite a realistic probability."

In contrast, funding apparently is available for some military expenditures, such as training of carrier-based pilots, testing of combat planes and nuclear cruisers, and the introduction of missile-firing hovercraft to the Black Sea Fleet.
It appears that there have been some decisions made regarding spending with the future in mind. The Navy is getting the emphasis. Their carrier pilots will be able to continue training. The SU-32, a 21st century aircraft, though thought an excellent export aircraft, will not be sold until Russian Forces have a like capability. It too is best-suited for maritime operations. The hovercraft, a new design, is the fastest ship in the arsenal and is considered a ship for the future. The nuclear cruiser once repaired will be underway again. Most noteworthy is the contrast between the obvious willingness to spend money on these items while the Army starves.

**Cossacks satisfied with new military status**
The designation of the Baykal, Siberian, and Terek Cossack units has been changed from that of public organizations to that of state servant. From the 1980s the relationship with the Cossacks took on a formal stance, with Russia accepting them as "paramilitary forces." Today they are now part of the military. What is the impetus behind this? It seems to be the same old story -- Russian imperialism -- with these military mercenaries to be used for new pogroms against ethnic minorities seeking self-determination.

**Russia reserves right of nuclear weapons first use**
Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin has now stated clearly that Russia reserves the right to follow every military road: "Everyone should know that if there is a direct challenge, our response will follow a full program, so to say, and it is for us to choose the elements of this program, including nuclear weapons...Only in that way can we use the materialized defense-building effort of many generations of Russians for their reliable protection." Moreover, he blithely evades keeping earlier Russian promises. "We have got down to a serious analysis of the treaties signed by the country and frankly speaking some political declarations of the past arouse great doubts...Our people developed a defense system, a nuclear shield, an instrument of deterrence denying themselves the most vital things for decades. And suddenly without warning or consulting
anyone it was declared that we will not be the first ones to use these weapons." The question remains what would be a direct challenge and from where would it come? His comments do not seem to count nuclear use as a weapon of mass destruction but rather as a survivable military tool. His understanding of deterrence and first use seems a little confused-- they are not synonymous as he seems to imply.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

Official denies Shevardnadze supports alternative to CIS
Georgian Presidential Press Secretary Vakhtang Abashidze rejected a report by the RIA news agency alleging that, during his visit to Ukraine, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze supported the creation of a new union to replace the CIS. Abashidze said the criticism voiced against the CIS does not indicate an attempt to create an alternative Commonwealth. (SAKINFORM, 17 Feb 97)

Peacekeeping commander confirms hostages released
General Zavarzin, commander of the CIS peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan, confirmed the Tajik president's claim that all hostages in Tajikistan had been released. Tajik President Emomali Rakmonov said that he and the hostages would be leaving for Dushanbe shortly. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 17 Feb 97)

Islamic extremism seen sweeping CIS
According to Sovetskaya Rossiya (15 Feb 97), "The tragic business of the rescue of the hostages seized by one of the guerrilla detachments in Tajikistan has once again highlighted the threat of Islamic fundamentalism that is moving ever closer to Russia's borders." Sovetskaya Rossiya also pointed to the "newly elected
Chechen president's assumption of office, the resumption of the Taleban advance toward the north of Afghanistan, the Muslim League's accession to power in Pakistan, and the unrest among the local principally Muslim population in the XinjiangUygur autonomous region of China" as further evidence of the spread of Islamic extremism.

In an attempt to link America with the Islamic threat, the paper claimed that "U.S. representatives' contacts with the Taleban, which have become more frequent of late, have set warning bells ringing. According to agency reports, CIA staffers have for this purpose paid several visits to Islamabad while a Taleban delegation visited Washington at the beginning of February."

**Solana tour 'Blatant Invitation' to CIS states to join NATO**

Moscow's Rossiyskiye Vesti reported on 14 February that NATO General Secretary Javier Solana completed his tour of the CIS's southern flank. The paper went on to say "the visitors from Brussels conceal[ed] the undeclared, behind the scenes aims of their meetings [which were] a blatant invitation to the CIS countries to join the alliance and an attempt to prevent the creation of a defense union which would counter the potential threat to the Commonwealth from the West. And this threat is entirely tangible."

The paper also reported that General John Sheehan, commander in chief of the NATO Joint Armed Forces, intended to fly to Bishkek to take part in a conference with the defense ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. The purpose of the conference was to confirm a plan for conducting the first peacekeeping exercises in the Central Asian region under the "Partnership for Peace" program in September 1997 in either Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan.

**Yel'tsin congratulates CIS defense ministers on anniversary**

Russian President Boris Yel'tsin congratulated the CIS Council of Defense Ministers on the fifth anniversary of its foundation. His message notes that
throughout the period the Council found "optimal ways of solving integration problems in the military sphere to ensure the security of the Commonwealth's member countries." (Mayak Radio Network, 14 Feb 97)

**Defense ministers meet to bolster common defense**
At a meeting with his Uzbek counterpart, Rustam Akhmedov, Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov said: "One can take many things in the country calmly but not security because one day this may lead to a catastrophe." The two ministers are expected to discuss "bilateral military and military technical cooperation and pressing CIS problems in defense." (Interfax, 18 Feb 97)

**Isingarin on results of CIS meeting**
The Kazakh chairman of the CIS Integration Committee, Nigmatzhan Isingarin, while discussing the results of the CIS Heads of Government meeting on January 17 1997, indicated he was still strongly in favor of continuing economic integration. Isingarin stated his country traditionally favors integration, noting that Kazakhstan is a member of the Eurasian Union and the Customs Union. He went on to say that the CIS countries, especially Russia, remained the republic's main trading partners.

The Chairman did note, however, that his committee did not have "a clearcut program of action" for integration. When asked what projects the Integration Committee was working on, he discussed the formation of a transport union and the drafting of a plan for "The Establishment of Common Conditions of the Supply of Products for New Technology." Additionally, Isingarin claimed work was initiated on bilateral agreements dealing specifically with eliminating dual taxation, preventing evasion of taxes on income and capital, and concerning the convertibility and stabilization of the rates of exchange of the national currencies. (Delovoy Mir, 23 Jan 97)

**Belarusian Minister for CIS affairs urges bi-lateral integration**
Ivan Bambiza, Belarusian minister for CIS affairs, discussed the creation of the Community of Belarus and Russia and the effect it might have on CIS integration. Vo Slavu Rodiny (11 Feb 97) reports the minister said, "I am assured [integration] will be a beneficial influence. The point is that the 12 CIS states have now come to the moment when it is necessary to rise above the accomplished things and make a subsequent step toward closer cooperation in the economic and humanitarian spheres (...) For this purpose, the fundamental principles of joint activity within the framework of the Community of Belarus and Russia have to be extended to the CIS."

When asked what he envisioned as the Community's final goal, he replied, "I think that at the current stage we can strive toward a Community of states resembling a confederation," but continued, "It is also important that our integration does not imply a loss of sovereignty or a mechanical merger of the two independent states; it is an equal union of their interests and efforts." He did not rule out, however, the formation of "a system of supranational management bodies in the Community," separate from the CIS, to oversee the functions of the organization.

**Kazakh foreign minister to visit Ukraine**

In preparation for his upcoming visit to Ukraine, Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasymzhomart Toqayev stressed that Kazakhstan regards Ukraine as a "very important European nation, whose prestige is steadily growing in the international arena," but also noted that Almaty and Kiev sometimes hold "different stands on integration within the CIS framework." Nevertheless, politicians of both states believe that "bilateral relations are of special value," the minister said.

During his visit, the Kazakh Foreign Minister will attempt to strengthen bilateral relations with Kiev. Also on his agenda is a meeting with President Leonid Kuchma. Mr. Toqayev pointed out that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Kiev and Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma visited Almaty last year, and
added "We are trying to develop a permanent dialogue at the top political level."
(Interfax, 13 Feb 97)

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Alexandra S.Y. Kim

BELARUS

Over 100 people arrested on Belarus to Europe march
On February 14, the Belarus to Europe march was organized by the youth organization of the Belarusian Popular Front. About 2,500 people marched on the sidewalks without breaking the public peace. Nevertheless, over 100 people were detained by the militia and "unidentified persons in civilian clothes."
(Belapan, 17 Feb 97)

The Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC) stated that the Minsk City's decision to reduce the march of 3,000 people to three groups of 15 persons each was illegal (Belapan, 20 Feb 97).

President Lukashenka wants parliament to approve Linh as premier
Deputy Prime Minister Linh was named as acting prime minister after Mikhail Chyhir was dismissed in November 1996. Lukashenka's appointment of Linh will be passed by a simple majority vote in the House of Representatives, the national parliament's lower chamber (Interfax, 14 Feb 97).

On February 19, 97 members voted for and 8 against Linh's appointment as prime minister (Belapan, 19 Feb 97).

Crime rate rose 6% in January 1997 compared to last year
Ministry of Statistic and Analysis stated 9,100 crimes were committed in Belarus in January 1996, a six percent increase compared to January 1996. About 59% of the crimes reported in January were not investigated.

MOLDOVA

Russian and Moldovan presidents meet
The presidents of Russia and Moldova met on February 25 and discussed the Dniester Republic. The Russian president said, "Of course, we also have to agree [on] a position on the contingent of Russian forces, as the Moldovan Constitution does not permit the presence of foreign troops in the country" (Interfax, 25 Feb 97). Two days before the meeting, the Russian Defense Council visited the Dniester region and said, "...the President has decided to reduce the manpower of the Armed Forces by 200,000 men during 1997." Although Russia and the Dniester Moldovan Republic agreed that a memorandum should be signed as soon as possible for the settlement of the conflict, the final draft of the agreement has yet to be made. (Mayak Radio Network, 23 Feb 97).

Secret services arrest groups of illegal weapon traders
After the recent arrest of weapon traders, the secret service stated that there are "122 criminal groups operating in Moldova, who have more than 1,000 people." President Lucinschi issued an order instructing the cabinet to submit to the parliament a program to combat crime before March 1 (ITAR-TASS, 13 Feb 97).

UKRAINE

Ukrainian-Georgian accords signed
On February 14, Georgian President Shevardnadze and Ukrainian President Kuchma signed a declaration for broader partnership and 15 other agreements on trade, economic, and legal issues. They also discussed prospects for Ukraine's participation in the construction of an oil pipeline going from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to the Georgian port of Poti (Interfax, 14 Feb 97).
Pakistan will receive 320 Ukrainian tanks

Ukraine signed a contract with Pakistan in 1996 for the delivery of 320 T-80UD tanks for some $2 million each. The first 15 tanks are planned to be shipped off February 19, and are expected to arrive in Pakistan on March 23 (Interfax, 18 Feb 97).

Russian Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Davydov objected to the delivery of the tanks to Pakistan and said that Ukraine signed the contract "without consulting Russia, and the implementation of the contract runs counter to the state interests of our country." Russia objects to the strengthening of Pakistan's military, because it conflicts with the interests of Russia's strategic partner, India (ITAR-TASS, 19 Feb 97).

FBI will help Ukraine to set up NBI

Ukraine will set up its own National Bureau of Investigations (NBI) with the aid of the FBI. Within few months, the FBI will open an office in Ukraine to help build Ukraine's new law enforcement system. The NBI is expected to have a staff of 970 people, and will include for the first time a special sector for the protection of the witnesses and defendants in court hearings (ITAR-TASS, 21 Feb 97).

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoyp

ARMENIA

Solana visits the Caucasus

In contrast to his visits to Georgia and Azerbaijan, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana received a tepid reception in Armenia. The Armenian Foreign Minister, Aleksandr Arzumanian, informed him that Armenia and Russia are strategic partners and that the Russian leadership has legitimate apprehensions on the issue of NATO enlargement. (TASS, 12 Feb, 97) In contrast the Azeri and
Georgian leadership repeatedly stressed their European identity, OSCE and PfP membership, professed their desire to further cooperation, and confirmed that NATO enlargement poses no threat to their interests.

President takes over Prime Minister's duties due to PM's illness
A little over a months after he was appointed Prime Minister, Armen Sarkisyan is reportedly sick and President Ter-Petrosyan has taken over his duties. (TASS, 18 Feb 97) Prior to his appointment Sarkisyan served as ambassador to Great Britain. Soon after taking office, he traveled to Moscow to sign a contract by which Russia would supply Armenia with natural gas in exchange for transporting Russian gas through Armenia to Turkey. (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 11 Feb 97)

AZERBAIJAN
AIOC goes ahead with western pipeline route
Until the problems with the Northern route are resolved, Azerbaijan will send its oil by rail to the Georgian port Supsa. A working group of Georgian and Azeri experts are charged with developing the details of the project. (Interfax, 18 Feb 97) On February 28, the AIOC announced its intention to begin immediate construction of a pipeline from Baku to Supsa. It is estimated that construction will be completed by December 1998 and that the pipeline will carry 115,000 barrels a day of oil. (OMRI Daily Digest, 3 Mar 97)

However the Georgian route may also prove problematic. The port Supsa is located in Ajaria, an autonomous formation in Georgia that hosts a Russian naval and border bases -- which gives Russia effective control of the port. Moreover, Ajaria has exhibited some signs of seeking greater autonomy including the status of a Free Economic Zone, which if implemented may reduce Georgia's profit from the transit fees.

The quickened pace in promoting the western route comes as a result of oil and gas agreements and a declaration signed by President Aliyev and President
Shevardnadze by which Azerbaijan and Georgia became "Strategic Partners."
This phrase, which they borrowed from Primakov's rhetoric, emphasizes an important element of the agreement: it strengthens bilateral relationships among CIS members without using CIS mechanisms. Such extra-CIS ties are promising in that they may buttress the parties in their dealings with Moscow. Ukraine, which also seeks to attract pipelines, may be another candidate for the partnership.

GEORGIA
Georgia still storing enriched uranium
Though Georgia's nuclear reactor was shut down in 1995, the nuclear center still houses 4 kilograms (sic) of 90 percent enriched Uranium-235. The center has been attacked twice by armed persons who shot at the locks. (NTV, 20 Jan 97) Though the International Atomic Energy Center has installed a security system, the danger of the materials falling into the wrong hands remains. The Georgian government was ready to pass the Uranium along with the nuclear waste to Russia or the United States. The U.S. felt that this was Russia's responsibility; Russia which had agreed to take the substances for "recycling" in 1996, has thus far failed to do so.

Russian patriots menace South Ossetian settlement
Two days after a commission which monitors the progress towards the settlement of the South Ossetian conflict announced some very positive outcomes, a coalition of Russian Communists and Nationalists circulated a statement expressing support for the people of the "Republic of South Ossetia" and stating that the only positive outcome of upcoming quadripartite talks is the affirmation of South Ossetian statehood. The North Ossetian Regional Committee of the Russian Federation's People's Patriotic Alliance includes the North Ossetian Republican Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Council of War Veterans, the Derzhava sociopolitical movement,
and the Regional Department of the Women of Russia Movement. (Radio Tbilisi Network, 20 Feb 97)

That bit of bile from the patriots comes on the heals of a decision to cut the number of peacekeeping checkpoints and personnel in South Ossetia. The number of checkpoint will be brought down from 30 to 16 and will be distributed as follows: five Georgian, five Ossetian, and six Russian. Since at this stage the peacekeepers are mainly performing police functions, these duties will be gradually transferred to the local authorities. The mixed commission also adopted a document on the rules for the return of refugees and established a permanent body of Georgian and Ossetian representatives to coordinate the process. (Iprinda, 18 Feb 97)