1998-05-28

The IScip Analyst, Volume III, Issue 8

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/11920

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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Clean bill of health

After meeting with President Yel'tsin, the surgeons Rene Akchurin and Michael DeBakey pronounced him in good health. DeBakey even ventured to assess Yel'tsin's health in political terms. "There is no basis on health grounds why he should not run again," DeBakey claimed. (Reuters, 22 May 98)

APPARAT

Yel'tsin's favorite advisers examined

Obshchaya gazeta (23-29 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-134) discusses the new "favorites" among Yel'tsin's advisers. Dyachenko, Yumashev and Yastrzhembsky figure prominently, as could be expected. The article argues that the trio's lack of independent political ambitions contribute to their clout, but the inability of the president to "keep up with [his] schedule of meetings" has also shifted a greater sense of authority to these key personnel. The paper does note that, although these advisers are remarkably influential, Yel'tsin does still maintain firm control of crucial issues, such as the final word on government personnel appointments.

SECURITY COUNCIL

SC convenes to address economic concerns

Yel'tsin's convocation of the Security Council on 25 May 98 may have been an attempt to soothe a volatile Russian stock market, in light of the miners' protests and generally disturbing economic news, but it also revealed important aspects of the relationship of economic and political reform.
The Security Council, which is composed primarily of defense, foreign and national security personnel, would not seem to be the appropriate organ to address economic distress. The recent miners' strikes however, may have demonstrated the potential social unrest and turmoil that the continuing wage arrears and declining standards of living may provoke. With few options available for economic redress of grievances, the Yel'tsin government may be considering alternate methods of maintaining domestic tranquility.

As a result of the meeting, the members resolved to make greater efforts to meet the concerns of the miners (blaming the previous government for failing in this regard) and set up a special commission on stabilizing the situation in the North Caucasus, to be headed by Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko.

GOVERNMENT

Yel'tsin orders spending cuts
In light of the deepening financial crisis, President Yel'tsin signed a decree ordering Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko to cut government spending in the amount of 40 billion rubles. (UPI, 26 May 98) The move failed to assuage foreign investors however, as the stock market lost another five percent of its value.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By John McDonough

START-II discussion in June? Yel'tsin to push issue at meeting of 'four'
Parliamentary hearings on the ratification of the Russian-US START-II treaty could be held as early as June, according to Vladimir Ryzhkov, first deputy chairman of the Russian Federation State Duma. "The Duma Council's decision to postpone the ratification hearings until the fall doesn't really mean anything," the deputy speaker told ITAR-TASS on 20 May. If the defense ministry or the foreign ministry, acting on behalf of the government, asks the Duma to hold the
hearings, it will respond positively and may schedule them as early as June, the first deputy speaker said. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1416 GMT, 20 May 98; FBIS-TAC-98-140)

President Boris Yel'tsin planned to initiate a discussion on the START-II strategic arms reduction treaty at his meeting with the prime minister and the chairmen of both houses of parliament on 21 May, presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky told reporters 20 May. A serious and profound discussion on the treaty is required, the spokesman said. The Duma may have an approach of its own but there should be no or "cheap populism among deputies," he said. (Interfax, 1107 GMT, 20 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140)

**Russia advocates closed border between Kosovo, Albania**
Russia is interested in "a fairly tightly closed border between Albania and Kosovo because terrorists, militants and arms are crossing it," Russian foreign ministry spokesman Vladimir Rakhmanin told a briefing in Moscow on 21 May. Rakhmanin, speaking of the possible involvement of NATO in that region, said it is Russia's principled stance that any use of force is possible only under a resolution of the UN Security Council or the OSCE." [quote as received] He said there are experts from NATO and the Western European Union in Albania who are helping to revive the Albanian army and police after the 1997 crisis. (Interfax, 1230 GMT, 21 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-141)

**Results of G-8 summit emerging from Moscow**
Following the G-8 summit in England, President Boris Yel'tsin stated that the Russian government must find its way into all large international organizations, Yel'tsin told ministers on 20 May. "We must enter the World Trade Organization (WTO) by all means this year," he said. Russia's influence has significantly increased as a result of the G-8 summit, Yel'tsin said. He called on the government to build on these achievements. (Interfax, 1021 GMT, 20 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140)
British Prime Minister Tony Blair praised the Russian contribution to the Birmingham summit. Blair told ITAR-TASS that President Yel'tsin played an exclusively constructive role in the summit debates. The premier noted it would have been hard to solve many important problems, including the Indian nuclear tests and the Pakistani stance, without the firm and decisive support of Yel'tsin. Under the summit decision, Russia will join the international working group on nuclear security which has been formed under the G-8, Blair said. (ITAR-TASS, 1459 GMT, 17 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-137)

**Moscow criticizes Pakistan's nuclear test, urges India to revise policy**

Pakistan staging nuclear tests will "trigger a very negative reaction" in Moscow, sources in the Russian foreign ministry told Interfax 19 May. The sources expressed the hope that Pakistan "will take into consideration the international community's calls and refrain from holding a nuclear explosion in response to the nuclear tests conducted by India previously." (Interfax, 0917 GMT, 19 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-139)

Russia has denounced India's recent nuclear tests and has urged India to revise its nuclear policy and join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the comprehensive ban of nuclear tests without any conditions. (ITAR-TASS, 1459 GMT, 15 May 98; FBIS-TAC-98-135) Although Moscow is stressing a comprehensive test ban in India, Russian leaders have stressed that economic sanctions against India would be counterproductive, and unjustified from the point of view of international law and from the humanitarian point of view, the foreign ministry said in a press release. (Interfax, 1417 GMT, 15 May 98; FBIS-TAC-98-135)

**Primakov draws 'red line' limit for NATO**

During the international conference "A New Security Architecture in Europe" held in Moscow (organized by the Anti-NATO Commission in the State Duma, the
Russian foreign ministry, and Yu. Luzhkov and Yu. Petrov's Russian Movement for New Socialism), Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov stated there is a "red line" which Russia cannot allow NATO to cross. That "red line" is the acceptance of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the military bloc. If these states were accepted, the Russian Federation's reaction would have to be appropriately harsh and its relations with NATO radically reviewed. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 12 May 98, p. 7; FBIS-SOV-98-133)

**Duma warns threat of regional conflict in Russian south**

A threat of a serious regional conflict is possible in southern Russia, head of the Duma international committee Vladimir Lukin told ITAR-TASS on 12 May. "I think that the Caspian problem can also pose a threat to our country under certain unfavorable circumstances," he noted. A nuclear war threat is "unlikely but it has not disappeared. Recent nuclear tests in an Asian country are a proof to that," Lukin said. A threat of a conventional war in Europe is unlikely as well, "but I cannot say it has disappeared," Lukin said. "Many old threats are really gone, but new threats have appeared, including those in the East, where they are possible under certain circumstances." (ITAR-TASS, 1538 GMT, 12 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-132)

**Yel'tsin announces objectives of 'dynamic foreign policy'**

During a 45-minute speech before Russian diplomats at the foreign ministry, President Yel'tsin stressed that Russia should pursue "a dynamic foreign policy" founded on four "important objectives": "Maintaining territorial integrity, democratizing society, providing for national security, and reforming our economy and integrating it into the global market economy." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0820 GMT, 12 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-132) He also spoke of the need to maintain a positive relationship with the United States, but "without rolling over before that country." "Russia is developing an equal relationship with the United States," he said. (Interfax, 0905 GMT, 12 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-132)
Yel'tsin's speech was viewed by many as a "programmatic" presentation stressing Russia's place and role in the formation of a multipolar world, and charging the Russian diplomats present to work toward such a goal. According to Yel'tsin, "Russia's potential to exert a positive influence on world events has increased in a major way in the new conditions." As a positive illustration he cited "our astuteness in involving UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in the Iraq problem, which successfully prevented the situation from getting to the point where force would be used." (Pravda, 13 May 98, p. 1; FBIS-SOV-98-132)

**Iran-Russia relations strengthened over Tajik peace**

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi sent a reply to his Russian counterpart Yevgeni Primakov which stated that cooperation between Russia and Iran in the settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict is "constructive" and that Iran is ready to "strengthen this cooperation." (Interfax, 0826 GMT, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-125)

The Iranian minister underscored the importance of implementing all accords reached during Tajik peace negotiations as a basis for establishment of a lasting peace in that war-torn country. Referring to the constructive role of Iran and the Russian Federation in ensuring the success of the Tajik peace talks, Kharrazi expressed Iran's readiness to follow its cooperation with Russia in this regard given the mandates of both countries as guarantors of the Tajik peace accord. Kharrazi also expressed hope that Tehran-Moscow relations would continue to expand in the future. (IRNA, 1435 GMT, 5 May 98; FBIS-NES-98-125)

**Iran's atomic chief in Moscow**

The director of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Gholam Reza Aqazadeh, concluded a six-day visit to Moscow and other Russian cities and returned to Tehran 19 May. In Moscow, he signed a protocol with the Russian minister of atomic energy that provided for the schedule of operations to be undertaken by the Russian side for completing the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in southern Iran. During the visit the secretary general of Russia's National Security Council, Kukushin, told the Iranian minister that Russian President Boris
Yel'tsin insisted on closer collaboration with Iran in every area. Kukushin said Moscow condemned imposition on Moscow of foreign dictates concerning relations with Iran and said that Russia would not rally behind the United States in its anti-Iran position. (IRNA, 2022 GMT, 19 May 98; FBIS-NES-98-139)

**Japanese prime minister's proposal leaked**

A Japanese paper leaked details of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's secret initiative on resolving the Kuril islands dispute. According to the paper, the prime minister proposes redrawing the national border south of Iturup Island, not to the north of all four islands as previously demanded. Many press accounts noted that Hashimoto presented a secret proposal to President Yel'tsin at their recent "no neckties" meeting. This marks a major policy shift for Tokyo, which until now linked the signing of a peace treaty to the "favorable resolution" of the Kuril issue and the transfer of all four islands back to Japan (ITAR-TASS, 10 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-130). For its part, Moscow has stated that it will not officially reply to the Japanese proposal until this autumn when Hashimoto visits Moscow (ITAR-TASS, 15 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-135).

**Bilateral fishing treaty signed**

Russia and Japan have signed a treaty regulating fishing around the disputed Kuril Islands. The accord allows Japanese fishing boats to operate safely within 12 nautical miles of the islands (Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai group of islets) which are located off Japan's northernmost main island. By agreement, Japanese boats are allowed to catch up to 1,200 tons of fish in 1998, while Japan will provide Russia with 10 million yen to help preserve fishing resources and 15 million yen worth of fishing gear. The treaty should help end a series of confrontations between Russian coastal vessels and Japanese fishing boats, several of which ended in injuries to Japanese fishermen, and is seen as a step toward the eventual signing of a Russo-Japanese peace treaty (Kyodo, 21 May 98; FBIS-EAS-98-141).
Russian-Japanese contract signed on lunar exploration
Moscow has found a new country to help keep its space program alive. A Russian research and production company signed a contract with a Japanese company to cooperate in exploration of the moon. Specifically, the companies will collaborate in creating "space vehicles" designed for lunar exploration (Interfax, 28 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-118). Additional cooperation, and therefore funding, will come as a result of Japan's accession to the International Space Station (ISS) program. Examples of information exchange include visits of Japanese astronauts to Russia's training center at "Star City," a Japanese liaison group setting up permanent offices in the Russian Flight Control Center, and consultations on designing booster rockets for space launch vehicles (ITAR-TASS, 1011 GMT, 29 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-119).

Yel'tsin to host summit with China's Jiang Zemin 3-6 September
President Yel'tsin seems to like making fashion statements at his meetings with national leaders. Following his "no neckties" meeting with the Japanese prime minister, Yel'tsin has announced that he will have a "meeting without jackets" with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in Moscow in early September. The two are to discuss "various plans for interaction between the two countries in the Asian-Pacific region and possible joint participation in large-scale regional economic projects, including in the fuel and energy sector and engineering" (Interfax, 2 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-132).

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Michael Thurman

REGIONS
Zaveryukha wins Duma seat in far east
Aleksandr Zaveryukha has won a seat in the State Duma in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky with 20 percent of the vote. Zaveryukha, a former agriculture minister and deputy prime minister, beat Vladislav Shved of the Liberal Democratic Party, who polled 17 percent. Elections for the regional council, which were held simultaneously, were declared invalid because of the low turnout. (ITAR-TASS, 0840 GMT 20 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-110)

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Duma seeks court ruling on Kirienko re-nomination**

The Constitutional Court received a Duma inquiry questioning the legality of Yel'tsin's decision to nominate the same person for prime minister three times. Court Chairman Marat Baglay said the court cannot be guided "by considerations of political expediency" in its work and must follow a special procedure for hearing important inquiries. The procedure consists of deciding the "correctness" of the inquiry, and the court must decide within two months if it will hear the case. If the court agrees to hear the case, it will be put "on the waiting list." For these reasons, the court can only hear the Kirienko appeal, as well as the Trophy Art Law Yel'tsin is appealing, in the second half of 1998.

Clearly the Constitutional Court is busy and cases brought before it must wait their turn, but the special time considerations and the importance of the Kirienko nomination might suggest that a review of the case should be expedited. (Interfax, 1730 GMT, 20 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-110)

**Duma approves Kirienko as prime minister**

After two previous attempts, the State Duma finally confirmed Sergei Kirienko as prime minister in a secret ballot. Kiriyenko received 251 votes in favor and 25 votes against. A simple majority of the Duma membership was required for Kirienko's confirmation.
In total, 315 of the 445 Duma deputies present took ballot papers for the secret vote; however, only 276 ballots were retrieved from the ballot boxes at the end of voting. (Interfax, 1220 GMT, 24 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-114)

**Duma deputy Semago discusses lobbying activity**

Vladimir Semago, Duma deputy and member of the Commission to Fight Corruption, confirmed the existence of many questionable lobbying practices in the Duma. For instance, Semago admitted that confidential information concerning the content of laws regulating a specific industry have been offered to representatives of that industry for a price or guarantee of future financial support in election campaigns. The result is that the Duma drafts many laws legalizing the suspect activities of a small number of people or groups. Witness the enormous number of small laws concerning fishing, mining, or banking.

Semago also admits that the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky is a professional lobbyist, pushing the interests of Iraq, Libya, and one or another financial-industrial group. "The earmarks of somebody's business are always visible behind any piece of paper that comes from Zhirinovskiy."

Often groups lobbying the Duma claim to represent the downtrodden and disaffected, when in reality they are only furthering the interests of their powerful patrons. For instance, the Agrarian Party does not really promote the interests of the agricultural sector as a whole; rather, the Agrarians seem interested in defending the interests of particular persons at the expense of the individual farmer.

Semago also says that Most, Menatep, and Oneksim are the companies most active in lobbying the Duma for favors. "There is no denying that many deputies simply used the support of these or other companies and firms during elections. And this, incidentally, is not a crime."
Semago also admits that Duma deputies use their positions to threaten and coerce people so as to defend the interests of their supporters. "Suppose some regional law enforcement agency is discovered to be collecting compromising information on some person, this person could turn to a Duma deputy who might send a letter to the region’s governor threatening to send the federal prosecutor to investigate human rights abuses in the region."

Such activity is a sword with two edges: on one hand, nothing distorts and undermines the democratic process like favoritism. On the other hand, in a political system with a weak judicial system, the affected person or group cannot rely simply on the law to guarantee his rights. In such a system, the personal intervention of Duma deputies may be necessary to mitigate the capricious activities of regional power brokers.

There have been many attempts to pass legislation regulating lobbying activity, but nothing has come of them. Semago fears the time is still not ripe for the needed legislation. It should also be added that until the law and the agents of its enforcement are respected, legislation regulating lucrative lobbying activity will most likely be circumvented anyway. (Interfaks-AiF, 30 Mar-5 Apr 98, No. 13, p. 19; FBIS-SOV-98-118)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Dwyer Dennis and Curtis Stevens

Out with the old--in with the new at Rosvooruzhenie?
Director General Yevgeni Ananev of Russia's Rosvooruzhenie state arms exporter may soon be replaced by his predecessor, Aleksandr Kotelkin, according to a recent Pravda report. Sergei Kirienko, the new prime minister, is said to have a "largely negative" attitude toward the current leadership, which took control only last fall. He apparently blames the Urinson-Ananev team for lost
foreign markets and revenue amounting to nearly $1 billion. Since Ananev's placement as director by Vice Premier Yakov Urinson, both the Indonesia and Ecuador arms deals have fallen through and not a single major contract has concluded. (Pravda, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-126)

It is unclear as to whether Kotelkin will actually take over the directorship or be placed in charge of an oversight organ (i.e., a recreated State Committee for the Defense Sectors of Industry) that would provide top-level direction of arms sales for the three state arms sales/technology agencies now existing. It also remains to be seen how Urinson would react to such a move as it represents an obvious loss of influence, especially from the financing perspective. Urinson and Ananev have direct ties to both the Mapo and the Strategiya banks, while Kotelkin historically favored the Uneximbank in working defense industry deals.

Meanwhile, Ananev continues to tout the nearly $8.5 billion in projected orders through 2003 as evidence of success. A recent joint announcement by Ananev and the mayor of St. Petersburg, Vladimir Yakovlev, placed that region's piece of the pie at over 20 percent and served to highlight the effectiveness of the newly formed Rosvooruzhenie regional offices. According to a Rossiyskaya gazeta report, directors of local enterprises report that the overall attitude of the state arms company is changing from that of a monopolistic guard dog of arms sales to a proactive team player providing support and expert advice. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 30 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-127)

**Russian aviation industry continues its decline**

Interfax reported recently that, according to aviation industry experts, both military and civilian aviation is continuing to deteriorate. The civil aviation industry output has declined four to five times since 1990 while military aviation capability has declined due to a lack of new equipment, spare parts, and aviation fuel to support operational/training sorties. Military training flights are nine to eleven times below requirement. It is estimated that over 1.5 billion rubles are needed
just to maintain the entire net of military aerodomes. (Interfax, 0740 GMT, 4 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-124)

On 5 May Interfax released presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky's announcement that President Yel'tsin had instructed Kirienko to stabilize the military budget. (Interfax, 1259 GMT, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-125) What is not revealed is whether that stabilization will take the form of increased budget levels or result in further decreases in the Russian military infrastructure. Given the recent history of the Russian military budget, the accumulating unfunded operating costs, and the resulting decline in operational effectiveness (see flight hours), it is likely that not only further but even more drastic reductions in infrastructure are ahead.

**15 generals serve in Duma**
A 10 April article in Komsomol'skaya pravda detailed the retired generals serving in the Duma. The fifteen generals and their previous active duty commands include:

1. Lieutenant General Lev Rokhlin (former commander of the Eighth Guard Army Corps, Volgograd).
2. Colonel General Valentin Varennikov (former commander-in-chief of the infantry, USSR deputy minister of defense).
3. Lieutenant General Mikhail Surkov (former chief of the political department of the Guard Army and secretary of the All-Army Party Committee of the CPSU).
5. Colonel General Albert Makashov (former troop commander of the Volga-Ural Military District).
7. Lieutenant General Nikolai Stolyarov (former chief of the Ministry of Defense Political Administration).
10. Major General Ibragim Suleimenov (former military commissar of Chechnya).
13. KGB Major General Valeri Vorotnikov (former chief of the Fifth Directorate of the USSR KGB).
15. Colonel General of Aviation Georgi Titov (cosmonaut, former first deputy commander of the Armed Forces). (Komsomol'skaya pravda, 10 Apr 98, p. 4; FBIS-SOV-98-124)

Comment
Since this article was received, the former commander-in-chief of the Border Guards, General Nikolaev, has been elected to the Duma and, of course, Lieutenant General Aleksandr Lebed, former commander of the 14th Army in the Dniestr, was elected to a governorship in Siberia. The two main military contenders for the 2000 presidential election will most likely be Lebed and Nikolaev.

NASA head expresses concern
In testimony to the US House of Representatives Science Committee, NASA administrator Daniel Golden said he erred in letting Russia take on the construction of a key component of the international space program. The Russians are building the service module where astronauts will live. The launch timetable for the station has been pushed back because of delays in the Russian portion of the space station. "In retrospect, I wish that we built the ... module," he told the committee hearing. But he did say that Russian participation was still
clearly a net gain for the United States. (Reuters, 1553 PDT, 6 May 98; C-reuters@clari.net)

Yel'tsin says attack on Russia still possible
At a VE-day Kremlin reception for senior military commanders and security service leaders, President Yel'tsin said an attack on Russia was still possible. Speaking on the importance of military reform, the president stated "The final goal of the military reform is to form smaller but efficient Armed Forces, armed with advanced hardware and well-trained personnel. ... I am confident that this kind of reform will not impair Russia's potential to deter, in particular a nuclear attack, and repel an aggression if necessary. We cannot afford discarding the possibility of aggression."

At the same reception, President Yel'tsin expressed an interest in reviving a tsarist tradition where senior officers were presented to the emperor. Since the 17th century military officers had been presented to the head of state but "since 1917 everything collapsed. Now we want to revive this glorious tradition. Every senior officer will see the head of state when he is promoted." (Interfax, 0900 GMT, 8 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-128)

Black Sea Fleets to gain two cruisers
The Ukrainian government announced plans to complete the Soviet Slava-class cruiser Admiral Lobov and commission it into the Ukrainian navy as the Ukrainia. The ship is 95 percent complete and has been under construction sporadically since 1984. The decision to complete the ship came after attempts to sell the ship failed. The Ukrainia will become the flagship of the Ukrainian navy.

Meanwhile, the Russians announced that overhaul of the Slava (renamed the Moskva) is nearly complete. The Slava/Moskva entered Ukraine's Nikolaiv shipyard in 1990 for an overhaul and, with the demise of the Soviet Union, the ship remained in limbo awaiting a decision by the Russian Navy to either
complete the overhaul, sell or scrap the ship. The Moskva will become the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The former Slava operated frequently in the eastern Mediterranean during the 1980s in operations monitoring the US Sixth Fleet. (Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 14 May 98)

Comment
As reported in an earlier Digest, the Moscow city council has funded the completion of the Moskva's overhaul. The renaming of the ship is politically significant since the mayor of Moscow has been very vocal in demanding the return of Crimea to Russia. A previous Moskva was commissioned in the Soviet Navy in 1967 and served as the first helicopter carrier in the Soviet Navy.

Russian marines in Denmark
Some two dozen Russian marines from the Baltic Fleet are in Denmark participating in a NATO Partnership for Peace exercise. This marks the first time Russian combat troops have participated in a NATO exercise. Over 3,000 troops from 17 nations are participating in the two-week event designed to practice multinational search, rescue and evacuation operations. (Voice of Russia World Service, 1310 GMT, 16 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-136, and Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 21 May 98)

Russian/Turkish military chiefs meet
The chiefs of the Russian and Turkish general staffs meet in Moscow on 20 May and signed a memorandum of mutual understanding. The memorandum is designed to be a framework for detailed discussions on other areas of mutual concern. Of note is that Russia and Turkey will hold talks on the preparation of an agreement for preventing incidents at sea. (Interfax, 1132 GMT, 20 May 1998; FBIS-SOV-98-140)
Yeltsin creates fourth deputy premier slot
President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree (No. 553) appointing Ivan Rybkin as his envoy to the CIS states and bestowing on him the rank of deputy prime minister. Rybkin, the former Security Council secretary, held the title of deputy prime minister in charge of CIS affairs until the position was abolished by Sergei Kirienko in March (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 16 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140). The appointment must have come as a shock to Kirienko, who had pledged to have no more than three deputy premier slots in his government. It must also be a shock to the Russian foreign ministry--and Yevgeni Primakov in particular--because last month's dissolution of the Ministry for CIS Affairs transferred all functions of that department to Primakov's ministry. The elevation of Rybkin, a close ally of CIS Executive Secretary Boris Berezovsky, to Yeltsin's plenipotentiary representative seems to indicate that the president wants to maintain his "personal touch" in managing CIS affairs (See also Jamestown Monitor, 15 May 98).

Duma votes to restore Ministry of CIS Affairs
On 22 May, the Russian Duma voted to restore the recently dissolved CIS cooperation ministry (RFE/RL Newsline, 23 May 98). This is not surprising, since the leaders of the various Duma subcommittees dedicated to CIS affairs are extremists who view the commonwealth as a way of maintaining Russian domination over the former republics of the USSR. These are the same Duma leaders who are blocking the ratification of the Russian-Ukrainian friendship treaty because it solidifies national borders and accepts the division of the Black Sea Fleet. They maintain that it is in Russia's interest to keep a ministry dedicated solely to CIS affairs rather than have CIS issues become diluted in the foreign ministry.

The 1998 Berezovsky CIS tour hits the road
Newly appointed CIS Executive Secretary Boris Berezovsky spent his first weeks in office touring his new domain. He has traveled to, and met with the presidents of, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and Georgia. It is obvious that Berezovsky intends to be more proactive than his predecessor, Ivan Korotchenya, in fostering CIS ties through the executive secretariat. Not surprisingly, Berezovsky's approach to aid integration is based on economics and the role of businessmen-entrepreneurs. After meeting with the Moldovan president, Berezovsky said, "To reform the CIS, all its members must root out their imperial mentality acquired during the times of the Russian Empire and the USSR." But he continued, "I do not consider 'empire' as a swear-word, if all members of an empire have equal rights." Unfortunately, Berezovsky did not give any historical examples of empires made up of members with equal rights (Infotag, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-127). At another meeting, Berezovsky claimed that state monopolies have exhausted their potential in most CIS nations and said commonwealth agencies must "understand the entrepreneur's needs; the executive and legislative authorities in CIS countries need help from the CIS in the setting up of mechanisms and adoption of laws for entrepreneurs" (Interfax, 19 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-139).

Quieting the rumors that the CIS headquarters would be moving to Moscow to accommodate the new executive secretary, Berezovsky recently moved into his office at CIS headquarters in Minsk. He also purchased a plot of land near the Belarusian capital on which he intends to build a house (NTV, 0600 GMT, 8 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-128, and Radio Minsk, 1600 GMT, 20 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-141).

**CIS personnel appointments noted**

Russian Army general and director of the Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information (FAPSI), Aleksandr Starovoitov, was re-elected chairman of the CIS coordination council on government communications during the council's eighth session (ITAR-TASS, 13 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-133).
Former CIS Executive Secretary Ivan Korotchenya will continue to work in his old office building at CIS headquarters in Minsk. Korotchenya was appointed Boris Berezovsky's first deputy (Radio Minsk, 0400 GMT, 20 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140). Both Presidents Yel'tsin and Lukashenka promised Korotchenya, a Belarusian, would be rewarded for his six years of service as the first CIS executive secretary.

Valeri Droganov, chairman of the Russian State Customs Committee, was elected chairman of the Council of the Customs Service Chiefs of CIS countries. He succeeds Anatoli Kruglov (ITAR-TASS, 21 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-141).

Russian Major General Pavel Lipsky was appointed commander of the CIS peacekeeping force in Tajikistan. Lipsky was deputy commander of the force for over a year (Interfax, 15 May 98; FBIS-UMA-98-135).

CIS, Tajikistan sign accord on information exchange
An agreement on information exchange has been signed between the CIS executive secretariat and the head of the Tajik president's executive staff. The agreement is aimed at strengthening the single "information space" of the CIS member states. The sides will exchange information about "political developments ... official meetings and ceremonies organized by the CIS countries and agencies; and agreements signed within the CIS framework" (Belapan, 13 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-133). These reasons seem dubious, however, because, as a member of the CIS, Tajikistan needs no additional agreements to share such common information. The truth of the matter is probably associated with another meaning of the phrase "information space" which in the past has indicated the linking of mass communications systems with Moscow in order to ensure the transmission of Russian-language television, radio, and newsprint to the former republics. Russians have been pushing for the recreation of such an "information space" since mid-1994.
Tajik-Russian border guards hold joint exercises

Units of Tajik and CIS (therefore Russian) border guards held a two-day exercise near Dushanbe in mid-May. Tajik officials claim that this was the first time such a maneuver was held. It included a command-and-staff exercise and a live-fire portion involving 1,000 servicemen, aircraft, artillery, and armored vehicles (Radio Tajikistan, First Channel, 1000 GMT, 14 May 98; FBIS-UMA-98-134, and ITAR-TASS, 19 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-139).

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Monica Florescu

MOLDOVA

Moldova struggles to produce a new government

Prime Minister Ion Ciubuc presented the resignation of his government to the newly elected Moldovan parliament on 30 April. Deliberations over the candidacy for the post of premier then were held between the three Alliance of Democratic Forces (AFD) factions. After the creation of the center-right parliamentary alliance, the Democratic Convention of Moldova (CDM) ceded the chairmanship in the new legislature to the Democratic and Prosperous Moldova Bloc (BMDP) in exchange for the office of premier. The alliance faced serious differences concerning prime ministerial candidatures and, after an exhaustive debate, two names were produced--Nicolae Andronic, deputy chairman of (Snegur's) Party of Revival and Accord, and Valentin Dolganiuc, a leader in the Christian Democratic Popular Front. (Infotag, 2000 GMT, 30 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-121)

However, Andronic failed to capture the necessary votes within the alliance's faction, while members of the alliance disagreed on Dolganiuc's candidacy. He was rejected by President Lucinschi for "lacking experience." In the end, Ciubuc was nominated by Lucinschi, with the condition that Ciubuc create a new cabinet
and present a new plan of government within 15 days. The Communist Party (CPM) proved unwilling to cooperate with the new government unless Communists were to be named ministers: If the CPM's opinion is ignored, Party members claimed, the convention will not vote for Ciubuc's government. In that case, everything will return to the zero point, and the president will have to nominate another candidate for the prime ministerial post. By the formula, this candidate must again be proposed by the CDM. If the president nominates Ciubuc once again and the parliament votes him down twice, the head of state may dissolve the parliament. However, Lucinschi said he did not want to turn the cabinet into an arena for a political struggle, but intended to "create a team of like-minded professionals." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1156 GMT, 13 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-133)

In addition, the CDM will vote for the new government only in case a compromise has been reached on the list of ministers, stated Mircea Snegur, the leader of the ruling parliamentary Alliance for Democracy and Reforms (ADR). (Infotag, 1950 GMT, 19 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140)

**Trandsniestr: no progress towards a peace agreement**

A year has passed since an agreement between the separatist Dniestr Republic and the Moldovan government was signed, in which the parties agreed to build a "common state." Exactly what features such a "common state" might display remained to be determined through negotiations and by mutual consent of the parties. At a meeting in Odessa on 20 March, the two sides and the two guarantor states, Russia and Ukraine, agreed that it was necessary to concentrate on the following "priority directions" regarding the current situation in Trandsniestr: 1) Delimitation and mutual delegation of powers and jurisdictions; 2) Specific measures for the establishment of a common economic, social and legal space; 3) Deepening of mutual confidence and cooperation; 4) Determination of a mechanism of external and internal guarantees; 5) Securing the effective work of the Joint Control Commission; 6) Improvement of the forms
of activity of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces and the deployment of the Ukrainian peacekeepers (at the present moment, monitors) in the security zone. (Basapress, 1700 GMT, 8 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-128)

However, the government of the self-proclaimed Dniestr Republic has recently decided to increase the number of customs and border troops in the security zone. The zone is controlled now by the peacekeepers of Russia, Moldova and the Dniestr Republic under the command of the Joint Control Commission (JCC). At a recent meeting JCC members said Dniestr border guards already have taken a post in the Dubasari district alongside the Dniestr River. This action contravenes the four-party Odessa accord of 20 March, when the presidents of Moldova and Ukraine, the Russian premier and Dniestr leader agreed to close all border guard and customs posts between Moldova and the Dniestr region. (Basapress, 2000 GMT, 14 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-135)

In addition, a statement passed by the Union of Dniestr Defenders, the most influential public organization in the self-styled republic, reads that "in case the new Moldovan leadership resumes speaking about a unified and indivisible Moldova at the forthcoming negotiations, we will begin insisting on giving up the idea of building one common state with Moldova, and on the further consolidation of the sovereign and independent Dniestr Moldovan Republic." (Infotag, 1950 GMT, 19 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-140)

**UKRAINE**

**Dim prospects for solving the Chornobyl problem**

On 4 May the general director of the Chornobyl nuclear power plant, Sergei Parashin, was dismissed for "crude violations of his duties and executive discipline" (Interfax, 1430 GMT, 4 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-124). This took place a few days before the Kyiv meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) from 8-12 May. Ukraine expected that two grant agreements on the financing of upgrades on the cover, or sarcophagus, facility at
the Chornobyl nuclear power station would be signed. The first grant agreement, to be signed by the EBRD and the Ukrainian Nuclear Regulation Administration, envisages technical assistance (about $10 million) for tighter controls over the procedure and technology for the licensing of nuclear power stations, EBRD Director for Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria Yuri Poluneev told a briefing. The second agreement deals exclusively with the cover facility at the station and aims to make the facility environmentally safe, he said. In total, the two grants will amount to some $60 million, Poluneev said. Approximately $1.2 billion reportedly is required for completing the construction of the two power units. President Kuchma stated that Ukraine still needs more money in order to build two other power plants at Rovno and Khmelnytsky. Some 80-85 percent of the construction operation has already been completed at the second power unit in Khmelnytsky and the fourth power unit in Rovno. In addition, he estimated that $760 million is needed in order to close down Chornobyl under the most environmentally safe conditions. (Interfax, 1159 GMT, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-125)

Last week, the third unit of the Chornobyl plant started functioning under normal regime, giving 70 percent of the planned output. The repairs of the pipe, damaged by the explosion 12 years ago, have begun. The work, with a cost of $1.8 million, is financed by the US government. (ITAR-TASS, 1953 GMT, 17 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-137)

The Ukrainian branch of the international environmental organization Greenpeace has protested against the decision to put a generating unit at Chornobyl back into operation. Greenpeace Ukraine also said a "nuclear lobby" was using the bogey of a new nuclear disaster in a bid to obtain from the West "at any cost $1.6 billion to complete the construction of obsolete nuclear units at the Khmelnitsky and Rovno plants." (Interfax, 1829 GMT, 14 May 98; FBIS-TEN-98-134)

Parliament opens on shaky ground
Ukraine's newly elected prime minister, Valeri Pustovoytenko, gave up his seat in parliament in order to perform effectively his function in government (Serhiy Larin replaced him in parliament). (ITAR-TASS, 2042 GMT, 11 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-131)

Parliament opened on 12 May with a total of 450 deputies. The following is the breakdown of factions: the Communists have 125 members on their faction list, according to Oleksandr Bandurko, who is in charge of preparing the first parliament session. Next is the Popular Democratic Party with 77 seats, followed by nationalist Popular Rukh (50), Hromada ("The Power," 41), the agrarian-socialist bloc (36), the Greens (19) and united social-democrats (17).

None of the parties has an absolute majority in the 450-seat legislature, but leftists may form a majority if they unite. According to unofficial sources, such talks are underway. Some sources said that the leftists plan to nominate former speaker Oleksandr Moroz to chair the parliament. Moroz, who leads the Socialists, had been backed by the Hromada leader, ex-premier Pavel Lazarenko, during the election race. (ITAR-TASS, 0137 GMT, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-127)

**Comment**

No speaker has been elected thus far, and most party heads disagree on the nature of the position, as well as on the legitimacy of the last election results. Most party leaders agree that electoral reform needs to take place in Ukraine. For now, talks regarding possible coalitions are being conducted on the two extremes of the spectrum: one on the left, made up of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Communist Party of Ukraine, and one on the right, consisting of the People's Democratic Party and the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine.

**Odessa mayoral elections declared invalid**
A court in the Kirovohrad oblast invalidated the results of mayoral elections in Odessa and annulled the decision by the Odessa election commission that had confirmed Eduard Hurvitz's election as mayor. Charges against Hurvitz's election were brought by his main contender, the present Odessa oblast governor Ruslan Bodelan, who accused Hurvitz's supporters of numerous violations of the election procedure. (Intelnews, 0151 GMT, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-127)

Protracted confrontation between local bodies of power--the regional state administration, on the one hand, and the Odessa city council and its executive committee, on the other--has brought to a standstill important and promising projects for the region and for Ukraine's economic health as a whole. Of late, not just the political forces of the city, but even its population has split into opposite camps. In addition to the ever more complicated socioeconomic processes in Odessa, there has been a steep rise in crime, which could be seen particularly clearly during the election campaign. The prime minister plans to carry out an examination of the situation in the area. (Radio Ukraine World Service, 1600 GMT, 15 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-135)

**Crimea's government suspended**

Hours after electing Communist Party member Leonid Hrach as its speaker, the Crimean parliament chose to dismiss the peninsula's entire government, with 58 out of 73 deputies voting on the matter. The discharged government will continue fulfilling its responsibilities until a new government is elected. The parliament also elected members of its presidium, as well as several committee heads. The full presidium features six Communists, six unaffiliated deputies, one Socialist and one Soyuz Party deputy. In accepting the position of speaker, Hrach said he will strive to have close relations with Kyiv. He said the "reasonable" extension of Crimean authority is possible. He added he did not expect tension between the Crimean Parliament and the president. Moreover, he intends to postpone his idea of renewing the Soviet Union, but will push for close cooperation with CIS
countries in economic, political, cultural and other fields. (Intelnews, 0244 GMT, 15 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-135)

BELARUS

**Positive prospects for the Belarus-Russia Union**

The eighth session of the Union of Belarus and Russia Parliamentary Assembly was held in Homel on 4 May. It was agreed that a new Union parliament is to be elected next year at the same time as parliamentary elections in both Belarus and Russia. Also, further rapprochement between Russia and Belarus and the creation of a common economic space would make it necessary in future to introduce a common currency. According to Pyotr Prakapovich, it will take at least four to five years after such a decision is made by the leaders of both countries for such a plan to be implemented. (Belapan, 1320 GMT, 16 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-138)

The Union may face future expansion. Yugoslavia has expressed its wish to join the Union’s parliament, while Belarus is hoping that Ukraine will join as well: "currently nothing prevents Kazakhstan, Ukraine, or Armenia from joining our union," stated Russian Duma Chairman Gennadi Nikolaevich Seleznev, chairman of the Union Parliamentary Assembly. He commented on the nature of the union between Russia and Belarus: "It is clear that sovereign Belarus and Russia are at issue. This implies that they would rather unite in a confederation. Of course, like any confederation, this rather implies a political union. We are still working in terms of our economic integration, but one can also feel the political integration." In other words, Belarus is ready to unite with Russia on an equal basis, and is not willing to adhere to any interstate union, as Moscow would like to see. Regarding the possible dual citizenship issue, he stated that "every Belarusian and Russian citizen will preserve his national citizenship and at the same time be a citizen of the Belarusian-Russian Union, but no more." (Interfax, 1754 GMT, 15 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-135)
Belarus' view on mutual debts
President Lukashenka recently addressed the problem of mutual debts with former Soviet republics. "Ukraine owes Belarus about $214 million," said Lukashenka at a CIS forum of journalists which began in Minsk on 5 May. Speaking on Belarus' debt to Russia, Lukashenka pointed out that this debt--"slightly more than $100 million for oil, $200 million for gas and so on"--is not the government's liability but debts accumulated by companies. He added that Russian economic entities also owe Belarusian enterprises the same amount for the products delivered. "Belarus spends $410 million annually to guard the airspace," Lukashenka said. However, he added that he had always spoken of Russia's debt to Belarus only "in response to attacks of the Russian side." According to the Belarusian president, during his last meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Moscow the problem of mutual debts was "settled in the sense that we never reproach each other, and if there is a debt, we will settle accounts in a civilised manner." During the meeting, he added, the sides agreed on the way Belarus will pay for Russian gas and other energy resources, and on the way Russia will pay for Belarusian products. (Belapan, 1732 GMT, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-125)

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy

ARMENIA
Dashnaks included in cabinet; party legalized
President Robert Kocharian has appointed two members of the Dashnaktsutyun party, Vagan Ovanisian and Levon Mkrtchian, to the cabinet. Ovanisian will serve as adviser to the president for public relations, particularly with groups and lobbies in the diaspora, and Mkrtchian will take on the position of science and education minister. (Snark, 28 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-118)
On 6 May, Kocharian officially repealed his predecessor's December 1994 ban on the activities of the Dashnaktsutyun. Petrosian had accused the party, which has been run by Armenians in the diaspora, of fostering foreign interference in Armenian politics, terrorism and drug trafficking. Since Petrosian's resignation in March, Kocharian has released Dashnak leaders from jail and allowed them to set up an office and press organs. (Interfax, 6 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-126)

A possibility of normalized ties between Armenia and Turkey?
The Armenian news service Snark reported a story that appeared in the Turkish Daily News on 1 April. According to the Turkish paper, Robert Kocharian has "put to official Ankara a proposal to start direct dialogue between Armenia and Turkey without the interference of a third party (that is to say, Baku), to set up trade and economic cooperation without any political preconditions, and also to open the Armenian-Turkish frontier." (Snark, 1 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-092)

The public position of the new Armenian government towards Turkey does not seem more conciliatory than that of the previous government. In a 25 April interview, the Armenian foreign minister elaborated his country's position: "Armenia's approach to Turkey will be the following: if unilateral negative manifestations continue from the side of Ankara, then Turkey should be left in no doubt that our attitude to it cannot be positive." Turkey has conditioned the normalization of relations with Armenia on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute and has participated in a partial embargo against Armenia. The new government, like the old one, requests that Turkey abandon those stands. In at least one respect the position of the new government will make it more difficult to improve relations with Ankara: Whereas the previous government had occasionally called on Turkey to recognize that the massacres and deportations perpetrated during WWI constituted "genocide," the new government has placed much greater emphasis on the issue. (Respublika Armenia, 23 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-115)
However, during a visit to Georgia on 1 May, the speaker of the Armenian parliament, Khosrov Arutyunian, called for re-establishing relations with Turkey. "Armenia and Turkey should restore relations sooner or later, both countries need it as does the whole region," he said. "Armenia will do its best to gradually re-establish relations with Turkey. Of course, it requires political will and desire of Turkish government and people," he noted. (ITAR-TASS, 1 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-121)

Turkey's envoys attended the April meeting of the Black Sea Economic Conference (BSEC) which was hosted by Yerevan, while Azerbaijan boycotted the event. The minister of state, Sahin Refaiddin, led Turkey's delegation. When asked about the possibility of creating a free economic zone among the BSEC countries (which cannot be arranged until Turkey's and Azerbaijan's embargo of Armenia is lifted), he said that "It is important to note that these economic steps and intentions lead to appropriate political steps and vice versa. Politics and the economy should interact. Our arrival in Yerevan also demonstrates our readiness to create an appropriate political scenario for cooperation." He emphasized that prosperity requires peace. According to the state minister, peace requires a "settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh and, under the norms of international law, the liberation of the occupied Azerbaijani territory." (Snark, 30 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-121)

It seems that the Armenian side is trying to arrange a normalization of economic and trade relations while increasing its political demands on Turkey. So far, Ankara has not altered its position and has presented the same terms to the new government as it did to the previous leadership.

An Azerbaijani paper reported the Greek response to the possibility of warming relations between Yerevan and Ankara. The national defense minister, Apostolos-Athanasios Tsokhatzopoulos, pointed out that historic Armenian lands are now part of Turkey and drew parallels between that and the issue of northern
Cyprus. The national defense minister made those comments and the parliamentary speaker Kaklamanis expressed sorrow at a ceremony marking the 83rd anniversary of the "genocide." (Azadlyg, 29 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-119)

Ovanes Igitian, chairman of the Armenian National Assembly's standing commission on foreign relations, also raised the possibility of revising Armenia's borders with Turkey. He said that the issue of recovering the territories ceded to Turkey by Russia in a 1921 treaty should remain open. He suggested that Armenia should take up the issue not only with Turkey but also with Russia:

"Today's Russia, which we consider our ally, is the legal successor of that Russia and it has declared this, while we consider Turkey an adversary. It is clear that it is easier to talk about problems with an ally than an adversary. However, this subject has never been discussed with Russia, and it is difficult for me to say whether Russia will take some steps or not if such a discussion takes place."

Furthermore, he linked the issue of the recognition of "genocide" to the territorial issue: "From the legal point of view, the lands that we lost--Nakhichevan, Erzurum, and Kars--were lost as a result of the Russian-Turkish agreement and physically, of course, we were expelled because of the genocide. The reason for Turkey's concern is that if the genocide is recognized, the next step will be the compulsory return of the lands. If we want to present the issue legally and seriously, we should work toward recognition of the 1921 treaty as illegal."

(Noyan Tapan, 0500 GMT, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-129)

**Armenian MP on Nagorno-Karabakh**

Speaking of Karabakh, Igitian explicitly described the Armenian side's premise when it calls for a Baku-Stepanakert dialogue. The current OSCE system is flawed, Igitian said, because it recognizes three warring parties (Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) and three mediators (Russia, France, United States). This approach is wrong, in his view, because "We could not even
be considered the third side. We are an interested state that could be the guarantor of the existence of Nagorno-Karabakh." The calls for direct dialogue are based on the false claim that Armenia remained aloof from the conflict. (Noyan Tapan, 0500 GMT, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-129)

DAGESTAN
An attempted coup in Dagestan?
Mukhu Aliev, speaker of Dagestan's parliament, warned against plans to storm a village occupied by Wahhabis who recently staged an uprising in Makhachkala. He said that the situation in the republic is "absolutely uncontrollable" and "any further carelessness from Moscow may result in a situation where promises of Chechen leaders about a united Islamic state in the North Caucasus turn a reality. " (TASS, 26 May 98; NEXIS) Aliev was referring to the Congress of Peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan which was held in Chechnya on 26 April and elected Shamil Basaev as its leader. The congress aims to unite Chechnya and Dagestan. (Agence France Presse, 27 April 98; NEXIS)

Nadir Khachilaev, a Duma deputy and leader of the Russian Muslim Union, his brother Magomed, and their supporters seized a government building in Makhachkala on 21 May. Whether this action was an attempted coup d'etat remains unclear. Khachilaev and his bodyguards had an altercation with policemen from the Dagestani interior ministry as a result of which one policeman was shot dead. The police surrounded Khachilaev's house on the night of 20 May. On the following day, with the help of a large crowd of supporters, those inside were able to force their way out and take over the government building. While holding the building they replaced the Russian flag with the green Islamic flag and called for the resignation of the State Council and direct suffrage to elect a new republican leader. Twelve thousand supporters rallied outside the building. After a few hours, Khachilaev's group agreed to leave the building in return for safe passage and the summoning of the regional parliament. (AAP Newsfeed, 22 May 98; NEXIS)
Russia's deputy prime minister in charge of national policies, Ramazan Abdula
tipov, commented that only direct general elections of Dagestan's leader
can provide a real mandate to assure that the leadership is not dependent on
backroom intrigue. (TASS, 21 May 98; NEXIS) (For more background information
about Dagestan's government and social problems, see Magomedkhan
Magomedkhanov, "Dagestan: Rents in the Fabric of Government," in
Perspective, Volume 8, Number 4.)

In another ominous episode, residents of the Novolakskoe district began a
blockade of the road linking Dagestan and Chechnya on 16 May. Dagestanis
have endured repeated abductions, cattle and car thefts and other criminal acts
perpetrated by Chechens who cross the border into Dagestan. The action in the
Novolakskoe district was prompted by the disappearance of a chairman of a
collective farm from the district on 13 May. (ITAR-TASS, 18 May 98; FBIS-SOV-
98-138)

CHECHNYA

Russian envoy abducted
Russia's envoy to Chechnya, Valentin Vlasov, was abducted in Chechnya on 1
May. Starting that day, Dagestani army and police units along the border with
Chechnya were placed on alert. (ITAR-TASS, 1 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-121)
Russia's deputy prime minister, Ivan Rybkin, Security Council deputy secretary,
General Boris Agapov, and representative of the Russian government to
Chechnya, Georgi Kurin, flew immediately to Dzhokar-gala. (ITAR-TASS World
Service, 1 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-121).

The circumstances of Vlasov's abduction were somewhat unusual: He was
traveling with only one bodyguard and failed to notify the Federal Bodyguard
Service of his flight to Chechnya. (Interfax, 5 May 98; FBIS-TOT-98-125)
President Maskhadov of Chechnya asserted in a letter to President Yel'tsin, as
he has on numerous occasions, that the kidnapping was staged by forces committed to undermining Russo-Chechen relations. (ITAR-TASS, 5 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-125)

On 7 May the Chechen authorities informed their Russian counterparts that Vlasov was being held in Russia. (Interfax, 7 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-127) On 13 May several people were killed when a bomb exploded in the center of Dzhokargala. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, which apparently targeted the head of Chechnya's anti-kidnapping unit, Magomed Magomadov, who was investigating the Vlasov kidnapping. Magomadov escaped unharmed. (AAP Newsfeed, 14 May 98; NEXIS)

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN
UTO gives reasons for latest clashes as fighting finally ends
Renewed fighting broke out between the Tajik government and United Tajik Opposition (UTO) troops near Rokhaty (10 km east of the capital) and Kofarnihon on 29 April (see previous Digest) and then spread into Dushanbe itself, causing up to 25 civilian deaths. Finally the Tajik government and opposition leaders were able to establish a cease-fire and bring the conflict to an end on 2 May. UTO units managed to seize control of much of the Dushanbe-Kofarnihon highway and even penetrated the eastern part (mainly the Karategin district) of Dushanbe. Rahmon Sanginov, a former UTO commander (who was expelled by the UTO leadership last summer), is considered to be primarily responsible for extending the battle into residential areas in eastern Dushanbe (Interfax, 0735 GMT, 2 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-122). Sanginov’s men fired grenades and mortar shells into the eastern part of the city, hitting the presidential palace (which sustained no damage), the Pakistani embassy (which received minor damage),
and destroying dozens of houses, as well as damaging water mains and electricity lines (ITAR-TASS, 1038 GMT, 3 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-123, and ITAR-TASS, 1244 GMT, 3 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-123). Shells also fell on central Dushanbe, but fortunately resulted in neither structural damage nor loss of life (Interfax, 0822 GMT, 2 May 98; FBIS-TOT-98-122).

Following discussions between President Rahmonov, UTO leaders, and representatives of the Tajik defense and security ministries on 2 May, an agreement was reached for the withdrawal of both Tajik government and opposition troops from the Karategin district and from the highway to Kofarnihon. Government forces would retain only one checkpoint in Karategin, while the UTO and interior ministry troops would set up two joint posts near the village of Teppai-Samarqandi (15 km east of Dushanbe), where the opposition field commanders had set up their headquarters. A special commission led by First Deputy Prime Minister and UTO First Vice Chairman Ali Akbar Turajonzoda, Deputy Prime Minister Abdurahmon Azimov, and the ministers of the interior, defense and security (presumably the police forces) was set up in order to meet with the opposition field commanders and oversee the troop withdrawals. UN military observers accompanied the commission to Teppai-Samarqandi on 3 May in order to help supervise the troop withdrawal. However, Tajik government forces prevented UN representatives from entering Dushanbe's Karategin district in order to form an independent assessment of the destruction caused by the recent shelling (ITAR-TASS, 1038 GMT, 3 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-123).

On 30 April the UTO leadership issued a statement outlining its views on the causes of the renewed fighting, in which it primarily blamed the government for reneging on the terms of the 5 April agreement that had ended the first outbreak of fighting in Kofarnihon (see previous two Digests). According to the terms of this agreement, both government and opposition troops would have to withdraw from Kofarnihon and the government would cede a 30 percent share of the district administrative organs to UTO representatives. Although the opposition
units did withdraw to their designated training camps, UTO leaders assert that not all government forces were pulled out of Kofarnihon, and the political reform of local administrative organs did not occur. The UTO leadership also sent an open letter with this statement to Paolo Lembo, the UN secretary-general's acting envoy to Tajikistan (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1600 GMT, 1 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-123). There has not yet been a public reaction to this letter from the UN observer mission in Tajikistan, other than to praise President Rahmonov for his role in negotiating the most recent cease-fire agreement (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1338 GMT, 4 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-124).

**UN secretary-general calls for election postponement**

On 13 May, Paolo Lembo, the UN secretary-general's acting envoy to Tajikistan, met with Said Abdullo Nuri, chairman of both the UTO and the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), to discuss the slow pace of the peace process and to transmit a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the upcoming parliamentary elections in Tajikistan. According to the terms of the peace agreement signed in July 1997, parliamentary elections are to be held in the Fall of 1998, by which time all opposition parties are to have been granted full legal status (so that they may participate in the elections). However, Annan sent a message to the UN Security Council calling for the elections to be postponed until the following year, on the grounds that the peace process has not achieved adequate progress to ensure a free and fair election (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1600 GMT, 13 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-134). However, Nuri, while agreeing that the peace process has been proceeding too slowly, firmly supports holding new parliamentary elections before the end of 1998 (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1600 GMT, 13 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-134).

**Tajikistan joins anti-Islamic 'troika'; parliament bans religious parties**

Following Uzbek President Karimov's announcement from Moscow on 6 May that he, President Yel'tsin, and President Rahmonov had decided to form a "troika" to combat the negative influences of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia and
Russia more effectively (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0925 GMT, 6 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-126), on 22 May the Tajik parliament passed a law banning the formation of religious political parties. This law instills new life into the Tajik Supreme Soviet's 1993 decree outlawing the Islamic Renaissance Party, and directly contradicts the terms set out in the political protocol of the 1997 peace agreement between the Tajik government and the UTO, under which all of the opposition parties are to be granted full legal status. The new law also prohibits the establishment of political parties "whose purposes and activity aim to overthrow the constitutional system by force and organize armed groups or groups propagating vengeance, inter-ethnic conflicts, social and religious hostility." Nor may political organizations be formed in national security structures, law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor's offices or in other security and law enforcement organs (Interfax, 1607 GMT, 22 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-142).

One day prior to its ratification of this new law, the Tajik parliament rejected President Rahmonov's appointments of UTO leaders Ali Akbar Turajonzoda and Dawlat Usmon to the positions of first deputy prime minister and minister of economics and foreign trade, respectively. The reason given for the rejections was that neither Turajonzoda nor Usmon was present at the parliament session in order to answer questions. According to Tajikistan's present constitution, the president may nominate the same candidate three times for a position in the government's executive structure and only has to nominate someone new after the parliament's third rejection (Interfax, 1311 GMT, 21 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-141).

Comment

If the law banning religious political parties is permitted to stand, it will invalidate the entire peace process in Tajikistan and even the 1997 peace agreement. The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) is the strongest member of the UTO and its leaders also largely comprise the top UTO leadership: Said Abdullo Nuri, Ali
Akbar Turajonzoda, and Dawlat Usmon are all members of the IRP. The general peace agreement signed in 1997 bears the signatures of President Rahmonov and Mr. Nuri. To instate a new ban on religious parties is to deny Nuri's authority and the legitimacy of the alliance which he represents. In fact, this new law deprives Nuri and his party of even the opportunity to achieve equal status with President Rahmonov and his supporters, thereby denying the validity of the peace agreement itself, because the agreement represents the two sides’ recognition that each has an equal and legitimate interest in the peaceful reform of Tajikistan's political system and that this reform can only be reached by their cooperation as equals.

With the peace process in such jeopardy, it is surprising that thus far there has been no public reaction whatsoever from either the UN observer mission in Tajikistan or OSCE representatives. The UN recently (26 May) released a statement condemning the Tajik government's participation in Russia and Uzbekistan's anti-Islamic alliance and called on the Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik administrations to refrain from taking any new actions which might further exacerbate tensions between the UTO and the Tajik government. However, the UN has yet to react to the new ban on religious parties, or to the Tajik parliament's rejection of Dawlat Usmon and Ali Akbar Turajonzoda's government appointments.

**Tajik parliament increases national security ministry’s authority**
At its 22 May session, the Tajik parliament also adopted a law which will increase the powers of the special services within the ministry by 20-25 percent. Many parliament members were opposed to this new law and actually favored limiting the authority of certain organs within the ministry, particularly the authority of the counterintelligence and special operations divisions, but a personal appeal from President Rahmonov resulted in the new law's adoption. The Tajik president told parliament representatives that crime and corruption in the military and (unspecified) "security structures" had grown to such proportions that only the
national security ministry would be capable of restoring law and order in the country. The president further stated that in order to undertake this task, the ministry needed enhanced powers (Interfax, 1607 GMT, 22 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-142).

**Tajikistan to receive additional international financial aid**

On 17 May it was announced that Tajikistan will receive a $50 million credit from the World Bank in order to carry out an economic restructuring program and to maintain its balance of payments. The IMF is also extending a $120 million credit to the Tajik government to support a three-year restructuring and privatization plan, which IMF and World Bank experts helped to draw up, together with Tajik government representatives (Interfax, 0814 GMT, 17 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-137).

On 20 May, at the conclusion of the Paris Donor Conference, it was announced that the Tajik government will be granted a total of $515 million over the next three years from individual donor countries in order to aid in Tajikistan's economic stabilization, as well as in the reform of the economy. Tajikistan will receive more than half of these funds ($340 million) in 1998-1999, $280 million of which is to be used to support its balance of payments and to maintain its public sector economy, and $60 million of which will be in the form of humanitarian aid (Radio Tajikistan First Channel Network, 0400 GMT, 21 May 98; FBIS-SOV-98-141).

**Newly Independent States: Baltic States**

By Kate Martin

**ESTONIA**

Meri’s admission of visa regime possibility widens schism over EU
The inclusion of Estonia in negotiations with the European Union has led to a certain amount of animosity on the part of the other two Baltic states, which as yet have not been invited to begin EU talks. The latest volley came as a result of Estonian President Lennart Meri’s interview with Poland’s Rzeczpospolita newspaper. In response to a hypothetical question, Meri declared that, if it were to be a condition of admittance to the EU, then Estonia would establish a visa regime with Latvia and Lithuania. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1000 GMT, 28 Apr 98) Since there has been no indication that the EU has requested such an action, the motivation for the question is murky. The result, however, was undeniably clear: A statement from the Lithuanian government's press service criticized the EU for inviting only Estonia to talks and described Estonia's behavior toward the other Baltic states as "arrogant." A press representative for the Estonian government subsequently reiterated Estonia's position that it will do everything possible to ensure the speedy invitation of Latvia and Lithuania to EU accession talks. (Radio Tallinn Network, 1500 GMT, 30 Apr 98; FBIS-SOV-98-120).

**Military feels the lack of money, men and materiel**

While Estonia may have developed economically to a sufficient extent for possible inclusion in the European Union, the growth of the country’s armed forces has not been smooth. Its air force and navy, especially, have faced hurdles in acquiring money, men and materiel.

The air force can claim possession of two Mi-2 HOPLITE helicopters (and only one of those is operational) as well as two An-2 COLT, small military transport aircraft. [The border troops, on the other hand, have four Mi-8T helicopters (configured to serve as rescue helicopters) and two L-410 Turbolet.] The country’s lack of haste in acquiring materiel is intentional, however, according to its commander-in-chief, Col. Vello Loemaa. With the long-term objective of joining NATO, the focus has been on developing an air defense system as well as ensuring that all officers have a command of the English language and that all
personnel are well-trained. As of June 1997, the air force consisted of 37 officers, 14 NCOs, 316 lower-enlisted ranks, and 21 civilian employees. In addition to the air force base that opened in Aemani in April 1997, an air defense division is also planned—with bases in Aemani, Tallinn and Tapa—which is to receive approximately 100 ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns. (Flug Revue, May 98, p. 8; FBIS-SOV-98-114)

There certainly will be no increase in air force personnel if a recent proposal submitted by Estonian student organizations is accepted by parliament. The students propose the exemption from military service of all full-time students enrolled in 1994-98. While they are gathering support from some MPs, other parties, as well as the Reserve Officers Body, have condemned the proposal. The defense ministry and the defense forces are applying for the compulsory military service of nearly 2,000 university-educated young men this year. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 27 Apr 98)

Like the air force, the navy remains close to the larval stage. According to the commander of the Tallinn naval base, Capt. Maj. Andres Ehrenbusch, the Estonian navy has only three vessels that can be classed as ships, while five of the navy's nine vessels are non-operational, awaiting repair. The average age of the vessels is 28-30 years, Ehrenbusch told the Baltic News Service. Meanwhile, the Border Guard Department maintains a fleet of 70 vessels, including 11 of the ship class. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1300 GMT, 14 Apr 98)

It would be rash, however, to view the disparate materiel inventories simply as a result of a growing rivalry between the border guard service and the military branches. Rather, Estonia has had to balance its concern to maintain border security with a view toward possible NATO inclusion and a need to establish interoperability with members of the alliance. Toward that end, this June Estonian troops are scheduled to participate in three NATO Partnership for Peace exercises. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 5 May 98)
LATVIA

Working group develops draft defense plan
Estonia's armed forces were not the only Baltic military which did not fare well under recent scrutiny. Experts of the bilateral US-Latvia working group (established under the US-Baltic Charter) helped to develop a draft defense plan that envisages a small well-trained infantry army. Once again, however, Latvia's minuscule defense budget was determined to be insufficient. As in the case of Estonia, Western groups recommend the allotment of at least two percent of GNP for defense expenditures. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 6 May 98)

LITHUANIA

Seimas approves defense reorganization; move may not be enough
While Lithuania's defense strategy may not cause as much dismay as those of its Baltic counterparts, even the steps Vilnius has taken may not prove to be sufficient. The Lithuanian parliament voted earlier this month to adopt a law on the organization of the national defense system and military service in order to bring the army closer to NATO standards. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 5 May 98) However, NATO's deputy secretary-general, Klaus-Peter Klaiber, told Reuters that the alliance disagrees with the Baltic security assessment and is in no rush to admit Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, regardless of the countries' levels of readiness. "I don't think NATO membership for the Baltic countries is a burning issue as our assessment of risk is a little different than in the Baltic countries," Klaiber said. (Baltic News Service, 1800 GMT, 27 Apr 98)