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Putin's campaign finance reform

Boris Berezovsky does not appear to be a desperate man just yet, but he has turned up the rhetorical heat considerably, and the result may be the burning of some very important bridges. The prosecutor general's office has set two appointments to question Berezovsky in connection with the financial arrangements at Aeroflot. Thus far, Boris Abramovich has missed one meeting and seems intent to remain abroad for the second. In a radical departure from his recent "quiet exile" approach, Berezovsky has decided to address some of the issues arising from the prosecutor's inquiries.

In a live interview with the Hero of the Day Program, Berezovsky, who was in New York, denied that there was "criminal activity" associated with the Aeroflot case, but also claimed that a diversion of funds did occur. (TRANSCRIPT, OFFICIAL KREMLIN INTERNATIONAL BROADCAST, 16 Nov 00; Federal News Service, via lexis-nexis) Specifically, Berezovsky asserted that money from a profitable company (presumably Andava), which was used to make Aeroflot a "normal company," was used also to finance both the Unity party's parliamentary race and President Putin's presidential campaign. In both the interview and an earlier published statement, Berezovsky implies that Putin was aware of the origin of his campaign funds.

According to Boris Abramovich, his change of tack in relation to the president came after remarks Putin made to a French newspaper concerning his determination to use a "cudgel" to deal with Berezovsky and his ilk. After months of denial, it seems Boris Abramovich's eyes have been opened to the possibility...
that his candidate did not remain grateful. The Putin government doesn't just want to control his media holdings, it wants what Putin always said it wanted: to pry loose the oligarchs' hold on the government and Kremlin -- well, at least the grip of those oligarchs with a propensity for independent political initiative.

Berezovsky, as yet, has offered no proof of Putin's complicity in illegal campaign financing (would it make the papers if he did?), so it is still possible that a deal may be struck that would allow him to return to Russia with no further threat of prosecution. For that to occur, however, Berezovsky would have to prove his loyalty to the Putin regime anew and maintain a much lower profile.

In the meantime, the Putin government, together with the prosecutor's office and the tax police, will continue to target key media and financial interests that could serve potentially as outlets for political challenges. Vladimir Gusinsky and Berezovsky are, thus far, the most well-known targets. The reintegration of the arms export companies and the removal and replacement of the Yel'tsin Family friend Aleksei Ogarev indicated another. The utilities and oil companies appear likely to be next.

From all reports, Putin is methodical and detail-oriented. In order to maintain his strong central control and enforce his "dictatorship of laws," there can be no popular, vocal opposition. First, control the means of communication. Next, in Putin's Russia? Why, deny access to the capital that could finance dissent.

**Kremlin politics as usual or a challenge to the president?**
Two interesting events suggest personnel changes loom in the Kremlin or the government or both. In the first incident, a general was transformed into a civilian. In the second, a presidential confidant and government minister was summoned for questioning by the St. Petersburg prosecutor's office.
On 9 November, President Putin discharged Sergei Ivanov, secretary of the Security Council (SC), from his military service as a general in foreign intelligence. Ivanov explained his request for the discharge by describing the various conflicts he found between his military status and his duties as SC secretary. He also proclaimed himself to be a "civilian" official now. (INTERFAX, 1615 GMT, 9 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1109, via World News Connection) The only position for which there has been any clamor for a civilian appointment has been at the defense ministry, and it is, of course, possible that Ivanov will supplant Igor Sergeev there. Persistent rumors, suggest nonetheless, that Ivanov actually may be in line to replace Mikhail Kasyanov as prime minister. Ivanov's conjectured main rival for the post is viewed to be Putin's friend from the St. Petersburg administration and the current finance minister, Aleksei Kudrin.

Isn't it fascinating then, that less than two weeks after Ivanov's civilian facelift, the St. Petersburg prosecutor summoned Kudrin for interrogation about the city's financial dealings from 1992 to 1996? During those years, both the president and Kudrin served as deputy mayors. Will, then, the president be interrogated also?

It is difficult to imagine that Kudrin would have information relevant to the investigation, and Putin would not. Therefore, Kudrin's summons to the prosecutor's office would be seen naturally as an attack on Putin as well. On the day Kudrin was called in, however, he was unable to attend as he was traveling with the president in Novosibirsk. On the trip, Putin apparently threatened to dissolve the government when he learned of thefts at a nuclear institute. He also charged Kudrin with improving the situation. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 21 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) This incident, along with a later rebuke from Putin over the slow payment of servicemen's benefits, are now cast as evidence that the president has lost confidence in his former colleague and current finance minister.

According to the director of the Center for Strategic Studies Director, Andrei Piontkovsky, "The war is on between Putin's old KGB clan and their St.
The sought-after prize is the prime minister's seat. It may make sense that the current finance minister would seek greater control over the economic situation as a whole through the prime ministerial post, but what is to be gained for a security services general (pardon me, former general), in this scramble for the premiership?

Questions abound. What could Ivanov accomplish that the trusted Kudrin could not? Would Kudrin balk at an ever-widening re-nationalization of industries? Is the issue the degree of state inspection of all industry? Or are the security services simply prepared to direct as many facets of Russian life as they can swallow?

One fact re-emerges from this renewed Kremlin/government struggle: The Security Council continues to exist as a personality-driven organ of power. Without a strong and trusted leader, it appears as little more than a redundant state organ. If Ivanov does move to a new post, it will likely recede into the Kremlin shadows until Putin finds a need to revive it.

**Russian Federation: Security Services**

*By Luba Schwartzman*

**In the spirit of Thanksgiving**

Edmund Pope's trial was adjourned early on 23 November so that he could return to his cell for some turkey, courtesy of the US Moscow Embassy. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 23 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) And there is some cause for him to be thankful. On Monday, 27 November, new evidence finally was accepted by the Moscow City Court, including copies of his medical history and an authorization of the Bauman University's permanent commission for a report by Professor Babkin to be sent abroad. According to Pope's attorney, the
authorization should exonerate his client by proving that no secret data were to be transferred. (INTERFAX, 27 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Earlier, the prosecution's position was undermined by the discovery that Yuri Plotnikov, a member of the Federal Security Service (FSB) investigation team that worked on Pope's case, is the son of state prosecutor Oleg Plotnikov. The defense's request that the elder Plotnikov be dismissed "because all the evidence received in court might be non-objective" was denied, but on Monday, 20 November, he was replaced by Yuri Volgin... for medical reasons. A letter from Deputy Prosecutor General Vasily Kolmogorov, explaining that Plotnikov had suffered a stroke and might be hospitalized, was read in court. (ITAR-TASS, 20 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Yuri Plotnikov sometimes is referred to as one of the chief investigators -- this sheds an interesting light on the statement attributed to Putin that the job of the "chief investigator" depends on winning the case. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Nov 00) But it is too early to rejoice: If this case is dismissed, or if Edmund Pope is acquitted, he may have another ordeal to face. A civil suit demanding $252 million in damages, filed by the Russian Navy and dismissed by the current judge, may be filed again after the trial ends. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 24 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Another victim of an espionage charge, Grigori Pasko, after being acquitted by a court, is being tried once more.

Above the law
Among the 49 passengers on a flight from Makhachkala, the capital of the Dagestan region, to Moscow were Dagestani Finance Minister Abdusamad Gamidov, his six bodyguards, members of a soccer club and two FSB officers. Shortly after takeoff, a man wearing a device he claimed to be a bomb demanded that the flight be redirected to Israel. He then locked himself in the cockpit, appropriating the guns handed over by the bodyguards, as per flight regulations. Meanwhile, a thrilling scene took place in the passenger area. The soccer fans, bodyguards and secret service men were all equally suspicious of each others' thuggish appearance. Shikhabuddin Mikhailov, the soccer club manager, and a few club members searched agitated FSB officer Oleg Lutsenko,
finding a military knife, but missing a pistol that dropped from under his arm to his seat, and a short-barreled Kalashnikov rifle in his bag. When the plane stopped to refuel, Lutsenko, who declined to explain how he got his weapons through security, pulled out the gun, shouted that he was a member of an anti-terrorist squad, ordered his colleague to take the Kalashnikov, and proceeded to search the passengers. Mikhailov explained who he and his companions were, and together the men searched the rest of the passengers. The story had a happy ending: The airplane landed in Israel, the mentally unstable hijacker, identified as Akhmed Amirkhanov, was persuaded to give up, and was handed over to Russia by the Israeli authorities on condition that he would not be sentenced to death. (Israel does not apply the death sentence except for Nazi war criminals like Adolf Eichmann.) No passengers were harmed, but questions about security need to be answered. (LOS ANGELES TIMES, 15 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis, and THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 17 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Sarah Miller

Russia's Iran policy: reneging on past promises to the US
In the midst of the US election turmoil, Russian President Vladimir Putin has steered his country into the diplomatic limelight. Whether it is the resumption of Russian involvement in the Middle East peace talks (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Nov 00) or a new nuclear initiative, Putin appears to be taking advantage of the diplomatic opportunity afforded him to pursue several Russian policies with renewed vigor. One area that has continually complicated US-Russian relations - - Russian arms sales to Iran -- particularly demonstrates Putin's attempt to take advantage of the US government's apparent preoccupation.

On 24 November, the Russian government announced that, as of 1 December, it would renege on its secret 1995 deal with the US not to supply Iran with
conventional arms beyond the year 1999. The agreement, signed under the auspices of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, allowed Russia to sell certain weapons to Iran in exchange for Moscow's pledge that it would end all deliveries of sophisticated conventional arms to Tehran by 31 December 1999. Moscow's latest decision came on the heels of the US election season, during which the contents of the 1995 deal emerged. Citing the supposed leak as well as the supposedly improving domestic situation in Iran, Moscow, in a letter to Madeleine Albright which arrived days before the election, announced its intention to withdraw from the agreement and resume arms sales to Iran. The timing of the letter and the flimsy Russian argument that the US effectively had broken the agreement first by leaking its contents suggest that Russia is simply using the current state of affairs as a pretext for continuing potentially lucrative sales to Iran. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR, 23 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)

For Russia, arms sales constitute a prime means of bolstering its failing economy. Already the Iranian government has announced its intention to purchase aircraft and anti-aircraft systems with a price tag estimated at $2 billion. Russia claims that the agreement has cost it several billion dollars in lost sales to Iran over the past decade. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR, 23 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)

The US government assesses Russian arms sales to Iran as a potentially destabilizing force in the Middle East, contending that Tehran is a major supplier of the terrorist Islamic Hizbollah group that opposed the direction of the current Middle East talks. As such, the US government has threatened to impose sanctions against Russia if Moscow allows the transfers to take place. (REUTERS, 28 Nov 00; via RussiaToday.com) The sides, which have already discussed the issue at the APEC summit in Brunei and the OSCE meeting, will meet in Moscow next week to discuss the issue. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 29 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative
Branch
By Michael Thurman

REGIONS
Volgograd gears up for elections
On 24 December 2000, the residents of Volgograd will go to the polls to cast
ballots for the region’s governor and mayor of the city of Volgograd.

Presently, only the incumbent governor, Nikolai Maksyuta, has registered for the
election, but this is sure to change. It seems that his chances for re-election are
good: The economy is moving forward and the grain harvest is twice as large as
last year. It also helps that the regional media is in his back pocket.

Even so, Maksyuta is taking no chances. Recently, the governor had the regional
Duma lower the percentage of turnout required to validate an election from 50
percent to 25 percent. This move is constitutional; however, critics see it as an
attempt to ensure Maksyuta’s re-election.

Volgograd Mayor Yuri Chekhov has become the loudest critic of this change, as
well as of other moves by the governor. This is in keeping with the political
competition between various regional governors and the mayors of their
respective cities. And, as with the relationships between governors and mayors
in others regions, Chekhov seems to be angling for support from Moscow.
Indeed Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Yevgeny
Primakov are said to be close friends. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 27 Oct 00;
FBIS-SOV-2000-1027, via World News Connection)
It is far from clear whether Chekhov's gamble will work, since Putin is courting the nation's governors through the creation of a State Council and the erection of federal districts. If Putin does manage to persuade the governors to cease opposition to his centralizing tendencies, the country's mayors may become a potentially important source for the defense of Russian federalism.

**Parliamentary immunity used to hide from legal action**

According to the nation's security services, there are virtually no regions left where the list of candidates for public office does not include the names of someone from the criminal underworld. For example, in Yekaterinburg, "crime bosses" from the Uralmash and Center groupings ran in elections to the oblast and city dumas and some won. In the Tyuman Oblast, one of the most powerful organized crime groups reportedly is in control of the city Duma.

(ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 1 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1031, via World News Connection)

The idea of immunity against criminal prosecution for members of parliament is to protect them from legal action filed by political opponents. In Russia, this seems to have reversed itself: The Duma is there to protect illegal acts of its members. This should not be allowed to continue. President Putin has declared war on crime and corruption. Let us see if it includes criminals protected by parliamentary immunity.

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Richard Miller

**First real step towards reform underway**

Recent decisions by Russia's Security Council constitute the first steps to real reform in the military and security services. Despite the rancorous and sometimes heated debate of the past year on the nature of restructuring,
consensus and an impetus towards beginning to implement these initiatives are reflected in recent statements from various politicians and military leaders. What remains to be seen is how much reshuffling President Putin will need to make in the senior military leadership to ensure that bureaucratic resistance does not interfere with his initiatives. In fact, Putin’s rather scathing comments to his senior military leadership at a recent staff conference seemed further to indicate the seriousness of his reform initiative and a probable shake-up of the leadership. While careful not to criticize the military as an institution, or even field-level personnel and common soldiers, Putin laid blame on the senior staff officers in Moscow for allowing the forces to atrophy. He stated that the armed forces today are "unequal" in morale, discipline, and equipment to the missions they are assigned. He repeated the recently heard theme of the need to ensuring that pay and living standards for the common soldier are elevated along with the material readiness of the conventional military forces. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 21 Nov 00) Two of the critical steps in achieving this reform are reducing the number of excess personnel in uniform and re-aligning defense funds and priorities to vital needs, especially the rising relative importance of the conventional forces over the strategic missile forces.

**Summary of reductions**

With over 3 million personnel serving in the military and security services, and many in often-duplicative roles, the Russian political leadership has finally acted on reducing this burden. The following table summarizes the largest proposed reductions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>180,000 servicemen</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>50,000 servicemen</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army &amp; Navy</td>
<td>120,000 civilians</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air &amp; Air Defense Forces</td>
<td>40,000 servicemen</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRF</td>
<td>10 divisions; 80,000 servicemen</td>
<td>by 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal Troops  20,000 servicemen
Railroad Troops  10,000 servicemen
Border Troops  5,000 servicemen

(ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 11 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1113, and INTERFAX, 1157 GMT, 23 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1123, via World News Connection)

Within those reductions, approximately 400 generals and admirals will be retired and over 240,000 other officer billets will be eliminated. In total, nearly 600,000 personnel will be cut out of the current 3 million-strong military and security force structure. There are conflicting reports that the airborne forces will be slightly reduced by 5,500 troops, as stated by one airborne commander, or that they will be excluded from this round of restructuring, as indicated by Putin in previous comments. (ITAR-TASS, 1321 GMT, 22 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1122, via World News Connection)

Emergency Ministry Civil Defense troops will be cut by 20% by 2005 (a reduction of 5,000 troops). As with personnel reductions in the other services, all funds saved by these cutbacks will remain in the budget and be applied to pay account shortfalls and procurement of new equipment. (ITAR-TASS, 1103 GMT, 14 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1114, via World News Connection)

Implementation details for this round of reductions are being developed currently and the defense ministry is due to report its findings to Putin in early December. A second round of restructuring and reductions is expected in 2001 with the principal focus to be on the security services and elimination of redundant capabilities.

Possible leadership changes
As Russian Federation Security Council Secretary, Sergei Ivanov, stressed, the current force constitutes an "unbearable burden" for the Russian economy and these reductions, principally from the rear service and management structures, will not impact Russian combat capability negatively. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 11 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1113, via World News Connection)

This is a particularly important view as Ivanov is rumored to be a strong contender to replace General Igor Sergeev and become the first civilian defense minister. If
Sergeev is retired or replaced soon, it will fall to his successor to implement the reform policies. Sergeev certainly has been viewed by Chief of the General Staff Anatoli Kvashnin as the main protagonist in a long-running debate over the priorities between conventional and nuclear forces. As a former commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF), Sergeev advocated maintaining the SRF's independence as a separate military arm and its prominent funding status. And while current reform proposals envisage only reductions of the SRF's force structure, personnel and budget, indications point to an eventual breakup of the force and consolidation of its reduced segments with parts of the Army and Air Force. This further reform may be delayed only as long as Sergeev remains as defense minister and can offer bureaucratic resistance from within. Moreover, it will be interesting to study which senior officers are asked to retire in the planned force reductions as a consequence of their previously expressed views on the proposed military reforms.

Consensus is building
Building support for the new reform initiatives comes not only from possible removal of defense ministry members who may oppose them, but also from a diverse group of other military leaders and politicians whose support will be required to ensure reform is implemented in more than name only. This type of support appears to be developing from several different directions.

The Duma Defense Committee voted for the distribution of extra funds for defense allocations essentially in accordance with the reform plans proposed by President Putin. The deputy chairman of the committee, Alexei Arbatov, said of the extra 12.6 billion rubles for defense, "these funds will be spent on most pressing needs, above all on the upkeep of the forces, pay to servicemen and equipment of the army." Arbatov stated there was a heated debate but ultimately the committee arrived at a decision similar to that of the government. (ITAR-TASS, 1344 GMT, 14 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1114, via World News Connection)
The liberal Russian party, the Union of Right Forces, issued a statement hailing the government's military reform initiatives as the appropriate steps towards a professional army, firmly under civilian control, which does not interfere in politics and guarantees the social security of the uniformed servicemen and military retirees. (RIA, 0947 GMT, 16 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1116, via World News Connection)

The support of military district commanders and operational unit field commanders will be required also to realize fully the capability to reform the armed forces. The Leningrad Military District commander, Colonel-General Valentin Bobryshev, reflected this view when he told reporters he believed the proposed force cuts would not hurt the country's defense potential and are important to achieve desired military readiness. (ITAR-TASS, 1408 GMT, 9 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1109, via World News Connection)

**Elimination of redundancy -- increase in efficiency**

The Russians view this initial 20% reduction in personnel coupled with a modest increase in the defense budget as key steps in increasing efficiency and professionalism of the force. Officials quote funding per capita of service personnel as an important measure in evaluating their forces qualitatively.

Combining the planned force reductions with current economic calculations and budget predictions, the resulting estimates show that in five years spending per soldier will double and by 2010 the value will triple today's levels. The implied result is a leaner, yet more capable and professional force. Even if the economic forecasts on which these assumptions are based are borne out and projected small but steady increases to military spending continue, Russia still needs to take dramatic strides in personnel training and retention of qualified enlisted personnel if it is to achieve the desired professional advancements in its conscription-based service.
Continuing pressure for 'welfare of the troops'

Slowly taking root in budget and reform discussions throughout the summer and gaining momentum following the public outcry over the Kursk disaster (which only highlighted further the plight of the conventional forces) is the pressure to "fix" the social problems of the service personnel. The current consensus of various political and military leaders, along with the public outcry, seems likely to ensure that the welfare of the troops is addressed as a primary concern in the budget process. Following the Security Council decisions on force reductions, the Federation Council stressed the need for social security for the military members who will be transferred out of active service, and called for an increase in military wages and state housing availability for service members. (ITAR-TASS, 1147 GMT, 14 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1114, via World News Connection) General Vladimir Yakovlev, commander of the Strategic Missile Forces (RVSN), stated, "we have to resolve the social issues of servicemen who will be made redundant." (ITAR-TASS, 1747 GMT, 14 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1114, via World News Connection) Even with force reductions, it is questionable whether significant funding will remain genuinely to upgrade and improve the condition of the conventional forces' hardware after all the lagging pay, housing, and retirement issues are fully funded.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Heads and bodies, bodies and heads

A missing journalist, a disappearing headless body, shrapnel, jewelry and a disembodied head combined this month to create a mystery to rival anything mystery author Patricia Cornwell could imagine.
On 3 November, a decapitated body was discovered in a forest outside Tarashcha, a small village in the Kyiv oblast. By mid-November, a group of journalists who had worked with missing Ukrainska Pravda editor Georgy Gongadze were in Tarashcha trying to determine if the body was that of their friend.

According to one account carried in the Kyiv Post, Ukrainska Pravda's new editor Olena Prytula was shown "an x-ray of the corpse's hand" with "small metal fragments in the same place where Gongadze was injured by shrapnel" while reporting on the Abkhazia conflict in Georgia in 1993. (KYIV POST, 21 Nov 00; via KPnews.com) Based on this, as well as on pictures of jewelry found on the body, Prytula positively identified the body as Gongadze's, and was issued a death certificate by the local coroner.

Later that day, however, before Gongadze's wife arrived to view the body, it was removed by detectives working for the prosecutor general. Where did it go and why was it removed? "At this point," Prosecutor General Myhailo Potebenko told Deutsche Presse Agentur, "we can not provide answers to those questions." (DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR, 1125 CET, 22 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Meanwhile, Deputy Interior Minister Mykola Dzhiga cautioned reporters to remember that "nobody can say for sure that this is Gongadze's body." (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 16 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Those words did nothing to sway Prytula, however. "It seemed clear to us it was the body of our Georgy," she said. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR, 1206 CET, 16 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)

Confusion also surrounds a skull found in the same area as the body claimed to be Gongadze's. According to Potebenko, that head most likely does not belong to the body confiscated by his office, but instead belongs to another body. "We have reason to believe that the head belonged to a woman," he said, and then announced that two other headless corpses had been found in Tarashchaa.
Shockingly, details on those bodies are also quite sketchy. But residents of Tarashcha must be watching where they step.

Dzhiga announced that DNA results would be run on the confiscated body and would be released to the public. Gongadze's friends -- and even some legislators -- aren't holding their breath. On 21 November, several lawmakers asked that foreign forensic experts be brought in to examine the remains. At the same time, Ukrainian journalists are suggesting that The Case of the Disappearing Body is yet another example of law enforcement corruption -- the same corruption that Gongadze railed against in Ukrainskay Pravda, and the same corruption that many believe led to his disappearance.

MOLDOVA

Peacekeepers?

At the 1999 Istanbul Summit, the OSCE welcomed "the commitment by the Russian Federation to complete withdrawal of the Russian forces from the territory of Moldova by the end of 2002" and took note "of the positive role of the joint peacekeeping forces in securing stability in the region." (ISTANBUL SUMMIT DECLARATION, paragraph 19) The statements raised eyebrows among those who had watched Russia repeatedly ignore previous agreements to withdraw, saw scarce evidence of any new Russian commitment to do so, and feared that these latest promises were just one more delaying tactic. (For further background, see Behind the Breaking News, 1 Dec 99; www.bu.edu/iscip)

Just one year later, this fear has apparently become reality. Russia has not only dropped all pretense of withdrawing its forces -- actually left over from the days of the Soviet Union -- but also apparently is standing by as the Transdniestr military takes up arms once again.
On 20 November, the OSCE celebrated the anniversary of the Istanbul Summit by bemoaning the fact that "the negotiating process for a lasting settlement of the Transdniestrian problem has not made significant progress." In particular, the statement noted, "Little progress has been made on paragraph 19 of the Istanbul Declaration. The last shipment of Russian arms and military equipment left the Transdniestrian region of Moldova on 19 November 1999." Even more important, the statement criticized Russian forces -- whom they call "peacekeepers" -- still in the region for not finding "ways to reduce the current unacceptable level of direct military confrontation between the former combatants." Finally, it denounced the "presence of unauthorized military units in the Security Zone." (OSCE PRESS RELEASE, 20 Nov 00)

Those unauthorized forces -- almost, if not entirely, Transdniestrian -- have moved steadily into the demilitarized zone that Russian officials repeatedly have claimed to be "stabilizing" and "protecting." In fact, these officials have used this "peacekeeping" function as justification for ignoring commitments to withdraw. If we do, they say, fighting will begin again.

Unfortunately, fighting has begun again anyway, and thanks to the Russian presence, the balance of power is totally on the side of the breakaway republic. Just two days after the OSCE statement, the Helsinki Committee announced that a "Transdniestrian column" had entered the village of Kitskan in the security zone, raped several women, beat several others, kidnapped a number of persons, and eventually left the area. As evidenced by the OSCE's criticisms, this is obviously not the first such offense by Transdniestrian troops. At a press conference, which was unfortunately given much less attention than was Russia's commitment to withdraw last year, Helsinki Committee spokesman Stefan Uritu charged that the OSCE and Russia are "failing in their responsibilities" to keep the peace in the area. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR, 1618 CET, 22 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)
Unfortunately, given Moldova's pitiful economic and political situation, and Russia's powerful position in the region, it is unlikely that much attention will be paid to the OSCE's suggestion that an international peacekeeping force might be necessary to curtail the renewed violence in the area. Perhaps if there had been a will for such a force one or more years ago, the situation today might be different.

Newly Independent States: North Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

Looking for a jihad?

On 23 November Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev identified the biggest threats facing Russia as "religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism." Emanating from Central Asia and the North Caucasus, they are not distinct or unrelated phenomena but a "powerful army with centralized control." (INTERFAX, 1809 GMT, 23 Nov 00; via Turkistan Newsletter) Although Sergeev did not elaborate on what a military solution to the problems of religious extremism, separatism and terrorism would entail, the ruthless assault on Chechnya gives some indication.

Sergeev's is only the most recent of many statements from the top Russian policy-making circles which tend to regard certain ideological currents within Islam as a major threat to Russia and view them as aspects of a coordinated international assault. According to this logic, foreign clients usually identified as the Gulf states or Afghanistan use Islam to motivate Muslim separatist movements in Russia and Central Asia.

However, the evidence of international coordination is thin, at least where it pertains to Chechnya. According to what can be ascertained by Western journalists, the scale of such international cooperation is so small that it simply
cannot account for the Chechen resistance. For all of the Russian blustering about thousands of foreign mercenaries fighting in Chechnya, only four have been taken prisoner. (THE ECONOMIST, 7 Jul 00) A French journalist, Anne Nivat, who was in Chechnya from October 1999 to February 2000, said that she had seen two foreign fighters -- the infamous commander Khattab and one other Arab who was with Arbi Baraev's detachment. In fact, according to Nivat, there were by far more Russians fighting on the Chechen side than there were Arabs. (Presentation at Harvard University, 28 Jun 00)

**Jihad begins at home**

While there is little reason to suppose that international sponsorship is responsible for the resilience of the Chechen resistance or the spread of radical currents of Islamic thought, there is evidence to suggest that Russia's anti-Islamic policies have exacerbated dangerously religious and ideological divisions. One recent study based on extensive field research in Dagestan and published by the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN) finds that anti-Wahhabi policies have limited indiscriminately religious freedom and have inadequately addressed the social issues that are most responsible for widespread discontent. (THE PROBLEM OF WAHHABISM IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS, Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology, RAN, 29 Jun 00)

The study begins as most such papers do with the difficulties of defining "Wahhabism," a term which has been applied to groups which have little else in common. [See Igor Rotar, ISLAM AND WAR, Moscow 1999, and Muriel Atkin, "The Rhetoric of Islamophobia," CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS, No. 1 (2000)] Yarlykapov settles on a very broad definition of Wahhabism: any fundamentalist or radical current within Sunni Islam. "Field studies allowed us to determine that the Wahhabi movement in Dagestan lacks a coherent structure or a single religious or legal doctrine." (p. 9) He then identifies strands of Wahhabism, some of which are quite amenable to compromise with the authorities. One of the chief issues of contention with local and federal authorities
is the Wahhabi preference for the adoption of shariah law. According to Yarlykapov, some Wahhabis are willing to postpone the advent of shariah law indefinitely. Another discovery is that in some locations, such as Kabardino-Balkaria, shariah and adat (pre-Islam common law) existed for decades alongside the secular courts of the Soviet state. (Irina Leonidovna Babich, LEGAL PLURALISM IN THE NORTHWEST CAUCASUS, Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology, RAN, 20 Feb 00)

Yarlykapov notes that Dagestani authorities took steps to suppress Wahhabis throughout the 1990s. The most repressive measures were anti-Wahhabi legislation of 1998 and a complete ban on the movement in September of 1999. Since the start of the war in Chechnya the representatives of the official faith structures have taken an even harder line: "Wahhabis can only be cured by a bullet," says the mufti, Akhmad-hadji Abdulaev, the representative of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan. When it comes to Wahhabis, "There are no other paths besides extermination," says the head of the current Russian puppet government in Chechnya, Akhmad Khadji Kadyrov, until recently the mufti of Chechnya. (pp. 8-9)

The law of 16 September 1999 forbids "wahhabist and other extreme activity" but fails to define these terms. The implementation of this law is carried out by MVD and police officers who predictably lack the religious education necessary to make these judgments. As a result the ordinary Muslim population is exposed to ignorant and unpredictable police harassment. The following examples were characterized as typical by the study: In the Nogai region several young men were jailed because they had quit drinking alcoholic beverages, and started studying Islamic religious thought and rituals. When Yarlykapov approached the local MVD personnel to persuade them to release these prisoners, the chief officer related that he held "lengthy discussions" with another suspected Wahhabi until the man "promised not to pray any more." (p. 10) Other instances of abuse include beatings; arrests on the grounds that a suspect wears a long
beard; random searches; as well as bans on religious publications, religious services, and the construction of madrases and mosques.

Frequent denunciations of Wahhabism in the mass media, the portrayal of the Chechen war as a holy crusade (accompanied by footage of Orthodox priests blessing combat-bound divisions), and the broad legislation employed by the police to terrorize the Muslim population only bolster the impression among many Dagestanis that they are being governed by an alien and hostile power. At the local level, frustration with corruption is seen as a major irritant in the relations between the authorities and the public.

Yarlykapov points to a more sensible approach which would curb the appetite for Wahhabi ideals by addressing the needs of the population. Such policies would include religious toleration in strict accordance with federal legislation, fostering religious education, job creation for the youth, curbing corruption, and forbidding the use of anti-Muslim catch phrases in the state-owned media. (pp. 14-15) If the authorities ignore such reasonable advice and continue to rely exclusively on the use of force, they will only exacerbate ideological confrontation and widespread public dissatisfaction.

**Newly Independent States: Central Asia**

By Lt. Col. James DeTemple

**Iran and Tajikistan: forging closer ties**

Tajikistan President Imomali Rakhmonov and Iranian President Mohammed Khatami agreed to forge closer ties during Rakhmonov's official visit to Tehran in November. The two leaders also exchanged views on regional security issues including the crisis in Afghanistan, and agreed to work together toward a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict, in order to prevent a spillover into Central Asia.
Rakhmonov said the "Afghan crisis poses a threat to the whole region" and "the longer the war the more will be its consequential afflictions to the regional countries." (IRNA, 1854 GMT, 7 Nov 00; FBIS-NES-2000-1107, via World News Connection) Moreover, non-traditional security threats such as international terrorism, arms smuggling, drug trafficking and organized crime have undermined the Central Asian states, particularly Tajikistan, which shares a 1,500-kilometer border with Afghanistan. Illegal weapons and narcotics have continued to flow across the Tajik-Afghan border, and the narcotics trade has spread from Tajikistan throughout much of Central Asia. (THE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIE T REVIEW, 1996) According to the United Nations, "drug traffickers use routes through Tajikistan to smuggle drugs from Afghanistan -- the world's largest producer of opium -- to Russia and the West." (BBC NEWS, 20 Oct 00) Despite the presence of Russian border guards and infantry (approximately 10,000 Russian border troops and a motorized infantry division are stationed in Tajikistan), Tajikistan is still considered by regional experts as the weakest point in the Central Asian security system.

Tajikistan's five-year civil war also has eroded security in Central Asia. The country's eastern provinces have served as a staging area for opposition forces and international terrorist organizations such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). In August, the IMU reportedly staged several incursions from bases in Tajikistan into a remote mountainous region bordering Uzbekistan and southern Kyrgyzstan. The situation is leading other Central Asian states to consider reprisals against Tajikistan if Dushanbe is unable to control its borders. (JANE'S DEFENCE, 25 Apr 00) However, Dushanbe has asserted that very little armed opposition remains in the country and has called charges of armed militants infiltrating the territory of neighboring states from Tajikistan "unfounded." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 16 Sep 00; via The Current Digest Of The Post-Soviet Press) While, theoretically, the situation might call for increased surveillance of the Tajik-Afghan border, as well as rapid reaction forces to defend
that border, Tajikistan has neither the military or financial resources to do so. Consequently, this consideration might be used by Moscow to increase still further Russian intervention in Tajikistan.

Iran and Tajikistan are to continue to discuss regional security issues on the CIS southern borders, including ways to end the Afghanistan crisis. The two countries already have participated in a UN-sponsored roundtable discussion of the "Six plus Two" group -- Russia and the United States, as well as China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan which border on Afghanistan - over the problems in Afghanistan. The Taliban, which is estimated to control approximately 95 percent of Afghanistan, is viewed as posing a serious threat to the region. Taliban victories against the northern alliance in the mountainous northeastern corner of Afghanistan after fierce fighting in September have displaced "tens of thousands" of persons. (KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 17 Sep 00; FBIS-NES-2000-0922, via World News Connection) An estimated 150,000 persons in northern Afghanistan have taken shelter in the Pamir mountains on the border with Tajikistan. However, Tajikistan lacks the resources to deal with this growing refugee crisis. Humanitarian relief, including UN assistance, is required to prevent a disaster.

Iran and Tajikistan are expanding parliamentary ties and economic cooperation through various contact groups and joint commissions. Iran is decidedly interested in increasing cooperation with Tajikistan in the military sphere. Indeed, common security is indispensable for harnessing the Caspian basin's untapped energy resources and supply routes. The region is thought by analysts to contain key global energy reserves and to be geographically well positioned to respond to sharp increases in world demand for oil and gas, particularly in East Asia and South Asia. Iran wants to capitalize on the revenues that will result from the exploitation of Caspian energy products. (JANE'S INTELLIGENCE REVIEW, 1 Apr 98) While some have argued that a north-south pipeline across Iran would be the shortest and cheapest route for transporting Caspian oil, Iran remains of
course, on the US Congress list of terror-supporting states and providing Tehran with a stranglehold on oil would hardly be considered safe.

Iran and the Central Asian states have much to gain from regional stability, and much to lose from regional conflict. The recent breakthrough in Iran-Tajikistan is likely to enhance Iran's prestige throughout the region and provide it with a foothold in Central Asia.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States
By Kate Martin

ESTONIA
The mysterious case of the disappearing document
Who signed what and where is the document now? These are the questions facing the Estonian government, as the existence of an agreement concerning the treatment of ex-KGB officers in the republic has come to light.

Information about the document surfaced during a lawsuit brought against the government by a former KGB agent who, with his family, was denied a residence permit. In the agreement, signed in December 1991 by then-Minister Raivo Vare and Vyacheslav Shironin, special envoy of the Soviet security service, the Estonian government pardoned KGB officers for their past activities in exchange for thousands of files, weapons and special equipment. (BNS, 1148 GMT, 30 Oct 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1030, via World News Connection)

Part of the conflict surrounds what else the agreement covered. According to the press service of the Russian embassy in Tallinn, the Estonian government of Edgar Savisaar also pledged to secure social, political and personal rights for KGB employees and their families. (BNS, 1515 GMT, 7 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1107, via World News Connection) The current government, under PM Mart
Laar, has to take the embassy's word for it, since the government's copies -- in Estonian and in Russian -- haven't been seen since the Savisaar cabinet left power.

While no one has denied the existence of the document, a panel of legal experts declared earlier this month that the agreement is no longer valid since the laws of Estonian have changed since 1991. Russian officials, and an Estonian court, disagree. On 8 November, the Tallinn administrative court pronounced invalid Justice Minister Mart Rask's decree denying residence permits to the family of former KGB employee Sergei Buchelovsky. In the case that brought the Vare-Shironin document into public discussion, the court ruled that blanket denials of applications were unacceptable, and authorities can refuse residence permits to former security services personnel only in instances where there is proof of guilt and of a continued threat. (BNS, 1751 GMT, 8 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1108, via World News Connection) According to Article 11 of the Estonian Law on Citizenship, naturalized citizenship cannot be granted to persons who "have been members of staff, informers, agents or owners of secret addresses of the KGB of the USSR (LSSR) or a security service, intelligence service or other special services of other foreign state, if this fact was established according to the procedure stipulated by the law"; no mention is made of residence permits, however.

A parliamentary committee has been established to investigate the circumstances surrounding the signing and subsequent disappearance of the agreement. Undoubtedly, Vare and Savisaar will face tough questioning when they appear before the committee. A spokesman for the Fatherland Alliance, which initiated the bill establishing the investigation, said the agreement "is a so-called secret pact, which attempted to provide rights for former collaborators of the Soviet Estonian KGB, pensioners and members of their families, which are in conflict with a number of subsequent legal acts of the Republic of Estonia." (BNS, 1413 GMT, 15 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1115, via World News Connection) Rask
and Interior Minister Tarmo Loodus have declared the agreement to be a historical-political document without any legal force.

Subsequently, opposition deputies in the Riigikogu called for a commission to check into possible links between top government officials and the KGB. Until 31 December, officials are required to state under oath that they have not been tied to the security services of another country. The proposed commission would be tasked with investigating ties of the president, MPs, ministers, the legal chancellor, the State Audit Office chairman, the Supreme Court chairman, the central bank governor and the army commander once the oath ceases to be required. (ETA NEWS AGENCY, 0906 GMT, 23 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1123, via World News Connection)

LATVIA

The Bolsheviks are coming!

In one action-packed week in mid-November, Latvian government officials at first downplayed threats posed by Russian extremists, and then had to cope when those threats proved to be only the beginning of the excitement.

Russian security officials passed word to their Latvian counterparts that members of a Russian extremist organization planned a publicity stunt in Riga. Interior ministry spokesman Normunds Belskis told the press on 13 November that the report from the FSB was being analyzed, but security authorities in Tallinn believed the actual threat was exaggerated. (BNS, 1028 GMT, 13 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1113, via World News Connection) Two days later, Belskis had cause to regret his statement, as Latvian police detained four members of the Russian extremist movement the National Bolsheviks, who had jumped off the St. Petersburg-Kaliningrad train and entered the country illegally. (BNS, 1439 GMT, 15 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1115) Subsequently, police announced the detention of all National Bolshevik leaders based in Latvia, to check the possible
collaboration of Latvian and Russian groups. (LETA, 0913 GMT, 16 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1116, via World News Connection)

Some Bolsheviks were missed in the roundups, however: Three young men entered St. Peter's Church in the center of Riga around 11 a.m. on 17 November, and proceeded to hold the church hostage. According to police, they pulled out what looked like grenades, threatening to blow themselves up unless their fellow Bolsheviks were released from detention. Instead, they were detained themselves, police said, after about an hour of negotiations. (BNS, 1305 GMT, 17 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1117, via World News Connection) Later reports indicated that they were leaders of the Samara and Smolensk branches of the group.

The Latvian Border Guard Service announced that the Border Guard and Latvian Railway had agreed to increase control of trains in transit. (BNS, 0933 GMT, 16 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1116, via World News Connection)