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PRESIDENCY

Dogs of war?
Speaking off the cuff in front of foreign media reporters, President Yel'tsin issued what appeared to be a stern warning to the United States over its Iraq policy: "By his actions, Clinton might run into a world war. He is acting too loudly." (Interfax, 4 Feb 98; BBC at news.bbc.co.uk)

As journalists sought clarification of Yel'tsin's statement, they speculated on a possible Russian defense of Iraq in the event of an American attack. In a rush to squelch international concern over the remarks, Presidential Spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky described the journalists' interpretation of Yel'tsin's statement as "ridiculous and absurd." Yastrzhembsky did not, however, offer his own spin on the president's intended message. Given Yel'tsin's propensity for hyperbole when departing from prepared texts, particularly in front of foreign audiences, it seems likely that Yastrzhembsky will concentrate his attention on keeping the president and his staff on the same page.

Yel'tsin rules out 2000 presidential bid
While it may be much too early to accept President Yel'tsin's latest statements as the final word on this subject, Yel'tsin has announced that he will not seek re-election in the year 2000. He has also suggested that he, yet again, has a potential successor in mind. At this point, Yel'tsin's new chosen heir remains unnamed, most likely an attempt to shield him from media scrutiny and political attack.
Presidential review of death sentences
Hailed as a step "towards the abolition of the death penalty," President Yel'tsin will now review every death sentence handed down, regardless of clemency appeals by the convict. The mechanism of presidential review is an apparent attempt to reconcile disparate elements of the judicial system in the wake of Russian accession to the Council of Europe's protocol on abolition of the death penalty. While there has been a moratorium on executions in Russia since August 1996, the courts have continued to allow the imposition of death sentences. (ITAR-TASS, 11 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

APPARAT
Presidential staff substantially changed?
Despite the absence of a presidential decree outlining yet another restructuring of the apparat, there have apparently been significant changes to the structure and influence of presidential advisers. Chief of Staff Valentin Yumashev has reportedly managed to sideline several former close Yel'tsin advisers, without resort to official presidential approval of the reshuffle. In addition to the long-time assistants formally fired last year, Satarov and Ryurikov, also lost in the shuffle are Yevgeni Shaposhnikov, Boris Kuzyk, Mikhail Krasnov and Anatoli Korabelshchikov. (Komsomol'skaya pravda, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013)

Yevgeni Savostyanov, deputy chief of the Presidential Staff in charge of personnel matters, has also announced a ten percent reduction in staff personnel, which is asserted to be a dismissal of 200 staffers. Savostyanov's explanation for the cuts focused on financial, not ideological issues: "In 1997 due to certain decisions, we expanded beyond the limits set by the budget." (Interfax, 19 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-019)

SECURITY COUNCIL
Chechen policy again highlights leadership rifts
MVD Chief Anatoli Kulikov's recent calls for "preventive strikes against bandit bases" in Chechnya has provoked a strong dissenting reaction from Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin. (ITAR-TASS, 6 Jan 98: FBIS-SOV-98-006)

Rybkin, stressing adherence to the president's approach to a resolution of the Chechen situation ("peace, territorial integrity and great patience"), complained that "some people still want to solve problems facing the Chechen Republic by old methods used by Bolsheviks--everything and at once." (ITAR-TASS, 7 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-007)

Ramazan Abdulatipov, who heads up the Russian government's Commission for the Stabilization of the Socioeconomic Situation in Chechnya, has been conducting negotiations in Chechnya throughout its recent formation of a new government. While Abdulatipov has refrained from direct comment on the Kulikov-Rybkin split, he has remarked upon the perennial problem of lack of implementation of presidential and governmental orders concerning Chechnya. (ITAR-TASS, 10 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012) Among the recommendations Abdulatipov is prepared to present to the President on the Chechen/North Caucasus situation is a proposal for the establishment of a committee within the Nationalities Ministry to coordinate policy. (Interfax, 12 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

GOVERNMENT

Urinson blamed for sluggish arms sales

Economics Minister Yakov Urinson, who assumed oversight of arms sales after last year's reform and restructuring of Rosvooruzhenie and the Ministry of Defense Industry, has come under attack in a recent article in Moskovsky komsomolets (14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015) for alleged losses of arms sales of "more than $1 billion."

While purportedly an investigation of recent shortfalls in sales expectations, the MK article focuses on Urinson's role in the removal of arms sales authority from
the presidential apparat and, specifically, the undercutting of the former Rosvooruzhenie chief Aleksandr Kotelkin. The unflattering portrayal of Urinson's stewardship vis-a-vis Kotelkin's suggests a strong personal motive for this journalistic attack.

**Chernomyrdin health rumors confirmed by events?**
Anatoli Chubais chaired a government meeting in mid-January, which set off rumors that Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin was ill and recuperating at the Barvikha Sanatorium. (NTV, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015) While later developments appeared to refute the PM's health rumors, it has recently been announced that Chernomyrdin has taken a vacation and will spend at least some of his time at the sanitarium. (RFE/RL Newsline, 2 Feb 98)

Russian analysts are notoriously, and quite understandably, sensitive to potential health crises, nonetheless the state of the prime minister's health could well be an important variable in the current leadership conflicts, especially if Chernomyrdin is the chosen successor Yel'tsin has in mind.

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**
By John McDonough and Mark Jones

**Primakov opposes force in Iraqi inspection problems**
Russia opposes any use of force to settle the problems concerning the work of inspectors, Primakov said during his telephone talk with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on 13 January. The telephone conversation was initiated by Albright. Primakov emphasized the need for full cooperation between Iraq and the UN special commission, Russian foreign ministry spokesman Valeri Nesterushkin stated on 14 January. (Interfax, 1351 GMT, 14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014)
Primakov stated in a news conference the following week that Russia is in favor of Iraq fulfilling the UN Security Council resolutions, commenting that it was essential for Iraq to comply. However, he noted Russia's opposition to the use of strong-arm methods, which he said were counterproductive. Primakov said there was a whole arsenal of possibilities for exerting additional pressure, including more effective work by the special commission." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1659 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

**A new dimension to Baltic-Russian relations**

Moscow raised questions and concerns over the US-Baltic charter signed in Washington on 16 January, indicating that the new agreement might alter existing relationships with Europe and NATO.

The Russian side declares "with total certainty" that if the issue of the Baltic states' admission into NATO becomes a reality, Russia will inevitably have to revise its relations with the alliance, foreign ministry spokesman Gennadi Tarasov told a briefing in Moscow Tuesday. Russia "takes note" of the explanation that the charter is not legally binding, he said. "At the same time, comments by the signatories are full of words about the United States' commitment to aid in the admission of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to NATO, although it was said previously that the issue of the Baltic states' acceptance into the Alliance is not on the agenda. (Interfax, 1259 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

Russia hopes that the charter between the US and the Baltic countries "will not bring negative elements into Europe's system of interaction appearing in the process of working out a general and universal model of security," foreign ministry spokesman Valeri Nesterushkin said at a briefing in Moscow prior to the signing of the Partnership Charter. Russia's attitude to this document will depend on "its consistency in ensuring open, equal and good-neighborly ties in the
Baltics as a part of constructing a new Europe without division lines," Nesterushkin said. (FBIS-SOV-98-015)

Prior to the signing of the new charter, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeev noted that positive changes have taken shape in Russian-Baltic relations; however, the process of clearing the obstacles of the past and mutual confidence-building needs to be continued. These comments came while concluding a working tour of the Baltics. The conversations centered on the Russian president's proposals to strengthen trust and stability in the Baltics and his proposal to cut unilaterally the armed forces in northwestern Russia by 40 percent. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 14 Jan 98, p. 7; FBIS-SOV-98-014)

Kovalev on challenges facing Federal Security Service
The director of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), Nikolai Kovalev, reported that his service has information on a number of international organizations purposefully interfering in Russia's domestic life. "A new and not always favorable geopolitical and international situation for Russia has emerged," he said. According to Kovalev, negative processes in the Russian economy constitute a serious threat to national security. These processes are aggravated by the centrifugal aspirations of Russian territories, which increase the threat to the territorial integrity of the country. National separatism is increasing, and favorable conditions have appeared for ethnic conflicts. "Today this is one of the biggest threats," he said. (Interfax, 1613 GMT, 19 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

Moscow glad Bosnian Serbs form constitutional executive
Russia is satisfied with the creation of constitutional executive power bodies in the Bosnian Serb Republic, spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry Gennadi Tarasov said at a briefing in Moscow on 20 January when commenting on the election of a new Bosnian Serb government led by the chairman of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, Milorad Dodik. (ITAR-TASS 1434 GMT 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)
US efforts for Middle East peace settlement welcomed
As a co-sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East, Russia welcomes any constructive efforts to overcome the impasse in the peace process, including efforts by the other co-sponsor, the United States, according to Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Tarasov. Moscow believes that concerted actions--by Russia, the United States and other countries--that can influence the situation in the Middle East constructively are needed to overcome the impasse in the Mideast peace process, the spokesman said at a briefing. (Interfax, 1603 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

Space agency director to discuss technology export with US
US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Director-General of the Russian Space Agency Yuri Koptev were scheduled to discuss the US and Russian stands on observing the export procedures for rocket technologies during Koptev's visit to the US last month. Koptev arrived in the US capital to sign an agreement on the international space station and a memorandum of implementing the intergovernmental agreement with NASA. (ITAR-TASS, 0932 GMT, 27 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-027)

New interest in North Korea noted
Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov said he will soon visit North Korea to "confirm Russia's interests on the Korean peninsula and its commitment to detente and settlement of relations between the South and the North." Foreign ministry official Aman Irgebaev followed by saying that Russia is trying to restore its previous positions in North Korea and the region as a whole and to establish a balancing in relations between Pyongyang and Seoul (ITAR-TASS, 21 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-021). In a related story, Russian Ambassador to North Korea Valeri Denisov said a new treaty outlining the basic principles of relations between Russia and North Korea is actively being developed by both countries. According to the ambassador, top priorities of the treaty are invigorating political contacts between
Moscow and Pyongyang and a joint search for ways to expand cooperation in economic and other fields (ITAR-TASS, 21 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-021).

**High-level talks produce a commission**
Japan and Russia agreed to set up a joint commission aimed at securing a bilateral peace treaty. The commission will be chaired by the foreign ministers of the two countries. The agreement was reached during the first round of negotiations called for in the November 1997 presidential agreement, which laid out plans for the two countries to sign a peace treaty by the year 2000 (Kyodo, 22 Jan 98; FBIS-EAS-98-022).

**Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch**

*By Michael Thurman*

**REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

*Ryzhkov: No 'Red Belt' seen developing*
Assessing the results of the 14 December 1997 elections held in seven Russian regions (Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Vladimir, Smolensk, Tambov, and Kaliningrad), State Duma First Vice Speaker Vladimir Ryzhkov claimed that the popular view that "Red belts" have almost encircled the entire country is untrue. The communist parties were routed in each region. According to Ryzhkov, the seemingly common belief that political parties play no real role in the society and politics of contemporary Russia is similarly false and therefore must be the invention of sociologists. In evidence, Ryzhkov points to the fact that the NDR has established factions in 23 regional assemblies and hopes that by the end of the year that number will increase to 30-35. (Rossiyanskaya gazeta, Dom i Otechestvo Supplement, 20-26 Dec 97, p. 1; FBIS-SOV-97-356)

*‘Industrial lobby’ wins Tomsk elections*
In accordance with the old adage that he who owns the gold makes the rules, virtually all seats in the Tomsk regional Duma have gone to representatives of the industrial lobby—that is, candidates with no party affiliation and who are connected to industry and banking. For example, the president of the Eastern Oil Company, Leonid Filimonov, and the company's vice president, Viktor Kalyuzhny were elected regional Duma deputies.

An interesting question may be raised as to why these busy industrial executives should choose to sit in the regional Duma themselves, rather than seat a front-man (or woman). Is it the perks of office, the lack of trustworthy drones, or an absence of respect for maintaining a discreet distance between public and private interests? Perhaps this is not surprising given that, with so much emphasis being placed on the beneficence of the marketplace, voters would believe that there is, and more importantly should be, no effective difference between politics and business. (Radio Rossii Network, 0400 GMT, 22 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-356)

Common sense said to win in Tambov
As with the recent election results in Tomsk, independent businessmen defeated party candidates and won a majority of seats in the new Tambov regional Duma. Even the Russian Communist party winners, who won 13 out of the 50 seats up for election, are businessmen and not ideologues. Local newspapers hailed the election of "pragmatic" deputies who understand that the region will be saved by economic development and not party slogans. Interestingly enough, the elections in both Tomsk and Tambov belie the assertion of State Duma Vice Speaker Vladimir Ryzhkov that political parties are of great importance in Russian elections (see above). At least on the local level, voters seem to trust in the restorative powers of local business acumen rather than national party promises. (ITAR-TASS, 0610 GMT, 22 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-356)
Duma amnesty will release 35,000 convicts

About 35,000 convicts will be released in Russia in compliance with an amnesty resolution passed by the Russian State Duma. The sentences of another 400,000 people will be either shortened or dropped if people indicted [sic] got a suspended sentence or were sentenced to punishment in other forms without imprisonment. [ISCIP note: I infer from the discussion of sentencing, that an "indicted" prisoner is in fact a "convicted" one; but given the state of the Russian court system, this inference might prove to be unfounded.]

The amnesty applies to pensioners, including men over 60 years of age and women over 50, persons who served in the army or took part in fighting to defend the Motherland or received state awards, invalids and people suffering from tuberculosis in a contagious form, adolescents who were sentenced to imprisonment of up to three years but were never indicted [sic] earlier, women imprisoned for a term of five years and who had served no less than a third of their prison sentence and people indicted [sic] for a term of three years for crimes committed as a result of carelessness.

The amnesty does not apply to people indicted [sic] for premeditated murder, severe violence, robbery, large-scale thefts, fraud, abuse of office, high treason, or subversive and terrorist acts. The amnesty does not apply to dangerous recidivists [sic], people indicted [sic] for violent crimes more than once, and those who had been amnestied earlier and were again convicted of another offense.

The purpose of this amnesty is to relieve pressure on the severely overcrowded and under-funded Russian prison system. The amnesty is also a result of the malformed Russian legal system, the workings of which are often politically motivated, operating with laws that are often contradictory and/or vague, and "proceeding" absent any clear direction from the highest courts. Broad amnesties granted by the legislative branch can only be temporary and should not be relied upon to correct, or even ameliorate, the poor showings of a chaotic and
insufficient judicial system. Correcting legislation is required. Such amnesties only work against the construction of a Russian society based upon the objective rule of law and support the bad old habits of legal capriciousness of the central authorities. (ITAR-TASS, 1956 GMT, 24 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-358)

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Lt. Col. Dwyer Dennis and CDR Curtis Stevens

Russian helicopter industry struggles to survive in a free market

During a recent review of the M.L. Mil General Design Bureau, which is marking its fiftieth anniversary, a recent Rossiyskaya gazeta article highlighted many of the current challenges of the helicopter industry. The overriding problem seems to be that during the Soviet period, two design teams, Mil and Kamov, were strongly subsidized and production was kept at very high rates. But today, there is neither the domestic nor foreign market to support such plant capacity. Since its inception Mil has developed, tested, and produced 12 basic types and more than 100 modifications. Approximately 30,000 helicopters have been produced, with more than 7,000 sold abroad. One solution considered is to convert aircraft construction to a commercial basis. The article points out that, even under the most favorable conditions, it takes five to seven years just to develop an aircraft, not counting production and marketing--far too long for businessmen expecting quick returns on investment. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 4 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-007).

While this transition occurs, workers go unpaid. The Mil design bureau's biggest customer, the army, is making the tough choice also. Strapped for cash, military leaders must choose between buying helicopters and feeding troops. In the west, the purchase of 30-40 helicopters per year was considered good, but Mil was accustomed to 300-400. Production is nearly at a standstill today.

Two other situations compound the uneasiness in the industry: privatization and resources. Six months ago, foreign ownership of the Mil Design Bureau was
about 14 percent; now it amounts to 35 percent, greater than the government's holdings. (NTV, 1900 GMT, 19 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-019) The resource challenge is a function of the distributed nature of the production process. The article provides a clear example, the Mil-26 helicopter, which is built in Rostov. The main rotor blade construction relies on a special composite called Nomex which was previously supplied by a small enterprise in Kazakhstan. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the plant was shut down. Now the Rostov plant must purchase the material abroad with very limited foreign currency coffers and may logically impact the competitive pricing that government subsidies afforded in the past. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 4 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-007)

The Soviet Union's defense industry was very distributed across the board, so the resource situation is by no means unique. However, the overwhelming capacity and competing design bureaus will make a successful transition very difficult. On the other hand, there has been some success: Recently at a Rzhev military enterprise in the Tver region, a new commercial two-seat helicopter has been designed, tested, and first two units manufactured within 18 months through a collaboration between Tver businessmen and the military enterprise. (ITAR-TASS, 1530 GMT, 17 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-017) Mil may also find that the foreign ownership may be in the bureau's best interest. Out of the 35 percent of shares held by foreign investors, approximately 10 percent are held by Sikorsky, a major US competitor. Such ownership may indeed lead to unique strategic partnering as the article described a joint development program currently underway between the two. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 4 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-007)

**Russia tests three new aircraft**

Inspite of continued budgetary woes, Russia continues to develop and test new aircraft. NTV released footage of the first flight of the Sukhoi Su-34 taking place in Novosibirsk. The Su-34 is a long-range fighter-bomber reported to have the most modern aerodynamics and possessing some "stealth" characteristics.
Meanwhile, testing continues on the Su-37 "the inverse sweptback wing design" (forward-swept) fifth-generation combat aircraft. Its design characteristics include supersonic capability and "stealth" and is planned to oppose the US F-22 Raptor. (Komsomol'skaya pravda, 17 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020) The third aircraft in development and testing is a new MiG-29 variant, the SMT. The MiG-29 SMT's main distinguishing features from previous MiG-29 multipurpose fighters are a new cockpit design and an increased flight range. Modifications include the latest avionics and radar functionality, doubled maximum ordinance payload, a dismountable aerial refueling system, and a potential unrefueled flight range of 3,500 km. (Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozerniye, 5-18 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

**Sergeev visits France**

Defense Minister Igor Sergeev completed a four-day visit to France on 17 January. Although no agreements were expected to be signed with the French, both sides agreed to expand their working groups with emphasis placed on space and aviation cooperation. Additionally military exercises at the company level have been scheduled in Russia and France for 1998 and 1999. The highlight of Sergeev's first official visit to France was a tour of the French Navy's SSBN base near Brest. (ITAR-TASS, 1956 GMT, 17 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-017)

**Decree designed to improve coordination on space systems**

President Yel'tsin issued a degree on 20 January on the improvement of military and civilian applications of the Russian military space industry. Russian Defense Council Secretary Andrei Kokoshin briefed reporters that the purpose of the degree was to "coordinate between the Defense Ministry and the Russian Space Agency the policy in the field of application of military and dual-purpose space systems." (ITAR-TASS, 1309 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

While the military and civilian space agencies may have reached a bureaucratic agreement of the future of Russian space policy, the general director of the
Russian Space Agency, Yuri Koptev, said on 23 January that 72% of Russian military and civilian satellites were past their operational life. The condition of military and civilian satellites "is equal and explained by a small size of the state support." Koptev went on to say "reformed armed forces and reformed Russia cannot exist without a corresponding space activity." (ITAR-TASS, 1437 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-023)

487 military suicides in 1997

Chief Military Prosecutor Yuri Demin announced that suicides accounted for 487 out of the 1103 non-combat deaths in the Russian military in 1997. Demin blamed draft commissions on the high rate since they often admit conscripts who "suffer from chronic and psychiatric illnesses." (RFE/RL Newsline, 23 Jan 98)

Meanwhile, on 27 January a soldier at a remote outpost on Sakhalin Island shot and killed six other privates and a warrant officer. The soldier was quickly apprehended and was reported as telling investigators he had been brutally hazed by one of the soldiers he killed. But Colonel-General Mikhail Klishin, a deputy chief of the General Staff, has a different explanation for the killings. He said the conscript responsible had been sniffing acetone and was a known substance abuser. The general went on to say the conscript had a police record. In 1997 there were 80 shooting incidents at guard posts with 36 fatalities. (Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 29 Jan 98)

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

Yel'tsin trying to reinvigorate commonwealth

President Boris Yel'tsin has been raising the visibility of CIS relations in his own country as well as other member states. In addition to declaring 1998 "The Year of the CIS," Yel'tsin recently stated that, "A very active period in the work of the
CIS is now beginning." Why the sudden emphasis on the commonwealth?
Perhaps the reason is revealed in the second half of Yel'tsin's statement:
"Summing up the results of 1997, we can say outright that the CIS was
jeopardized...some countries were ready to withdraw (from the commonwealth)"
(ITAR-TASS, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020).

Comment
The Chisinau summit apparently shook Yel'tsin more than first seemed evident.
Second only to the president's domestic agenda is his desire to maintain Russian
hegemony in the former Soviet space--minus the Baltics. Reintegration--political,
military, and economic--is Russia's goal. If this was ever questioned, elements of
the recently published National Security Concept erase all doubts. Chisinau
opened Yel'tsin's eyes to just how far Russia's former clients have strayed--and
Russia views this drift as a threat to its national security. Yel'tsin's statements
indicate the beginning of a trend and a redoubling of Russian efforts to bring the
"near abroad" back into the fold. Expect more of the same in the coming months.

New CIS peacekeeping commander appointed
The council of CIS defense ministers have appointed Major General Sergei
Korobko as the new commander of the CIS collective peacekeeping forces in
Georgia. Korobko is 50 years old and is being transferred from Russia's Main
Military Inspectorate. He was born in North Ossetia and has served in
Azerbaijan. In his first official statement, the new commander reminded
observers that the peacekeepers' oft-renewed mandate expires on 31 January
and called for yet another extension (Radio Rossii Network, 1400 GMT, 19 Jan
98; FBIS-UMA-98-019, and NTV, 1300 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-UMA-98-020).

Move toward economic integration continues
Leaders of the CIS Group of Four (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan)
held a summit in late January and moved closer to forming a customs union.
President Nazerbaev of Kazakhstan, the leader of the group's economic
committee, proposed that the final version of the treaty on creating a single economic space between the four countries should be modeled on the European Union system (Interfax, 22 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-022). For its part, Russia continues to operate its "customs academy" to train CIS officials. How can the training at the academy be characterized? According to NTV correspondent Aleksandr Ostrovsky, "Despite the fact that half of the academy's students are representatives of the weaker sex, military discipline reigns here. The training course even includes karate just in case a criminal needs to be dealt with more firmly" (NTV, 1600 GMT, 24 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-024).

On newsstands soon: CIS Today
Members of the Council of CIS State News Agencies, under the chairmanship of ITAR-TASS General Director Vitali Ignatenko, drew up a draft convention on the status of CIS correspondents working in other member countries. Among other things, the draft calls for preferential conditions and eased accreditation procedures for journalists in other commonwealth states. The draft will now go forward to the Council of Heads of State for approval. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine did not sign the agreement. Valery Talkachow, head of the Belarusian president's press service, called for the creation of a single CIS newspaper as well as a single radio and television channel. According to Talkachow, if the Heads of State do not adopt the convention, there will be no reform of the CIS (Rossiyiskie vesti, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014). That is an interesting concept: setting up a press organization to achieve a political goal. Perhaps the Belarusian does not grasp the idea of a free, independent press.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tracy Gerstle

MOLDOVA
Tiraspol-Chisinau negotiations stalled
The Joint Control Commission (JCC), a tripartite group consisting of Moldova, Transdniestr officials and Russia, has not convened for the past two months. Tiraspol has refused to work with Vitalie Bruma (a deputy in the Interior Ministry, who was recently appointed to the JCC by Moldovan President Petru Lucinschi) due to his chastisement of Transdniestr authorities in the media. (RFE/RL Newsline, 21 Jan 98)

Tiraspol's representatives failed to appear for a 22 January meeting, at which the three sides were purportedly to draft a document that would bring a resolution to the conflict. (Basapress, 1750 GMT, 22 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-022) Currently the peacekeeping corps patrolling the security zone is under no one's control and there is speculation that Tiraspol will take over the area. (Basapress, 1757 GMT, 21 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-021)

Talks also have been hindered by Moldova's upcoming parliamentary elections in March. Anatol Taranu, Chisinau's head negotiator and a special advisor to President Lucinschi, is planning to run for a seat with the newly formed Speranta bloc. The bloc is a social-democratic group of parties, including the United Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDUM) and the Movement of Professionals, whose platform is "pro-presidential." (Infotag, 1717 GMT, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013) With elections only ten weeks away, Taranu said he may be reluctant to restart the talks, since they would take away from his time on the campaign trail.

**Lucinschi in Brussels**

Lucinschi met with NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana on 26 January. The two agreed to expand further Moldova's role in the US Partnership for Peace program and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. However, Lucinschi stressed that this new role would not harm relations with Russia. He said that Moldova is still a "neutral country and pursues a policy of non-alignment with military blocs." (ITAR-TASS, 1523 GMT, 26 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-026)
**Chemical weapons removed to Lvov to be destroyed**

When Russian troops deployed in the Dniestr region were withdrawn in July 1997, they left 200 tons of toxins behind, including dichloroethane (a degasifying agent) and over 40,000 tons of munitions. Dniestr authorities have been reluctant to let these armaments go, requesting that they be split 50:50 with Russia. However, in mid-January they cited the 1992 Russo-Moldovan agreement, which called for the withdrawal of all Russian military equipment in the region, and demanded that the chemicals be removed. All the chemicals will be sent to the Kaluch chemical plant in Lvov and liquidated. (NTV, 0900 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-TAC-98-023)

**UKRAINE**

**Population shrinking**

The Statistics Committee reported that the country’s population decreased by 415,000, out of a total of 50.5 million. Officials cited a high mortality rate and migration as the primary factors of the decline. (ITAR-TASS, 1733 GMT, 6 Jan 98; FBIS-TAC-98-023)

This was coupled by an announcement from Ukraine's Pulmonary Institute that tuberculosis rates have reached epidemic proportions. From 1990 to 1996 the rate of infection increased 45.1 percent. Currently 45.8 Ukrainians per 100,000 have the disease. Experts contribute the rise to spoiled food and poor medical care. (Intelnews, 0116 GMT, 20 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020)

No reductions planned in the Army or the Navy despite budget woes

The Ukrainian Minister of Defense, Oleksandr Kuzmuk, announced that despite current budget difficulties and a shrinking GDP, there will be no reduction in the two branches of armed forces. Instead, the structure of the Ukrainian military will be rearranged and the bureaucratic apparatus reduced. (Radio Ukraine World Service, 1600 GMT, 29 Jan 98; FBIS-UMA-98-029)
'Peace Shield 98' scheduled for August
As part of a NATO peacekeeping exercise, Ukrainian and Russian troops will for
the first time take part in a joint military exercise. The maneuvers, titled "Peace
Shield 98," will be held in Yarvorov, near Lvov, from 15 to 30 August. Seventeen
other counties will also join the exercise, of which the majority are vying for
NATO membership, including the Baltic states, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and
Bulgaria.

Ukraine in violation of PACE membership terms
The expansion of Ukraine's membership privileges in the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Council of Europe has been jeopardized by the country's refusal
to obey a moratorium on the death penalty, which is one of the conditions of
PACE membership. Executions were carried out in the Ukraine in 1996 and
1997. PACE leaders have said that they will not expel Ukraine from the
organization for noncompliance, since they hope eventually to convince the
country to follow their obligations. Further, the council will still consider expanding
Ukraine's privileges before PACE's spring session. (ITAR-TASS, 1907 GMT, 26
Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-02)

BELARUS

Milosevic, Lukashenka and Yel'tsin: Future comrades in arms?
During a visit to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Belarusian President
Alyaksandr Lukashenka said: "What we have agreed on in talks with Yugoslav
President Slobodan Milosevic...is approximately what we have (i.e. the Union
Treaty) between Russia and Belarus." (Interfax, 1249 GMT, 29 Jan 98; FBIS-
EEU-98-029) He hinted that the three may arrange talks in the near future.

Belarus loses its Council of Europe membership
In January Belarus' special status in the Council of Europe was suspended due
to its history of human rights violations. However Leni Fischer, chairwoman of the
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), said that the
organizations will keep the lines of communication with Belarusian authorities open. She also urged them to "strengthen relations with their neighbors," Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic states. (ITAR-TASS, 1808 GMT, 26 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-026)

**Common code of law for Russia and Belarus by 2000?**
Russian Minister of Justice Sergei Stepashin said that the Russia and Belarus should be able to set up a union justice ministry in the next two years, with a singular set of legislation, as called for in the Union Treaty. However, his Belarusian partner in the negotiations, Prime Minister Sergei Ling, said that unified legislation was a "far off goal." (Interfax, 0809 GMT, 19 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-019)

**ORT journalists convicted**
President Lukashenka described the sentences given to ORT journalists--Pavel Sheremet and Dmitri Zavadsky as--"mild." The two were allegedly caught illegally crossing the Lithuanian-Belarusian border and were sentenced to two and one and a half years respectively. (ITAR-TASS, 1442 GMT, 29 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-029)

While the trial was still in progress the two journalists' defense lawyers said that they would seek to have President Lukashenka charged for interference. They claim that he violated Article 172 of the Criminal Code, which states that "interference in a verdict on a criminal case is an abuse of office." In the days before the trial opened Lukashenka had said that "in time we will be able to call Sheremet simply a criminal."

**Newly Independent States: Central Asia**
By Monika Shepherd
TAJIKISTAN

NRC reconvenes, government continues to fulfill peace agreement

Tajikistan's National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) returned to its work on 23 January, following a flurry of meetings between President Rahmonov, United Tajik Opposition (UTO) leader and NRC Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri, and a contact group made up of representatives from the peace agreement's guarantor countries (these include Russia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Ukraine), the UN, and the OSCE. UN Special Envoy Gerd Dietrich Merrem met separately with both Rahmonov and Nuri in order to persuade the two men to sit down together and discuss ways of resolving their differences. Merrem's efforts were successful; the Tajik president and opposition leader held a two-hour meeting on 21 January in Dushanbe, at which Nuri declared his willingness to compromise. He also agreed to engage in further dialogue with the president in order to address the UTO's charges against the government peacefully and put the implementation of the peace process back on track (Interfax, 1329 GMT, 21 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-021).

President Rahmonov was given an opportunity to air his own grievances against the UTO on 17 January, before a meeting of the international contact group. The president's main complaints centered around the UTO's shortcomings in carrying out the terms of the military protocol outlined in the peace agreement. He charged that UTO members continued to violate the terms of this protocol by hiding and refusing to register their weapons and by recruiting new members to its military units even after the peace agreement had been signed. According to Russia's Ambassador to Tajikistan, Yevgeni Belov, the Tajik president was able to refute nearly all of the UTO's charges against him, implying that the opposition's withdrawal from the NRC occurred on frivolous grounds. Belov further stated that the members of the contact group felt that they should actively aid the Tajik government and UTO in the implementation of the peace agreement, rather than just acting as observers (Interfax, 1733 GMT, 18 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-020).
When the NRC reconvened on 23 January with all 26 delegates present, the members of the contact group were also in attendance (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1006 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-023). President Rahmonov and Said Abdullo Nuri held their second meeting later that day and were able to resolve a number of issues. The Tajik president again agreed to grant UTO deputy leader Haji Ali Akbar Turajonzoda (still living in exile in Iran) the post of deputy prime minister and allowed his decision to be announced to the press (Interfax, 1834 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-023). President Rahmonov also promised to grant amnesty to all of the UTO leaders (including Said Abdullo Nuri and Haji Ali Akbar Turajonzoda) who were convicted on charges of civil resistance in 1993 (Interfax, 1548 GMT, 26 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-026). Nuri, for his part, agreed to obtain the speedy release of the remaining prisoners held by UTO commanders, to hasten the process of the UTO troops' registration, and to order the dismantling of opposition checkpoints which still exist east of Dushanbe (Interfax, 1834 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-023).

President Rahmonov and Tajikistan's Prosecutor General, Salomiddin Sharopov, attended the NRC's next meeting on 26 January, at which Sharopov announced that the criminal cases stemming from 1993 against Nuri, Haji Turajonzoda, and the other UTO leaders had been dropped and that they were officially amnestied (Interfax, 1548 GMT, 26 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-026).

On 27 January the peace process advanced an additional step, when Deputy Prime Minister Abdurahmon Azimov informed the members of the NRC's Military Subcommission, as well as the chairmen of Kofarnihon and Lenin districts, that the sites for the stationing and retraining of UTO troops are completely ready for the troops' arrival (Khovar, 1145 GMT, 27 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-027). The preparation of training camps for those UTO troops which have been registered and disarmed is another measure which is called for in the military protocol of the
peace agreement, and the Tajik government's failure to comply with this measure was one of the reasons for the UTO's withdrawal from the NRC on 15 January.

**UTO troops finally to return home from Afghanistan?**

135 UTO troops have assembled in the Afghan town of Taluqan, in accordance with the terms set out in the military protocol of the inter-Tajik peace agreement, in preparation for their return to Tajikistan via the Nizhnii Pyandzh checkpoint. According to a source in the UN observer mission who passed this information on to Interfax on 29 January, the troops and their commanders were flown to Taluqan from Nusay (1 km south of the Afghan-Tajik border) in helicopters provided by General Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. Some UTO troops remain in Nusay; they are to travel to Taluqan on foot (the military protocol stipulates that they may reenter Tajikistan only from the Afghan towns of Taluqan and Konduz). The troops are carrying only small arms. Their heavy weapons are stationed in an area located approximately 320 km east of Taluqan, and will be moved into Tajikistan much later (Interfax, 1418 GMT, 29 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-029).

**Russian prime minister sends Gazprom delegation to Tajikistan**

On 22 January, less than ten days after Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's visit to Tajikistan on 14 January, the Russian government sent a Gazprom delegation to meet with Tajikistan's Oil and Gas Committee, in order to discuss the establishment of joint Russian-Tajik ventures in the republic's fuel industry. The delegation's main task was to collect data on present conditions in Tajikistan's oil and gas industry and then report their findings to Gazprom's Chairman of the Board, Rem Vyakhirev, as well as to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin himself. The Gazprom delegation hoped to be able to sign its first joint venture agreement with the Tajik government by the end of January. Tajik Prime Minister Yahyo Azimov happened to be visiting Moscow at the time of the delegation's fact-finding mission to his republic, and so could have signed immediately a joint venture agreement on behalf of his government (Khovar, 1135 GMT, 23 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-023).
Comment

The Gazprom delegation's findings have so far not been reported in the press, nor has the Tajik government announced the signing of a joint venture agreement with the Russian joint-stock company. Such an announcement may come in the near future, however, since one of the topics of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's discussion with President Rahmonov was the repayment of Tajikistan's $300 million debt to Russia. The terms of the debt repayment have not yet been set. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin also discussed the possibility of granting additional state credits to the Tajik government to be used by its armed forces (ITAR-TASS, 1053 GMT, 14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014). The Russian government may be hoping to finance these new credits, as well as Tajikistan's current debt, at least in part with oil and gas deals which give extremely favorable terms to Gazprom.

UZBEKISTAN

President strengthens ties to Tajikistan

President Karimov received his Tajik counterpart, Emomali Rahmonov, for a one-day working visit to Tashkent on 4 January. The two men signed a number of intergovernmental agreements, the most significant of which dealt with the issues of Tajikistan's $180 million (as of 1 January 1997) debt to the Uzbek government and mutual payments for supplies of gas and other goods in 1998 (Interfax, 1459 GMT, 4 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-004). However, at a news conference following his meeting with President Rahmonov, the Uzbek president's main concern was not debt settlement, but the threat of Islamic extremism emanating from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. President Karimov has blamed the violence which broke out in the Uzbek town of Namangan (and during which several police officers were killed) on Muslim Wahhabi extremists who have been receiving terrorist training in eastern Tajikistan and in the Osh district of Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbek president voiced his belief that this attack was linked to the 22 December attack on a Russian army unit in Dagestan, which Russian law enforcement agencies blame
on Wahhabis. President Karimov described these attacks as part of a struggle for power (presumably on the part of Islamic extremists throughout Central Asia and/or the CIS), and he expressed concern over the Tajik opposition's intentions for Tajikistan's political future. An Islamic regime in Tajikistan would pose a considerable danger to Uzbekistan's population, the Uzbek president explained (Interfax, 1519 GMT, 4 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-004).

**Comment**

UTO leaders Said Abdullo Nuri and Haji Ali Akbar Turajonzoda have repeatedly stated that they have no intention of attempting to impose an Islamic state in Tajikistan. They both support the establishment of a democratic regime, based on popular elections. They have admitted that they are not averse to the eventual establishment of a state based on Islamic rule in Tajikistan, but only if the republic's citizens vote such a regime into power in democratic elections and/or by way of a referendum. Thus, President Karimov can put his fears to rest about the UTO's intentions for Tajikistan's future, unless his real concern is not that Tajikistan might be transformed into an Islamic state, but into a genuinely democratic state, while political freedom in Uzbekistan is still quite restricted.

It is also interesting to note that it was the ostensible threat of Islamic extremism from Afghanistan and Tajikistan that prompted President Karimov to lobby so strongly for CIS intervention in the Tajik civil war in 1992-93. One could speculate that his recent recycling of this theme is connected to the fact that a new coalition government may soon be formed in Tajikistan which is to share power with UTO leaders, but which as of yet has made no provisions to allocate positions to the Uzbek-backed Khujandi faction. President Karimov may be once again attempting to increase his government's influence over Tajikistan's affairs by destabilizing the inter-Tajik peace process with accusations that the UTO is an extremist Muslim organization with links to "Wahhabi terrorists" (thereby causing President Rahmonov to halt the government's implementation of the measures called for by the peace agreement) and/or by putting economic on President
Rahmonov's administration, through the issue of debt restructuring, to procure Tajik government posts for Khujandi politicians.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

ESTONIA
Two-thirds of Russian citizens living legally in Estonia
Apparently, only two-thirds of Russian citizens living in Estonia are doing so legally. According to the Russian Embassy in Tallinn, as of 1 January there were 125,091 Russian citizens living in Estonia. However, Andres Kollist, the head of the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Department, stated that by the same date his department had issued residence permits to 88,683 holders of Russian passports. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1900 GMT, 7 Jan 98) According to Interior Minister Robert Lepikson, nearly 70,000 illegal immigrants may be living in Estonia. (Radio Tallinn Network, 1800 GMT, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013)
While the number of illegal residents may be high, the population of Estonia as a whole has dropped below 1.5 million. However, the percentage of Estonians is on the rise, from 61.5 percent in the 1989 census to 65 percent at the beginning of 1997. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 6 Jan 98) Part of the increase is due to the addition of naturalized citizens, although that rate also is decreasing: While 22,772 persons received Estonian citizenship in 1996, only 8,132 were granted citizenship last year. All told, more than 115,000 persons have become naturalized citizens since 1991. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 2 Jan 98) Still, the numbers of new citizens may increase as regulations are relaxed according to suggestions from the OSCE (please see earlier Editorial Digests).

LATVIA
Russian speakers continue to provoke debate
Estonia is not the only Baltic state receiving OSCE input. Russia's deputy prime minister, Valeri Serov, has promised that the OSCE and Russia will coordinate their positions regarding observance of the rights of Russian speakers in Latvia. According to Serov, in a meeting with the High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, Serov was told that the OSCE supports the revocation of some Latvian laws which apply to the Russian-speaking population and that the organization will announce new proposals on this issue in the spring. (Radio Riga Network, 1700 GMT, 26 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-026)

While Serov did not specify to which laws van der Stoel referred, in the past the OSCE commissioner--as well as other European bodies such as the EC--has discussed the need for changes in the citizenship law and naturalization issues. While the government of Guntis Ulmanis and the parliamentary faction Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK see no need to amend the citizenship law, the parties have agreed to launch a debate on ways to increase the speed of the naturalization process as well as to meet the concerns of non-citizens. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 8 Jan 98)

Even with difficulties in the process, however, the number of persons who obtained citizenship through the naturalization process last year reached 2,994, according to Eizenija Aldermane, the head of the naturalization department. Less than five percent of applicants were denied due to insufficient knowledge of Latvia or Latvian, the department reported. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 21 Jan 98) Aldermane estimated that approximately 121,000 persons who were eligible to apply for naturalization in 1997 did not do so. (BNS, 1700 GMT, 8 Jan 98). While a small percentage stumbled over the language and history requirements, others may have faced unofficial obstacles: The Latvian government has been significantly slower than its neighbor to the north when it comes to accommodating non-Latvians. Whereas Estonia has worked to meet almost all of the OSCE's recommendations concerning citizenship issues, Latvia has steadfastly refused to amend its law. More than likely, the attitude that the
citizenship process for non-Latvians should not be easy is prevalent throughout the governmental bureaucracy: In 1997, the State Human Rights Office received 3,120 complaints, many concerning the activity of the Citizenship and Immigration Department. Unfortunately, no breakdown on the number of complaints per government departments was provided. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 6 Jan 98)

The Latvian government does intend to react to another concern voiced by the OSCE, namely that of the large number of stateless persons in the country. The head of the Citizenship and Migration Administration, Ints Zitars, reported that the government plans to grant such persons that status of non-citizen. In 1995, Latvian law accorded the status of non-citizen only to those persons who were registered residents of Latvia prior to July 1992, which resulted in several hundreds of residents lacking official status. (BNS, 1900 GMT, 12 Jan 98) Those who would be affected by an amendment to the law would be persons who moved to Latvia between 1992 and 1995, persons who arrived in Latvia for short-term labor, and homeless persons without any place of registration.

LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, the debate revolves around Polish speakers

In Lithuania, the situation of Russian speakers is causing less uproar than is the situation of Polish speakers. In December 1997, the Vilnius Region local government resolved that Polish could be used in all of the region's institutions and organizations alongside the state language. Moreover, written public announcements could be written in Polish, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Tatar and other non-state languages, provided such writing was not larger than the state language. That decision, however, caught the attention of higher authorities, who may be more concerned with the letter of the law than the practical application of same. The governor of Vilnius region, Alis Vidunas, suspended the 22 December decision, citing a violation of the law on state language, which specifies that languages other than Lithuanian may be used
only in non-governmental institutions. On 7 January the local government board confirmed its earlier decision to allow multilingual options. (BNS, 1700 GMT, 8 Jan 98) Five days later Vidunas issued a decree restating his position that the local decision was unconstitutional. (BNS, 1100 GMT, 14 Jan 98)