Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

The last threat subsides

By persuading the Council of Europe not to eject Russia from its parliamentary group, Moscow won a key victory in its successful campaign to mute criticism of the war in Chechnya. Since every major international organization has now given acting Russian President Vladimir Putin a honeymoon during which to show his true nature, Moscow will be able to host Middle East regional talks in early February as an unimpeached member of the international community.

It was not clear, however, how Moscow would behave in the absence of international pressure. Would President Putin reward his Western suitors by winding down his country's brutal war? Or would Putin campaign in the March elections as the candidate who stood up to both Russia's enemies at home and its critics abroad? The US administration seemed prepared to gamble that Putin would use his mandate to restore more civil relations. But there were signs that the Kremlin might instead grow used to easy popularity from its diplomatic wins.

The Council of Europe's decision not to employ sanctions against Russia brought to a close a month in which Moscow dismissed all its major critics. The surprise elevation of Putin, apparently an enigma to many in the West, appeared to have caught flat-footed even the fiercest opponents of the Chechen war.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, an early advocate of NATO action in Yugoslavia, was calling for sanctions against Russia as recently as December. By late January, however, Fischer had begun insisting that the West maintain "open dialogue with the Russian leadership." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 25 Jan 00)
Italy saw fit not only to continue negotiations over economic ties to Russia, but even to sign new cooperative agreements with Russian arms manufacturers. (ITAR-TASS, 27 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

At high-level meetings of the International Monetary Fund, and the G-7, neither sanctions nor even statements of disapproval were supported. On 24 January European Union foreign ministers approved a suspension of $90 million in aid and expressed "concern" about Russia's behavior in the Caucasus, but declined to link the deferment to the Chechen war. (THE RUSSIAN BUSINESS MONITOR, 26 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) First Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said the suspension of aid would have few consequences for Russia. (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 26 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

**A council defied**

Only the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for a time seriously considered punishing Russia for the brutality of its military campaign. Returning from a fact-finding mission in the Caucasus on 20 January, Lord David Russell-Johnston, president of the assembly, criticized both the Russian and Chechen governments. According to at least one report, Russell-Johnston said Russia was "in complete breach of the agreement she made when she joined the Council of Europe," and threatened to suspend its membership in the group. (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 0636 EST, 20 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) The Russian media, however, treated Russell-Johnston's trip as a diplomatic victory, claiming that he had called Chechnya a "criminal state" and had changed his mind about sanctions. (RUSSIA TV, 1000 GMT, 20 Jan 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

When the parliamentary assembly considered suspending Russia's membership four days later, politicians in Moscow defiantly refused to curb the Chechen war. Yegor Stroev, chairman of the Duma's upper house, called the assembly's
threats "an open challenge to Russia" and vowed that, "irrespective of the PACE position," Russia would "tackle its conflicts on its own." (INTERFAX, 1548 GMT, 24 Jan 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) Addressing the assembly before its vote, Igor Ivanov, Russia's foreign minister, vowed that Russia would continue to fight a "barbarian invasion of international terrorism" that was building "the axis of its influence from Afghanistan via Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Balkans." (TASS, 27 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

In the end the assembly voted 83-71 not to punish Russia for its war, instead giving Moscow until April to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. The vote was celebrated in Moscow's Duma as a victory for Russian firmness. "Our delegation [acted] quite boldly," Dmitry Rogozin, chairman of the lower house committee for international affairs, told Echo of Moscow radio. Rogozin, however, did not indicate that he favored the political solution the Council of Europe sought. A political agreement with terrorists was impossible, Rogozin said, adding that he favored talks "only in the form of capitulation, or (rebels') disarmament. " (TASS, 0957 GMT, 28 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

Relations with NATO -- whose carrot, whose stick?
If some Western institutions were considering expelling their Russian members, at least one -- NATO -- appeared to pine for Russia's company. Writing in NATO Review, George Robertson, the alliance's secretary general, welcomed Russia's renewed attendance at meetings on Bosnia and Kosovo, but hoped to "resume work on the full range of cooperative activities agreed under the Founding Act" of the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council. (NATO REVIEW, Winter 1999; via www.nato.int)

Robertson's plea for more attention from Russia makes it difficult to remember that the Permanent Joint Council was established as a concession to Russia when NATO expanded. Why, it might be asked, is NATO now so worried that Russia does not attend meetings it had sought in the first place? NATO's ardor,
however, seems to have made Russia coy -- and demanding. Russian leaders appear to be requiring exactly the "veto" over NATO actions that had been denied them when the joint council was founded.

"Unfreezing the relations with NATO [to] a decisive degree depends not on Russia but on real action by the (Western) alliance," an anonymous official of Russia's defense ministry said. "If we manage to overcome differences on the situation in Kosovo, achieve an understanding within the framework of work of Russia-NATO Permanent Council on the Kosovo problem, [and] make sure of NATO's real intention of equal dialogue with Russia, the restoration of relations will become a reality." (TASS, 22 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

In the meantime, Russia has apparently found its own ways to gather information about NATO activities. After discovering bugging equipment in a Warsaw building owned by the Russian government and close to several Polish ministries, the Polish government expelled nine Russian diplomats it accused of spying. The Polish government said it had "found evidence of intensive spying activities aimed at vital Polish interests, carried out by a group of Russian citizens with diplomatic status." (THE GAZETTE (Montreal), 21 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

Nor does Russia seem at a loss on where it stands in the Balkans. The foreign ministry condemned a recent meeting of seven of Yugoslavia's neighbors as an "isolationist" attempt to "create an anti-Yugoslav pact with a Euro-Atlantic bias." (INTERFAX, 1332 GMT, 25 Jan 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) Russia's most recent stand in Belgrade's defense seems to indicate that its partnership with Yugoslavia is strengthening.

**A special case**
The deepening ties between Yugoslavia and Russia are both understandable and worrisome. The West, Moscow and Belgrade all comprehend that Russia's assault on Chechnya is more ferocious than the steps Serbia took in Kosovo. If
Yugoslavia deserved a full-scale war for its campaign against "terrorism," why can the West not bear even to suspend Russia from a few talking shops as punishment for its war? What could possibly account for the discrepancy in the Western response, other than the fact that Russia is a nuclear power and Yugoslavia is not? And if this is the reason the West has not been harder on Moscow, can anyone be surprised Russia relies so heavily on its nukes?

If the West is both reluctant to employ sanctions against a country with atomic weapons and quick to bomb one that lacks them, would Russia be wrong to conclude that it can win new friends by extending its nuclear umbrella? And if Putin wins elections in part for having stood up to the West, won't he have a strong mandate to do it again?

**New leadership, but no policy change**

Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin may not be taking any foreign trips prior to the March elections, but plenty of foreign events will take place in Russia between now and then. Suggesting that the new Russian leadership will continue the Sino-Russian rapprochement begun by the previous administration, Putin welcomed Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian, and announced that China will be one of his first destinations after the election.

In statements reminiscent of those made last July during a visit by China's General Zhang Wannian, Putin and Chi reconfirmed their common stance on international issues and bilateral cooperation, especially in the military sphere. (XINHUA, 19 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) Both sides will continue to oppose NATO interventionism and US National Missile Defense aims, as well as to promote a multipolar world. The diplomats followed up their rhetoric by signing an agreement of mutual understanding on military cooperation.

**If you're not a superpower, try to look like one**
Russia is attempting to reenter the international diplomacy game after a long break. As expected, Moscow's meetings with Israeli and Palestinian diplomats last autumn did foreshadow Russia's effort to play a role in the peace process. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 6 Dec 99) Now Moscow is gearing up for an impressive gathering of foreign ministers from several continents, who will meet from 31 January until 1 February to discuss Middle Eastern regional problems. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) The multilateral talks will draw an array of diplomats from Russia, the United States, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Canada, Japan, the Palestinian Authority and the European Union to discuss regional issues concerning water, trade, etc. The meeting will still be spun as a win for Russia, which has reasserted its role as a major international actor.

Another impasse
In a Cold War-style standoff, the UN Security Council reached another impasse over Iraqi weapons inspections despite passage of a new comprehensive resolution. The agreement, signed 17 December 1999, created a UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to replace UNSCOM. However, the bickering continues. The dispute pits the US and Britain against Russia and China -- and to some extent France -- over the terms of Iraqi weapons inspections and the appointment of a new chief. Iraq is opposed to any weapons inspections at all. Predictably, neither Russia nor its allies welcomed the appointment of a new UNMOVIC chief with direct ties to the controversial UNSCOM. To the Russian side, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's appointment of Swedish diplomat Rolph Ekeus appeared preordained. "Rolph Ekeus is associated with the work of UNSCOM, Russia's attitude to which is well known," said Russian Press Service Chief Dmitry Feoktistov. (ITAR-TASS, 1451 GMT, 18 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0118 via World News Connection)

Russia has been Iraq's most important ally throughout the Security Council proceedings, acting as Iraq's economic and political lifeline. And although the
issue was an old one even before Russia's Chechen campaign began, it is just another example of Russia's hard-line stance against the US and what it views as Western bullying. However, in the end, even if UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appoints a UNMOVIC chief who is acceptable to all sides, Iraq does not seem willing to consider any monitoring at all.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Michael Thurman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Opposition parties agree to return to Duma
Nine days after they stormed out of the first plenary session of the Third Duma on 18 January, the leaders of Fatherland-All Russia, YABLOKO, and the Union of Right Forces have agreed to allow their parties to return. They plan to return on 9 February.

The problem was caused when it became clear that the Communists and acting President Vladimir Putin's party Unity had made a secret deal to divide up the important positions in the new Duma. Together, the Communists and Unity have a majority of the 450 seats. They re-elected Communist deputy Gennady Seleznev to the post of Duma speaker and divided up the chairmanships of the important committees between themselves and their close allies. Fatherland-All Russia, YABLOKO, and the Union of Right Forces walked out in protest.

Some reports indicate that it was acting President Putin who negotiated their return, but it was also reported that former prime minister and leader of the Union of Right Forces Serge Kirienko had entered secret negotiations with Unity to cooperate in future Duma negotiations. It is not clear, but this may have been the
impetus for the other parties to return to the Duma. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 27 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

**Putin creates ministerial post for government representative in the Duma**

Although there have been governmental representatives in both houses of the Federal Assembly in the past, they were not at the ministerial rank. Putin has changed this by appointing Konstantin Lubenchenko to the post of minister for governmental representation in the Duma. The exact title is unclear. The head of government administration, Andrei Korotkov, explained that Lubenchenko's job in the Duma is "to improve the quality of work of the government within the framework of the exercise of its right to legislative initiative." (ITAR-TASS, 1335 GMT, 17 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0117)

**JUDICIARY**

**Constitutional Court denies courts right of initiation**

The Constitution Court has ruled that Russian criminal courts do not have the right to institute criminal proceedings. Citing point 4 of part 1 of Article 232, parts 1, 2 and 4 of Article 256 of the Criminal Procedural Code, and the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the court argued that the power to initiate prosecution does not lie with the courts. "Giving courts powers to institute a criminal prosecution does not conform to the constitutional provisions on the independence of justice. As a body of justice, a court cannot be entrusted with the procedural functions of instituting criminal proceedings that are not characteristic to it." (ITAR-TASS, 0929 GMT, 14 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0114)

The Russian Constitution clearly provides for an independent court. The executive branch of the federal government through the office of the procuracy is supposed to prosecute violators of the law and bring them before the courts for adjudication. The fact that the Russian prosecutor's office has not been very effective may have meant that the court found it necessary to take matters into its
own hands. Nevertheless, judicial independence, no matter how inconvenient, must be maintained if the law is to be equally and fairly applied.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

Needed reform missing in the Russian military
Western media reacted to acting President Vladimir Putin's approval of Russia's new national security concept with some concern. The document, published 14 January, has a distinct anti-Western tone and broadens the definition of contingencies that permit the use of nuclear weapons. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 18 Jan 00) However, some CIS and former Warsaw Pact countries view the document as just another politically profitable move to prepare Putin for the upcoming presidential election. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 19 Jan 00; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) A new military doctrine, which should closely resemble the national security concept, is under review and expected to be approved as early as February. (ITAR-TASS, 1333 GMT, 14 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0114, via World News Connection) Both documents list perceived external and internal "threats" to Russia's security, such as Western infringement OF Russian Federation interests and adverse economic conditions which foster ethnic conflict inside the Russian Federation. Neither document provides a framework for the military to organize and equip its forces to counter these new "threats," however. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 17 Jan 00)

The Russian army has not applied lessons learned during its humiliating 1994-96 foray into the breakaway republic of Chechnya. According to former Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, Putin's predecessor, Russia's recent invasion of Chechnya was planned months before August 1999. Stepashin insists the original plan was to occupy the northern half of Chechnya to the Terek river, establish full control, and lure "ordinary Chechens" to live in a better Russia.
Russia had sufficient forces to accomplish this objective, Stepashin said; however, Prime Minister Putin, with the overt support of Russia's generals, changed the operation's objectives and then sent an ill-prepared and -equipped conscript army into the urban canyons of the Chechen capital, an operation that continues to bleed men, money, and most importantly, morale. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 20 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) A large conscript army is not the solution to Russia's threats. Since Russia's generals have not proven flexible enough to make changes in doctrine, tactics and force composition, then it is doubtful they can prioritize and make tough decisions in the face of limited financial resources.

Meanwhile, the Russian navy is formulating its own naval strategy to deal with external threats. The strategy provides a framework for a future force whose composition mimics the former Soviet navy. The Northern and Pacific fleets will feature strategic missile submarines, attack submarines, and aircraft carriers. The Baltic, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea flotilla will consist of smaller, multipurpose surface ships, minesweepers, and diesel-electric submarines. Another priority is maintaining combat readiness, and equipping units with modern weaponry and hardware to include global navigation, communications, battle control, and reconnaissance systems. (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 11 Jan 00; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) To counter the US navy's maritime strategy, the Russian navy believes at least six aircraft carriers need to be built. (RIA, 2115 GMT, 21 Jan 00; BBC, via lexis-nexis) Diesel-electric submarines, mines, and antiship cruise missiles -- weapons which Russia possesses in quantity -- can be very effective defending the littorals. However, the Russian navy still aspires to fight the US Navy with larger, more glamorous, and very expensive capital ships such as aircraft carriers. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, this vision is not achievable based on Russia's projected economic future.

Finally, Russia is playing its trump card: strategic nuclear weapons. Russia's strategic rocket forces have received top priority. However, Russia recently has produced 10-15 Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missiles per year, and since the
defense ministry is already spending at least 25 percent of its budget on strategic rocket forces, there is probably no room to increase production. This rate is insufficient to replace Russia's aging arsenal and maintain existing force levels. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 1 Nov 99; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, STRATEGIC BALANCE 1999/2000, Oct 99) Over 70 percent of Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles are already beyond their guaranteed service life, which raises reliability questions. (RIA NEWS AGENCY, 18 Jan 00; BBC, via lexis-nexis) Although not widely reported, there have been incidents of strategic rockets malfunctioning during test flights. Recently, a Topol-M "turned upside-down" following a demonstration for Prime Minister Putin. (KOMMERSANT-DAILY, 20 Jan 00; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) Despite expense and reliability issues, Russia believes possession of strategic nuclear weapons is vital to maintaining world prestige and influence. Russia will cling to its nuclear weapons at the expense of modernizing conventional forces. In the absence of any document which prioritizes weapons, organization changes, and tactics, it is unlikely Russia's leadership will implement any much-needed reform of the conventional forces.

**Putin attempts to put his money where his mouth is**

Vladimir Putin announced on 27 January that he intended to increase military spending by 50 percent, thus backing his pledges to restore Russia's economic and military might. This increase in defense spending will be targeted at the military-defense industry as well as the research, development and procurement of new, high-tech weapons. The Russian conventional forces received very little in the way of weapons systems and equipment through the 1990s. The air force has not received any new aircraft since 1992 and is not expected to receive any, under the current defense planning, until 2001. The navy is slightly better off, having built a few, largely minor, warships. The army, on the other hand, not only has had to contend with antiquated weaponry but is critically short on everything from radios to food. (THE GAZETTE (Montreal), 28 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis, and
On the surface this should bring a great sigh of relief to military officials, but upon closer consideration this situation raises many concerns. There is a basic distrust concerning political proposals to increase military spending. Constant promises over the last decade to raise defense budgets to reverse the disintegration of Russia's armed forces have gone unfulfilled, largely because of Russia's desperate economic situation. This time, because of recent positive economic growth and an increase in oil prices, Russian military leaders have some hope that there may actually be money to spend on the military. However, the enormous cost of operations in Chechnya must put this money for defense procurement in jeopardy. According to First Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, current costs of the Chechen war stand at about five billion rubles ($175.8 million), exceeding planned budget expenditures of three and a half billion rubles. Roughly R148-150 million plus is spent monthly on the war effort. A second major concern is in the small print of Putin's policy. On closer examination, his plan to increase military spending does not actually mean the defense ministry would get more money. Rather, Putin intends merely to reallocate money within the current military budget to defense procurement, by 80 percent in some categories. The existing military budget, in fact, will not increase at all. Of course, there are secret military allocations, but most of them apparently concern R&D for exotic weapons technologies.

The real issue concerns not so much increases in defense procurement funding, but balance. The current military budget is woefully insufficient to meet the basic demands of the Russian military. This is not only true in terms of weapons and equipment procurement but across the whole spectrum of military spending: personnel, training, housing, recruitment, operations, etc. Putin's announcement to put more money into the defense procurement pot implies funds will be taken
out of other equally underfunded pots of defense money. Nonpayment of wages and salaries can be expected to continue. Lack of basic supplies, food, clothing, and adequate housing will continue to undermine troop morale and health. Lack of adequate funding for credible training will continue to jeopardize military capabilities. These consequences are already clearly evident in repeated stories of desertions, breakdowns of unit discipline, dire living conditions of troops, and the questionable effectiveness of military operations in Chechnya.

Instead of arbitrarily committing a large amount of restricted defense dollars to meet a need driven by the headlines (i.e., Chechnya), Russia might be better advised to go back to basics and restructure its military force and budget to meet the country's new needs and limited resources. To do this officials must first determine the role of the armed forces within the context of Russian realities (there had been attempts to answer this question as far back as 1992); second, given this role, determine their necessary size, organization, and equipment; and last, determine the funding and allocation required to meet the new military structure. This is not new thinking. Russian planners have recognized this need for almost a decade but have had neither the commitment nor backing to carry it through.

**A third senior commander replaced**

Following on the heels of the replacement of the two senior army field commanders in Chechnya in early January, acting President Putin has now removed Col Gen Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov as commander-in-chief of the internal affairs ministry troops. Replacing him is Col Gen Vyacheslav Tikhomirov. (INTERFAX, 1251 GMT, 22 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0122, via World New Connection) Russian Minister of the Interior Vladimir Rushailo was quick to note that these were "usual personnel changes" (ITAR-TASS, 2057 GMT, 2 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0122, via World New Connection), but it is clear Ovchinnikov was removed due to accusations of interior troops failures in Chechnya and the increasing squabbles between interior and defense ministry troops. Recent
defense ministry reports have accused interior troops in Chechnya of failing to follow successful army operations with effective "mopping up" operations. The interior ministry troops are tasked with securing towns and villages seized by army units. The interior ministry reply has been to stress that its troops are not being properly used in Chechnya, but rather thrown into offensive operations even though they are only trained and equipped for law enforcement. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 28 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

Col Gen Tikhomirov is a career army officer with a reputation as a strict commander and fierce soldier. Possibly even more important is his political vision regarding the Caucasus. He firmly believes that "if Russia loses its footing in the Caucasus, it risks losing the whole Federation." In November 99 he published an essay in which he said it was essential to win the war in Chechnya. If Russia did not, it would "lose [the public's] confidence in the government's ability to resolve conflicts, uphold national interests and maintain a powerful army." (STRATFOR GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE UPDATE, 25 Jan 00)

**Newly Independent States: CIS**

By Sarah Miller

**Rules, what rules?**

During Boris Yeltsin's last days in power, the CIS was a nearly moribund organization, plagued by ineffectiveness and dissent. Vladimir Putin's youthful leadership may help to resolve these problems, but at what price? At the 24-25 January CIS Summit in Moscow, Putin's Russia displayed some of its old vigor and leadership, but for 11 other sovereign CIS states, the price of Russian leadership may be high. Illegality and secrecy -- not substantive issues -- took main stage at the summit.
In their first act, the CIS presidents elected Putin to the CIS chairmanship two months prior to the election in Russia. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 25 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) The presidents not only acted illegally -- the chairmanship is meant to be filled on a rotating basis -- but with great secrecy. In a move reminiscent of Soviet days, they made the decision behind closed doors at two meetings -- one held on Monday night at Yel'tsin's Gorky-9 residence and the other on Tuesday prior to the official summit -- after which they announced their decision. Little else was accomplished at the summit, although they did sign several pre-approved agreements on communications and anti-monopoly cooperation measures. Major issues such as the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) were purposely shelved, while others, such as Abkhazia, were not even raised at the meeting. (ITAR-TASS, 25 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

As a result of the summit, Putin's Russia has retained and even strengthened its grip on the CIS. However, the group remains a loose organization plagued by inefficiency and dissent. Just because FTZ and Abkhazia were shelved for the time being doesn't mean they won't come up at later summits. In fact, numerous bilateral meetings held prior to the summit between Putin and each CIS president indicate that considerable effort was poured into orchestrating a smooth entrance for Putin onto the world stage. In the end, Putin's first foreign meeting as acting president may have actually raised expectations in the CIS that the second Russian president will bring renewed strength, vitality, and diplomatic finesse to the position. The next meeting has already been scheduled to follow the March election, at which time the CIS presidents plan to meet with the properly elected Putin. But, considerable work looms if Russia hopes to prevent shelved issues from causing problems in the future. And if they don't cause a stir, then the end of the CIS will be close at hand.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch
UKRAINE

Here a parliament, there a parliament...

If it wasn't such a potential disaster for Ukraine, it would be funny. On 21 January, the Ukrainian parliament split into two factions: the center-right pro-presidential majority, and the leftist coalition led by Speaker Oleksandr Tkachenko. Actually, it may be former Speaker Oleksandr Tkachenko.

After Tkachenko did not initiate a vote on a proposal by the newly created pro-presidential majority to oust him and Deputy Speaker Adam Martynyuk, majority members began yelling at him, attempted to approach the speaker's rostrum, and, when blocked, left the chamber. (INTELNEWS, 20 Jan 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) They held an alternative session the next day in a nearby exhibition center, where they voted to remove Tkachenko and Martynyuk. Tkachenko immediately called the vote illegitimate.

Tkachenko was elected in July of 1998 after over two months of wrangling, and the rejection or withdrawal of dozens of other candidates. In the post, he has shown himself to be an astute politician, but one who has been able only to block policies, not initiate them.

In the last year, as President Leonid Kuchma solidified his political power, Tkachenko and his fellow leftists appeared increasingly determined to block all presidential initiatives, no matter what the cost to the country. As reported in the last NIS Observed, this determination culminated in the refusal of the parliament to approve the Fiscal Year 2000 budget, which is a necessary step toward the release of suspended IMF and World Bank loan tranches. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 18 Jan 00)
It was that refusal that seemed to ignite parties opposing Tkachenko into solidifying their coalition. In fact, the pro-presidential majority of 241 deputies was announced on the same day that the budget was refused for the second time.

Unfortunately for Tkachenko, it seems that the legal grounds for his refusal to allow a vote to remove him are questionable at best. The Ukrainian Constitution states, "The Verkhovna Rada [parliament] of Ukraine elected from its members the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the First Deputy Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and recalls them." The document stipulates no other conditions for "recalling" the parliament's leadership. Therefore, it appears that, unless the speaker's office comes with a power to block votes that is not detailed in the Constitution, he must allow deputies to vote on his removal at any time in a session. On the other hand, it remains unclear whether the pro-presidential majority's unsanctioned vote taken outside the chamber to remove Tkachenko is legal, even though a quorum was present.

Clearly, Kuchma and his bloc in parliament are proceeding as if it is. The second parliament began by confirming Volodymyr Stelmakh as chairman of the National Bank on 21 January. Shortly after, it removed Tkachenko's bodyguards and disconnected his business telephones in the parliament building. (ITAR-TASS, 1204 GMT, 21 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0121, via World News Connection, and RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 25 Jan 00) The actions have clearly had an effect -- if not on Tkachenko, then on a number of deputies.

Both parliament factions -- each claiming to be the legitimate parliament -- met separately on 1 February to open the winter session. By that date, it was obvious that momentum was on the side of the pro-presidential group, as the number of its supporters had grown from the original 241 deputies to 259. At the session, these deputies voted to appoint Ivan Plyushch the new speaker of parliament. At the same time, however, Tkachenko was claiming that the vote to oust him was
unconstitutional -- presumably because it was held outside the parliament chambers, and without his authorization. He said, "I want to assure that I have never clung to this lofty chair -- I was elected to it. And I am prepared to hand it to another deputy if I am dismissed in strict accordance with the constitution of Ukraine." (REUTERS, 1 Feb 00; via America Online)

Not surprisingly, Tkachenko did not comment on the constitutionality of his original refusal to allow deputies to vote on whether he should remain speaker. His is an interesting argument: "it is unconstitutional for you to vote me out because I didn't give you permission, even though a majority of deputies asked for it."

As Tkachenko twists the constitution to fit his whims, Kuchma’s recent statements of support for the newly formed majority have alleviated some concerns that he would use the constitution for his own purpose -- to disband the parliament. Article 106 of the Constitution says, "The president of Ukraine terminates the authority of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, if the plenary meetings fail to commence within thirty days of one regular session." If the pro-presidential parliament were found to be illegitimate, and if Tkachenko continued to be unable to generate a quorum, Kuchma may have been able to use Article 106 to his advantage. He has clearly stated, however, that he considers the second parliament to be legitimate, and it therefore seems unlikely that he is considering disbanding the body. Given the state of emergency facing Ukraine’s energy system, it is also unlikely that Kuchma would want to go through a parliamentary election campaign before the 2000 budget can be approved.

Tkachenko has obviously painted himself into a corner, and increased Kuchma’s power along the way. The only way out for Tkachenko is to allow a vote to remove his leadership team. Tkachenko the fighter may not want to admit that, but Tkachenko the politician no doubt knows it already.
Ditto...

Not to be outdone, the parliament of the Crimea is also involved in an ongoing power struggle between the two government branches. This struggle, however, has resulted in a complete halt to all government action. The crisis began on the day that shall live in infamy -- 7 November, when the Communist Parliament Speaker Leonid Hrach apparently made disparaging remarks about Crimean Prime Minister Serhiy Kunitsyn. Kunitsyn responded by filing a slander lawsuit against Hrach, and stepping up efforts to build a coalition to topple him.

Hrach was elected to the newly formed Crimean Parliament in May of 1998, after a standoff between Communists and a bloc of centrist parties. In a deal to end the standoff, Hrach was elected speaker, while Kunitsyn, leader of the centrist coalition, became prime minister.

That tense agreement held for over a year, but the ideologies of the two coalitions were simply too foreign to each other. Their respective responses to the Tatar situation offer a prime example: Hrach fought against any special consideration for the Tatars and their Mejlis representatives, while Kunitsyn attempted to placate the group by agreeing to many of their requests for representation in the local government. Kunitsyn’s power to address the situation was severely limited, however, as the Communist-controlled parliament rejected most laws that would have been advantageous to the Tatar population.

The Communist-Centrist agreement unraveled completely on 16 December, when 51 out of 100 deputies voted to oust the leadership of the parliament. Hrach, however, has ignored that vote. On 19 January, Hrach attempted to open parliament's session, but could not because all 51 deputies boycotted the proceeding.

Up until this point, Kyiv has been largely silent about the government crisis in Crimea, particularly since it is preoccupied with its own crisis. If the pro-
presidential majority wins the battle for control of the Ukrainian parliament, however, as is likely, things could turn from bad to worse for the Crimean parliament. Ukraine’s constitution states that, if the Crimean parliament violates the laws of Ukraine, the Ukrainian parliament has the right to disband it and call for new elections. Does not opening a session constitute violation of the laws of Ukraine? One would think so. Will it get that far? Probably not. Like Tkachenko in Kyiv, Hrach no doubt understands that there is nowhere for him to go but down from the presidium. Also like Tkachenko, it’s just taking him a long time to swallow the truth -- and his pride.

BELARUS

Let us show you how much you mean to us...
President Alyaksandr Lukashenka received another not-so-subtle hint as to the importance that Russia places on the Russia-Belarus Union earlier this week when Vladimir Putin officially named Pavel Borodin as state secretary to the Union’s supreme governing council. One day later, an international warrant was issued for Borodin, either charging him with money laundering, or seeking him for testimony in a money-laundering case, depending on which media reports you believe. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 28 Jan 00) Either way, Borodin is clearly in a whole heap of trouble. Is it possible, perhaps, that Putin saw this coming, and needed somewhere irrelevant to "dump" Borodin? Nah. We all know that the Russia-Belarus Union isn’t irrelevant, don’t we? After all, Lukashenka was just named the chairman of the supreme council. (REUTERS, 26 Jan 00; via America Online) Although it is unclear what his powers are, we all know that Lukashenka is never irrelevant, don’t we? Don’t we?

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

Kazakhstan latest target of Uzbek expansionism
Sections of southern Kazakhstan seem to have become the most recent target of Uzbekistan's now nearly year-old anti-terrorist campaign. Following the bomb explosions in Tashkent last February, the Uzbek government launched a vigorous effort to arrest and/or simply eradicate any suspected terrorist groups not only within Uzbekistan itself, but also in certain areas of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan's border controls also became more stringent, resulting in a sharp decrease in cross-border trade. However, Uzbek-Kazakh relations remained largely unaffected by Uzbekistan's heightened security measures until last month.

During the first week of January a Kazakh citizen was shot and wounded while attempting to cross from Uzbekistan back into Kazakhstan's Sary-Aghash district. (INTERFAX-KAZAKHSTAN NEWS AGENCY, 1238 GMT, 11 Jan 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis) Uzbek border guards did not warn the man before they shot at him (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 24 Jan 00) and thus far have not offered any explanation for why they considered it necessary to open fire. Kazakh officials, meanwhile, have branded the shooting as "unlawful" and have demanded that those responsible be brought to trial. Yuri Vasilenko, deputy chief of the south Kazakhstan region's Internal Affairs Department, has stated that Kazakh law enforcement officials already know precisely who was responsible for wounding the man. (INTERFAX-KAZAKHSTAN NEWS AGENCY, 1238 GMT, 11 Jan 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis)

The Uzbek government has given little indication as to how this incident will be handled, nor has the border guard unit involved in the incident been publicly reprimanded. In fact, Uzbek border guard units appear to enjoy a great deal of latitude when it comes to enforcing Uzbekistan's "national interests." Last year the Kyrgyz government accused them of violating Kyrgyzstan's territorial sovereignty by establishing border posts inside Kyrgyz territory; on 26 January of this year Uzbek military personnel entered the south Kazakh region in an armored personnel carrier and began demarcating the Uzbek-Kazakh frontier
well inside Kazakh territory. By the following day, the Kazakh foreign ministry had sent an official letter of protest to the Uzbek government over this incident (INTERFAX-KAZAKHSTAN NEWS AGENCY, 0959 GMT, 27 Jan 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis), but so far there has been no response from either the Uzbek president or his administration.

Border demarcation negotiations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are planned for this year, but it seems that the Uzbek side decided to speed up the process somewhat. Unfortunately, the Kazakh government has thus far not reacted any more sharply than the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments did in similar situations. There have been no reports of a significantly strengthened Kazakh security presence along the Uzbek border and neither the Kazakh president nor the foreign ministry has informed the Uzbek government just what the consequences might be, should Uzbekistan's military decide to demarcate unilaterally additional portions of the Kazakh-Uzbek border.

**Uzbek military expands its sphere of influence into Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan**

The Uzbek government continues to pursue its foreign policy goals in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan quite aggressively, often resorting to bullying tactics and/or sheer force. Customs officials, border guards and security forces have become the ambassadors of Uzbek economic and military expansionism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Citing their fear that Islamic terrorists from Afghan training camps might attempt to infiltrate Uzbek territory from neighboring states, Uzbek officials have at times closed portions of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz and Uzbek-Tajik borders, bringing cross-border trade in certain regions to a standstill.

After the February 1999 bombings in Tashkent, which the Uzbek government has blamed on an alliance of Uzbek secular opposition groups and international Islamic terrorists, Uzbekistan’s military began to play a more significant role in its relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Uzbek security forces began entering Kyrgyz territory unlawfully on a frequent basis, apparently in pursuit of suspected
terrorists. Following the invasion of Kyrgyzstan's Batken region last fall by groups of armed Uzbek refugees, the Uzbek government took more drastic action and began erecting a barbed wire fence along the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border in the Ferghana Valley. (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 27 Jan 00) In a further violation of Kyrgyz sovereignty, Uzbek border guards set up a number of checkpoints inside Kyrgyzstan and now monitor the activities of Kyrgyz citizens on their own soil. (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 24 Jan 00)

Tajik officials have complained that the same thing is happening in Leninobod province. Anwar Kamolov, the chief of Tajikistan's new national border guard forces, told journalists on 18 January that at least six towns now contain Uzbek border posts. (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 24 Jan 00) Five of the towns which Kamolov named are in Leninobod province, which is still the most industrialized and developed part of Tajikistan, and a significant source of the republic's national revenue. The sixth town, Tursunzade, is located farther south in the "regions under republic administration," approximately 50 km west of Dushanbe, and happens to be the site of one of the former Soviet Union's largest aluminum factories. All six of these towns are situated in areas heavily populated by ethnic Uzbeks, and are considered by some to have stronger cultural and economic ties to Uzbekistan than to the central government in Dushanbe. It comes as no surprise, then, that some Uzbek officials may perceive these regions as belonging de facto to Uzbekistan and that much of the local population may agree. This may help explain why the local citizens have not yet driven out the Uzbek border guards.