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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock

PRESIDENCY

'When the Cat's away, the Mice will play' Gleb Pavlovsky, founder of strana.ru, on Putin's absence

During President Vladimir Putin's well-publicized visit to America this month, the internal struggle for power and influence within the Russian executive branch took interesting turns. Following hot on the heels of Nikolai Aksenenko's ouster from the railways ministry, Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu's retreat into a clinic, and the rumored struggle of Mikhail Vanin to retain power within the State Customs Committee, the true purpose and manipulator of this mini-purge require some elucidation.

The Auditing Commission is the arm and the General Prosecutor's Office the sword used in the Kremlin today for the removal of unwanted persons, as both Aksenenko and Shoigu learned recently. Headed by Sergei Stepashin and Vladimir Ustinov, respectively, the Auditing Commission initiates and directs investigation and the General Prosecutor's Office swings the final blow through criminal prosecution that can result in de facto removal from power (Aksenenko on vacation, Shoigu in the hospital). (WHAT THE PAPERS SAY, 6 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Seen as the hand of Vladimir Putin working behind the scenes, the cases of Aksenenko, Shoigu and others now are joined by what seems to be an unexpected counterpoint. While Putin visited America, Stepashin, himself a former prime minister, initiated what may be viewed as an attack on Mikhail Kasianov, the current prime minister. Stepashin announced that the Auditing Commission had been making corruption-fighting recommendations which Kasianov was not implementing or responding to, and if the situation
continued, Stepashin would go directly to the president. (NTV, 14 Nov 01; BBC Worldwide Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

This highly publicized criticism of the government's policies was followed quickly by equally public questioning of the constitutionality of the Auditing Commission's tactics by PM Kasianov (who was in Spain at the time), pointing out that "the drawing of political conclusions is up to the president and government." (KOMMERSANT, 16 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The question arises that, since Mikhail Kasianov is a Putin appointee, why is the Auditing Commission under Stepashin attacking him? Given that the Auditing Commission is viewed as one of Putin's political weapons, this becomes even more puzzling. And to whom does the loyalty of Vladimir Ustinov and his prosecutor's sword belong?

PM Kasianov is known to disagree with the criminal prosecution of Nikolai Aksenenko; however, his rebuff of Stepashin's tactics seems to constitute an unusually publicized tactic of keeping Putin's minions in line. Also interesting is that, thus far, Putin has not strayed into this apparently fratricidal conflict. Perhaps the dark hand of Putin is not as invasive as currently perceived, and he may be allowing, in fact, an internal power struggle to continue unchecked for two reasons: 1) to allow potential rivals to defeat one another; and 2) to determine which faction is the strongest so that he is bound to back the winning side. It could be also that Putin seeks the ouster of his own appointee. Kasianov became prime minister early in Putin's tenure and is not a full member of the St. Petersburg Clan. Perhaps the powers-that-be have decided to discard the appointee before he becomes too firmly established on his own merits and could be viewed as something other than Putin's mere appendage. One Moscow newspaper cites "sources from the Russian White House" as associating all recent attacks against high-ranking officials with Igor Sechin, manager of Putin's secretariat. (KOMMERSANT-VLAST, 1 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This would give more weight to the notion that Putin's hand is indeed
the guiding force, since Sechin is one of his most trusted advisors and is seen as a potential replacement for Alexander Voloshin, who has supported Kasianov in the past. (MOSCOW NEWS, 7 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Thus, Sechin certainly has a motive for pressuring the Auditing Commission to provide a target for the General Prosecutor's Office.

Ustinov himself has been somewhat in the limelight, first with the ongoing Kursk investigation and now with the mystery and rumors surrounding the current infighting. In a 12 November television interview, he denied that he had received any pressure from the executive branch -- which is to be expected, since the pressure would have been applied earlier on, at the Auditing Commission stage -- and managed to play up his personal role. Responding to questions about Shoigu's recent sudden and highly coincidental heart condition and its relationship to the investigation against him, Ustinov said, "Well, all our executives are ready to enter the Central Clinical Hospital because of the psychological stress under which we all work. We are all potential clients of the hospital. At any minute. And nobody would say that we are pretending to be ill." (KREMLIN PACKAGE, 12 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In fact, right now it seems that all of the Russian executive branch is in a position, from one perspective or another, to become someone's target and hence a victim of the sudden and highly suspect heart condition caused by "psychological stress." By some accounts even Ustinov may soon fall prey to this very syndrome. (WHAT THE PAPERS SAY, 6 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Meanwhile, in a recent high-level gathering that focused on Russia's domestic and foreign policies, Putin met with Kasianov, head of the Kremlin Administration Aleksandr Voloshin, Security Council SecretaryVladimir Rushailo, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, and Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov. (ITAR-TASS, 24 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Notably absent were both Stepashin and Ustinov, who are nominally in charge of one of Putin's main campaign promises -- the reduction of crime and corruption.
The chances are that President Putin is at the center of a maelstrom of political infighting that he loosely controls when possible and directs when necessary. The confluence of forces in the president's entourage contains elements both of the old school Muscovites and the new St. Petersburg Chekists, and this storm is likely to continue as long as Putin both benefits from and remains above the fray.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Luba Schwartzman

REGIONS

An open-and-shut place

Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of Russia's "closed cities" - cordoned-off communities with coded names that were usually home to military installations, intelligence-gathering centers, factories producing nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and other secret enterprises conspicuously missing from maps -- were reopened under Article 27 of the new constitution, which guaranteed "complete freedom of movement to everyone legally present in the Russian Federation." Since that day, the cities that recently had sprung up on the map have been disappearing again, picked off one by one by the atomic energy ministry, the defense ministry, or the prime minister of the time. A city "disappears" when access is closed off to foreigners and to Russian citizens without special documents. Decree No. 755, signed by Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov von 30 October, restricted access to six more cities -- bringing the estimated population living in closed cities to two million. (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 22 Nov 01; via Johnson's Russia List)
Not all of these locations are of security importance, however. One place that falls under Decree No. 755 is Siberia's Norilsk, Russia's northernmost city, home to large reserves of non-ferrous and precious metal deposits as well as the largest nickel producer in the world: Norilsk Nickel, which employs 80,000 of the 270,000 residents. Overpopulation, the difficult industrial situation, high crime rates, AIDS, and drug use all have been listed as official reasons for closing the city, but the primary target seems to be the 35,000 "foreigners" -- nationals of former Soviet republics -- who live in the city permanently, and the hundreds that arrive in the city every month in search of a more affluent life. (RUSSIA TV, 1100 GMT, 24 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The regulation becomes effective on 25 November, and the local airline (KrasAir) already has stopped selling tickets to "foreigners," with the exception of Belarusians, who have special status in the Russian Federation under the Russian-Belarusian Union agreement. Now, any foreigners wishing to visit Norilsk will need a special Russian visa or an invitation from a relative or an employer, which they will also need to register with the Federal Security Service. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 25 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

It has been made more than clear that two categories of "foreigners" exist. Norilsk Nickel spokeswoman Yelena Kovaleva explained that the rules will be waived for visitors "from further abroad," especially Norilsk Nickel's foreign investors. The violation of Article 27 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, aimed not at protecting state security but at retaining a special status for the industrial city, has outraged human rights groups. (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 22 Nov 01; via Johnson's Russia List)

**JUDICIARY**

**Duma passes reform bill**

Two years ago, President Putin entrusted Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration Dmitry Kozak with reforming the national judiciary. Kozak's
original ambitious plans were curbed by the debate that broke out over the limitations on the rights of prosecutors, the removal of immunity for judges, and the restructuring of certain legal procedures.

On 22 November, the Russian State Duma passed the new Criminal Procedural Code in the third and final reading by a vote of 289 to 93 with no abstentions. The new code requires court sanction for searches and arrests, and a prosecutor's approval for launching a criminal investigation (starting in January 2004); and improves the system of preliminary investigations, requiring a case rejected by a prosecutor to be closed, and allowing persons other than a lawyer (close relatives, for example) to defend the accused following an appeal. (RIA, 1431 GMT, 22 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The bill also extends the requirement of a jury trial for serious crimes (such as murder and rape) to all of Russia's regions (starting in July 2003). The main change to Kozak's original plans is the preservation of the provision concerning the immunity of judges. In fact, to initiate an administrative or criminal investigation of a judge, an investigator needs permission from the prosecutor, an enlarged board (20-25 judges from the same area), and three judges of a higher court. (VEDOMOSTI, 23 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Not only prosecutors, however, were upset about the changes in the balance of power. Opponents of this reform note transitional lapses between the current system and the new system (for example, the new code provides for jury trials to be introduced throughout the Russian Federation on 1 January 2003, while the current code loses effect at the beginning of 2002) and the redefinitions of procedures that remove the presumption of innocence from the Criminal Procedural Code (for example, under the new code, a judge will not be able to drop charges even if he sees no proof of the crime -- the charge needs to continue until the defendant is proven innocent). (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 23 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Others who criticize the bill assert that corruption will not be eliminated, that the only real change will be a shift from judges who depend on local authorities to judges who depend on the Kremlin. Sergei Pashin, a law professor and retired judge, observed that, through a tighter grip on the courts, the presidential administration would gain more control over "political and economic conflicts including everything from real estate disputes and company takeovers to scandalous election procedures and the delineation of powers between Moscow and the regions."

It remains to be seen whether the new Criminal Procedural Code will be a "legal cornerstone" to be improved as time goes on, or a reshuffling of authority by the powers that be, with little concern for the Russian citizen. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 23 Nov 01; via Johnson's Russia List)

POLITICAL PARTIES
If it looks like a party
While the new "Civil Forum" was specifically depicted as a non-political entity, the role it is likely to play and the amount of hype that it has been receiving from the government make it sound like a political party. And it is not only "hype" that the state treasury is doling out. This pet project of Gleb Pavlovsky, Kremlin political consultant and the head of the Effective Policy Foundation, has been reported to cost anywhere between $1 and $1.5 million.

President Putin was the first speaker at the Forum. He addressed the need for a dialogue between the state and civil society and acknowledged the fact that "civil society cannot be established at the state's initiative, at the state's will, much less in accordance with the state's plans" and suggested that the government's "major and essentially only task" is "to form the institutions maximally favorable for its development." The Russian president noted that among the "representatives of various civil institutions" present at the forum were "opponents of the government
on vital issues of state policy" and added that he considers that "a normal phenomenon and actually helpful in a democracy." (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 22 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The president stayed for about an hour, listening to the speeches as a pile of petitions (three armfuls for protocol chief Oleg Rakhmanin) grew. (THE MOSCOW TIMES; 22 Nov 01; via Johnson's Russia List) Other state officials who spoke at the forum generally tried to push their own agenda: State Duma Chairman Gennady Seleznev spoke about a proposed law on lobbying, Constitutional Court Chairman Marat Baglai complained about the State Duma's attempts to abolish the Court, and Russian Ombudsman Oleg Mironov promoted the establishment of the institute of regional ombudsmen. Still others discussed the process of organizing the Forum. Gleb Pavlovsky criticized the media for being disloyal. (KOMMERSANT, 22 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

One newspaper that would qualify as "disloyal," Novye izvestia, noted that the event was, in a way, a trap: Human rights activists either could attend, and appear to be in concord with the government, or ignore the event and allow the Kremlin to dismiss them as unwilling to accept a chance to do something constructive. Novye izvestia also taunted Vladimir Putin specifically for not playing "the old-new state anthem so dear to [his] heart," because the organizers knew that most human rights activists "would refuse to rise to their feet, and that the opening of the forum would be marred." (NOVYE IZVESTIA, 23 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

President Putin sent a greeting to another social organization -- the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which held its second congress on 19 and 20 November. The congress, headed by Russia's chief rabbi, Berel Lazar, was attended by over 400 delegates from 140 of the 143 communities in the Federation as well as Russian Culture Minister Mikhail Y.
Shvydkoi, an envoy of President Vladimir Putin, and representatives of the Muslim community and the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the opening speech of the congress Lazar declared that Jewish communities are "witnessing miracles today, we see Jewish schools, Jewish kindergartens, charity canteens, various cultural programs and lots of music and artistic groups in towns where Jewish life had not existed at all." He noted that emigration to Israel has declined, that Jews who previously were afraid to admit their background now proudly announce it and can practice their faith freely and comfortably. The rabbi praised President Putin's contributions to the improved conditions -- symbolic acts such as lighting a national menorah last Hanukkah. Lev Leviev, the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities, also praised the Russian president, noting that Putin went out of his way to make contact with American Jewish organizations during this month's visit to the United States.

At the same time, representatives who attended the congress noted that the presence of anti-Semitism can still be felt, and that periodic hate crimes like the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues still occur. They also discussed the extremist attacks against other minorities, especially against African students and immigrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. (ITAR-TASS, 1624 GMT, 19 Nov 01; BBC Worldwide Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database, and LOS ANGELES TIMES, 21 Nov 01; via Johnson's Russia List)

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Michael Varuolo

Shake-up at the GRU?
On 5 November President Putin visited the military intelligence (GRU) headquarters in Moscow and delivered two clear messages for that security
service. In the first message he relayed a sobering description of what he expects from the GRU in the future: "We have moved away from large-scale combat operations, the role of special bodies has been substantially enhanced." (INTERFAX, 1205 GMT, 5 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1105, via World News Connection) Then he continued to stress the importance of international cooperation in the "war on terrorism" and praised the work of the security service in Chechnya, noting that 421 special forces officers from the GRU have been killed in action since the summer of 1999. His speech was a clear indicator that the service will continue to be asked to shoulder the load in the "anti-terrorism" campaign and can expect to conduct even more operations, especially in Chechnya. He referred also, especially, to the GRU's role in "foreign affairs."

His second message was more direct and not delivered from the public podium. President Putin is not happy with certain aspects of the GRU's performance and is stressing that these aspects must be corrected rapidly so that the service will be operational for use in the near future. According to Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov, Putin "has set the task of raising the department's efficiency in all spheres - technical, specialized, traditional and law-enforcement." (INTERFAX, 1225 GMT, 5 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1105, via World News Connection) By telling the GRU what parts within the organization need to be overhauled, Putin is defining clearly the service's future role, that is, a role that focuses upon "anti-terrorism" and other operations which require direct military force. His comments both public and private indicate that he is ready to increase the role of the GRU on the international scene, provided that its overall performance is improved.

Recent activities in Afghanistan and Chechnya constitute one reason that Putin expects the GRU to become more efficient, but it is not the only reason. In addition, Kaliningrad Oblast' is rapidly becoming a major topic of discussion within the Russian Federation. As the EU and NATO look to expand, they may envelop Kaliningrad's borders from all sides. Russia wants Kaliningrad to take advantage of the lucrative economic and political opportunities created by the
region's location. However, the oblast' is in desperate straits and facing security challenges.

These challenges recently have forced the FSB to coordinate a special conference to address the implementation of Russian Security Council resolutions on the oblast'. (ITAR-TASS, 0744 GMT, 8 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1108, via World News Connection) They also have prompted border officials to move towards unprecedented cooperation with their Lithuanian counterparts in combating smuggling and drug trafficking. Furthermore, the state security organs have become entrenched as tax collectors within the region because governmental control of businesses has declined to the point of ineffectiveness. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 10 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1113, via World News Connection) Although the FSB has been given the lead in security issues within Kaliningrad Oblast', President Putin's appearance at the GRU headquarters serves as a reminder that another intelligence service is waiting in the wings if the FSB proves unable to handle the situation in the oblast'. Until then, the GRU must confine most of its operations to Chechnya.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Scott Bethel

More than meets the eye -- the Crawford Summit

The summit between Presidents Bush and Putin at the Bush ranch in Crawford, Texas was one of the most hyped meetings between two heads of state in recent memory. So much was said in the Russian and American media about this conference that, whatever the final outcome, it wouldn't match the prognostications and predictions made by leaders and pundits in both countries. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 7 Nov 01) Among the most publicized unresolved issues prior to the summit were the status of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972, Russia's role in arming Iran, its putative status in the Middle East
"peace process," and Moscow's longstanding desire to be included in major world fora such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). (AP WORLDSTREAM, 14 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis)

Clearly the two leaders had different public and private agendas. Apparently President Bush's personal aim was to deal with the Russian leader in an informal setting and to achieve a new camaraderie in Russian-US relations, Texas-style. Bush said, "The best diplomacy starts with getting to know each other -- and I want him to know my values and I want to know his values." (COX NEWS SERVICE, 14 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis) For Putin, Russia's focus in the near-term relationship with the US was threefold: First, to put the spotlight on the ABM treaty and demonstrate Russian largesse by allowing the US to continue testing toward the development of a National Missile Defense (NMD) capability, while giving the perception of full support to the US "war on terrorism"; second, to re-establish Russia's place as an important and equal partner with the US and perhaps with NATO while, in general, increasing Putin's profile in America and among Americans (ITAR-TASS, 0500 GMT, 11 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database); and third, to confirm the resurgence of Russian regional hegemony. (RUSSIA TV, 1830 GMT, 13 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Wrapped up in these competing agendas was the gray area of an informal meeting with formal expectations. Many hoped to see concrete resolution of the issues at hand to include some movement towards a revision of the ABM treaty. The actual result rested mainly on a de facto agreement to reduce the aggregate number of warheads on both sides. This decision simply reflects the declining dependence on these weapons as a cornerstone of both countries' national defense. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 Nov 01)

When the summit broke up on 15 November, it seemed that very little had been accomplished. No formal agreements were signed and limited official
pronouncements were made. However, does that mean that the overall effect of the summit was nil? Hardly.

Senior National Security Council staffers provided NIS Observed with some insight into the actual results of the Crawford Summit. First, the flurry of public posturing concerning Russia's position on NMD by Foreign Minister Ivanov and President Putin (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 24 Oct 01) meant that by the time the summit began there was uncertainty in the US camp as to the real Russian stance on the important ABM question. During the summit the actual position of both countries was clarified. The Russians are willing to bend but not break on ABM. It appears that they would be willing to make some concessions allowing the US to continue to develop the capability, while maintaining that a full-scale fielding of an ABM system is counter to both the 1972 treaty and to long-term Russian interests. However, once NMD is fully mission capable, there would indeed be further negotiations concerning its fielding. The Russians want near-term advantages in the areas of increased trade (WTO membership) and desire development money in the form of long-term loans. (ITAR-TASS, 1601 GMT, 16 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It appears Putin would be willing to back off on ABM rhetoric if the US would support Russia's desires to expand its economy.

In terms of increasing Russia's profile in the US, Putin scored high marks. He participated in several press conferences culminating with his widely publicized (both in the US and Russia) appearance on a National Public Radio call-in interview which included hundreds of would-be callers and more than 2,000 e-mails. (INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT, 15 Nov 01; via npr.com). He addressed a variety of subjects during the two-hour program, though he was circumspect in most. In the end, the interviewer, rather fulsomely, summed up the exchange by thanking Putin for "sharing so much of himself with us."
Russia's role in the Middle East "peace process" is still undefined as yet though Moscow's regional profile is increasing with the support of the US. That Foreign Minister Ivanov met with Syrian and Jordanian officials in New York as part of Putin's US trip is further indication of America's enhancement of Russia's visibility in ongoing negotiations. (ITAR-TASS, 1538 GMT, 12 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

According to senior NSC sources, the main US goal was to keep the Russians firmly in the "anti-terrorism coalition." But running a close second was the need to keep the Russians from pushing for a scaling back of NMD testing and to keep the US from having to move toward a position of unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty. In fact, there was no indication that the Russians were wavering in their public support of the anti-terrorism effort. According to President Putin, they are considering ways to increase participation in the coalition. (RUSSIA TV, 2000 GMT, 14 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The US seemed at pains not to challenge Russian assertions of hegemony in some portions of post-Soviet space and even to inflate Moscow's relative importance. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 10 and 24 Oct 01) Further, Putin never really pressed the ABM issue and has toned down his rhetoric on the issue. It appears the US administration was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 Nov 01)

In the final analysis, the Crawford Summit yielded some clarification of the near-term future of US-Russian relations. A lot was agreed on a handshake and verbal basis, much to the chagrin of the US Congress (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 Nov 01), while written agreements are yet to be determined. As for the counter-terrorism "coalition" and Russia's desire for more representation in international fora and increased global economic opportunities, Russia continues verbal support for the US stance and the US is inclined to support Russia's request for membership in such organizations as the WTO. On the thorny issue of the ABM treaty an understanding was reached. Heretofore, the debate has been fought
out through thrust and parry via official pronouncements, recriminations, and
justifications. Now, it seems there is a tacit understanding of what the future
holds for NMD and ABM. For the near term at least, the debate will be on the
back burner. That is, for at least as long as continued need for the anti-terrorism
"coalition" is apparent.

**Move over Churchill -- the Brits want Russia in NATO!**

In a strange twist of history, the UK is leading a serious effort to bring Russia into
some sort of increased participation in NATO. This could include everything from
creating a new forum for the Russians to have increased input to NATO
leadership all the way to a full Russian veto over decisions by the alliance. (THE
NEW YORK TIMES, 22 Nov 01)

Leading the charge are none other than UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and NATO
Secretary-General George Robertson (also a British citizen). News of this
proposal leaked out in the Russian and Ukrainian media nearly two days before
Robertson and Blair made separate, but similar proposals, on 22 November.
(URYDOVYY KURYER, 20 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets
Database) But that did not dampen the enthusiasm of the two-pronged British
offensive aimed at the Russians.

Robertson has offered the Russians the immediate opportunity to participate in
NATO discussions on counter-terrorism and other "selected topics" agreed to by
the existing member states. (REUTERS, 23 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis) For his
initiative, Robertson claims he has the full backing of President Bush, PM Blair,
and the rest of NATO. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 22 Nov 01) What is even more
shocking is that Robertson has offered the so-called "19 plus 1" format, which
would mean that on issues on which Russia is invited to be a participant,
Moscow would have a vote, and therefore a veto over NATO policy and planning
initiatives. (REUTERS, 23 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis)
For Blair and Robertson, these efforts could be driven by various reasons. Perhaps they believe in the sincerity of Russian intentions. Or, perhaps, they feel that by bringing the Russians into the debate and giving them a vote, one might obviate Russian verbal sniping over actions handed down from NATO's highest decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

However, it is to Russia's advantage to have such a relationship that would allow Moscow to decide what issues are "in" and which are "out" as far as a Russian de facto veto is concerned. Clearly Putin and his foreign policy team will resist full membership for two key reasons. Most importantly, full NATO membership would force the Russians to lay open their entire military apparatus to the scrutiny of the other 19 members. Such scrutiny would reveal fully the woeful condition of the Russian military and hamper efforts at regaining great-power status. Secondly, Moscow would have to comply with any number of NATO rules about arms dealing. Right now Putin and his foreign policy team are effectively using the international arms market as a tool to gain new allies and re-establish key alliances which have languished since the fall of the USSR. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 24 Oct and 7 Nov 01) Russia certainly would have to answer in the NAC for its recent major arms deal with Iran and its longstanding supply to Iraq and other countries with horrible human rights records. Even now, Putin already has begun to make it clear that Russian foreign policy cannot be questioned, but that the only issue for discussion is how Russia and NATO can fight terrorism more effectively together. Further, in all foreign policy initiatives the Russian president has left no doubt that Russian national interest will always come first. (ITAR-TASS, 0500 GMT, 11 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Finally, full NATO membership would be a less effective approach for Moscow as opposed to a series of bilateral relationships with individual NATO members. Through such agreements Moscow can exploit NATO weaknesses and maneuver from a position of strength. Thus the more formal the relationship
between the Russians and the alliance becomes, the less room Putin has to 
wiggle. However, even allowing the Russians a seat at the table, let alone a 
chance to vote, would constitute a real shift in the relationship between Russia 
and NATO and the effect of any such a shift remains to be seen.

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**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Walter Jackson

**Creative accounting**

As discussion continues concerning Moscow's military modernization plans, more 
is being reported on the current state of the Russian military. It is obvious that 
President Putin knows he needs to do something substantial. Military reform 
characteristically has a champagne appetite and a beer budget, and Russian 
reform is no exception. Realizing that adequate military housing is on the 
forefront of military reform (at least in the minds of the troops), the Russian 
government has decided to speed up the Presidential Housing Certificates 
Program. Under this plan every servicemen -- 210,000 in all -- will receive a 
housing certificate. The problem of finding 210,000 houses throughout Russia 
isn't addressed. In reality, the program's planners underfunded the actual cost of 
adequate housing by nearly 50%, but the government promises to close this gap 
in 2002. *(NEZAVISIMOYE VOYENNOE OBOZRENIE, 2 Nov 01; What the 
Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)* So Moscow now can say every 
serviceman has a housing certificate: problem solved, Soviet style. But since that 
doesn't actually provide any additional and affordable housing, it doesn't solve 
any problem.

**Robbing Piotr to pay Paul**

Another initiative to help fund the military pay and allowances increase would 
come at the expense of the retired. According to an analysis of a proposed new 
Duma bill on military pay (a new system of calculating remuneration for military
personnel), the two proposed 2002 pay increases will be offset by a 13% income
tax and the elimination of servicemen's current housing allowances. Since the
calculations do not take into account inflation, 2002 will end with the servicemen
in a still deeper hole, albeit with a fatter paycheck.

The long-range prospects for career servicemen are worse. According to the
Duma, "People retired from the military service will also be deprived of their
benefits; however, these pensioners will not receive any compensation at all.
Serving officers with over 20 years in the military have been receiving pension
payments since 1996; these will be cancelled, and the money reallocated toward
young officers. The reasoning is very simple here: the military needs to be
younger, times have changed and today there is no need to strengthen and
support the political loyalty of the mid-level and senior officers." (NEZAVISIMOYE
VOYENNOE OBOZRENIE, 2 Nov 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging
Markets Database) Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksei Kudrin presented
President Putin's military reform bill to the Duma on 15 November. Benefits such
as housing allowances, utility and telephone subsidies will be abolished. Further,
the pension allowance will be abolished and pensions will be calculated
differently. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 16 Nov 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI
Emerging Markets Database)

Whatever the revised pension looks like, it is obvious that it will be smaller. The
question is, will the young Russian servicemen notice? Will this policy add to or
detract from the stated goal of building a modern Russian military? In the short
term, it appears that servicemen's benefits only get better on paper (if that). In
the long term, if true benefits don't improve quickly, Russia will continue to be
plagued by poor quality personnel in all ranks, unable to attract and keep quality
personnel. The word does get around, even in Russia, so to what do future
military retirees have to look forward? Then again, retirement has never been a
Russian priority, and that appears still to be the case, at least for the foreseeable
future.
Apples and oranges
In an attempt to answer the question "Is the Russian military doomed to fall apart?" The writer Vadim Soloviev attempts to compare the current plight of the Russian military to its counterpart in the West. He stated "We once asked a British army veteran what the British military personnel would do if they weren't being paid on time, like their Russian counterparts. The British army veteran's answer was brief: 'military camps would be empty within a month.' " The journalist notes that "of course, the Russian army will not disperse, as the Russian mentality is different." (NEZAVISIMOYE VOYENNOE OBOZRENIE, 2 Nov 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) But the Russian military is not the British military. This comparison is naïve at best. The British (as well as the US) realized long ago the importance of a well-trained and -paid military. So, yes, most Russian servicemen go to work even if they are not getting paid (as do many other Russians). But Soviet-era notions are not dispelled easily from either side of the equation. Hence the old adage "they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work" remains relevant, and is one explanation for poor combat readiness and morale.

NMD, do as I say, not as I do
One of many NMD bones of contention between Moscow and Washington has been over the adherence to the 1972 ABM treaty. One layer of that argument concerns the capabilities of radar sites. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 7 Nov 01) Moscow believes that Washington should close the Vardo Norway radar site as a quid pro quo for the closure of two of Russia's overseas bases in Vietnam and Cuba. An article from the Russian Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies, titled "Vardo Radar: Unfriendly Act or Violation of the ABM Treaty," raises the question whether the Vardo radar site (operated jointly by the US and Norway), which purportedly can track Russian intercontinental missiles from launch to impact, actually violates that treaty. The article claims that the deployment of such systems outside the US does violate the 1972 ABM
Treaty. (Center for Arms Control, Energy, and Environmental Studies at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, updated 15 Oct 01; via WebPages) Analysis of the treaty, in fact, shows that "there had been some concern over the possibility that surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) intended for defense against aircraft might be improved, along with their supporting radars, to the point where they could effectively be used against ICBMs and SLBMs, and the Treaty prohibits this. While further deployment of radars intended to give early warning of strategic ballistic missile attack is not prohibited, such radars must be located along the territorial boundaries of each country and oriented outward, so that they do not contribute to an effective ABM defense of points in the interior." (US Department of State, Treaties and Agreements WebPages, updated 20 Jan 01) Thus, it raises the question of whether Russia will close every radar site in each of the newly independent states. It is doubtful, to put it mildly. Of course, in 1972 those sites were within the Soviet Union. Times have changed, and this is one of many examples why the treaty needs to be updated. The only reason that Russia has to fear anyone tracking its missiles (from within the European Theater) is to deny NATO and the US time to respond to an unprovoked attack.

An interesting sidenote emanated from a recent Russian report that, last year, China successfully carried out two ballistic missile launches in the 3,000km range and that Russian services detected all the Chinese missile launches and tracked them to the point of impact (clearly flaunting Russia's ABM capabilities against China). (ITAR-TASS, 1331 GMT, 5 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1105, via World News Connection) Of course, the Russian sites mentioned above also include many in other former Soviet states. Although the joint operation of these radar sites likely falls under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Collective Security Treaty, does that supersede the 1972 ABM treaty? Clearly it does; thus, in effect, Russia has already abandoned the 1972 ABM treaty.

MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
Fueling the Russian economy
Two of the biggest boons to the Russian economy this year have been the relative high price of oil and increases in arms exports. In fact, matters appeared so favorable that President Putin had been proposing accelerated payments of Russia's world debt. But all that was before the bottom fell out of the oil market, driving prices well below the bottom line calculated in the Russian 2002 budget. Now, instead of finding areas on which to spend the windfall surplus, Putin must find a way to fund military reform initiatives, for example, without increased revenues. How can Putin manage to pull this off, especially with the global economy in an apparent recession?

Ye olde shell game
There are two predominant reasons why the Russian economy did so well in 2001. Revenues were significantly up on the year due to the higher-than-expected price of oil (although the projected drop in oil prices is likely to have the opposite effect in 2002). (IZVESTIA, 6 Nov 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The second reason is that arms exports are also significantly higher this year. Thanks to the unilateral "repeal" of the Chernomyrdin-Gore Pact, sales to (cash-rich) Iran already are boosting arms sales figures (including construction of nuclear power facilities). Russia's defense giant Rosoboroneksport (which celebrated its first birthday recently, with anticipated 2001 sales reaching $3.2 billion) reported that it has sold 30 MI-8 military transport helicopters to Iran at a price of $150 million. (VEDOMOSTI, 1 Nov 01; via RFE/RL Security Watch)

While Putin looks for ways to pay off Russia's debt, the US continues to pour large sums into Russia and other former Soviet republics in assistance, including the cleanup of Russia's nuclear, chemical and biological ecological disasters. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 7 Nov 01) As Vneshekonombank head Andrei Kostin has stated, the drop in oil prices allows Russia to reopen negotiations with creditors to restructure the national debt, and possibly even to "raise the issue of lightening the debt burden, including to write-off part of it." (INTERFAX, 16 Nov
01; via RFE/RL Security Watch) Now the only way of generating the revenue that Moscow desperately needs to meet its 2002 budget (approved after the third reading) is through increased weapons sales, and increased foreign aid. That is nothing to brag about.

**Old lamps for new**

Putin (anticipating this predicament, no doubt) was already devising some rather dubious ways to reduce Russia's debts. One approach has been to get rid of stockpiled inventories of (older) military hardware in lieu of hard currency payments (and to offer them as state-of-the-art weapons). Austria, for example, apparently is one creditor willing to receive military exports to satisfy debts. According to Russia's Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade, Mikhail Dmitriev, Russia will pay off its Austrian debt with "high-technological hardware." It is reported also that Austria and Russia will launch a joint venture to build MiG-110 passenger airplanes in Austria. (NASH VEK, 31 Oct 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) Apparently, Austria's view is "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Without the substantial R&D and other start-up expenses, building Russian-designed aircraft could wind up being a very lucrative business venture for Austria, worth accepting the barter for Russia's debt.

According to Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov, during his three day visit to Spain, Russia hopes to pay off the nearly $1 billion debt to Spain by offering private investment opportunities and delivery of goods (such as trawlers and other ships). Apparently Spain is looking at building a third Campa-Prio (Campomos Foods) factory in Russia, and may be willing to write off some debt. These proposals are still in the negotiations phase, and Spain does hope to obtain some hard currency as well. (IZVESTIA, 15 Nov 01; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The best of all ways to pay off debts is with other people's money. According to Putin's economic adviser, Andrei Illarionov, another alternative is to pay down the foreign debt with a portion of Russia's
Central Bank gold or currency reserves. (KREMLIN PACKAGE, 5 Nov 01; via ISI Russia Publications)

Easy come, easy go
One ironic aspect concerning Russia's debt to Spain lies deeply buried in history. During the Spanish Civil War, Stalin "convinced" the Spanish government to send its gold bullion reserves to Russia for "safekeeping." And safe they have remained. Why not just pay off Spanish debt with Spanish gold? Oil and arms sales bring badly needed hard currency to help fund the Russian economy. At the moment, Russia is just another oil-producing country, without a "superpower" bargaining position. Will Iran support Russia's position vis-à-vis OPEC (not to decrease Russian oil production significantly) now that the flow of Russian arms and technology has resumed? At the moment the answer appears to be no. And as Moscow feels the impact of the decreasing price of oil on its 2002 budget, Russia might remember not to count its chickens before they are hatched.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE
Kuchma's choices
The last few weeks have seen a number of important decisions from President Leonid Kuchma. Unfortunately, these decisions have underscored what appears to be his primary purpose -- to keep as much power as possible in his hands. To do so, as these decisions show, the president seems willing both to delay necessary reforms and to allow his country in many ways to fall back into the Russian orbit.

One of Kuchma's most important actions in the last month was the appointment of a new minister of defense. His choice of an army general continues the status
quo at a time when most experts agree major changes are needed in the Ukrainian military. Kuchma himself repeatedly has stated the necessity for civilian control of the military. "Such control is needed," he said, "to accelerate military reforms and foresee the accountability of state management organs for the activity of Ukraine's armed forces." (UKRAINIAN NEWS, 14 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) As has become his habit, however, Kuchma's actions did not parallel his statements, and a career military man was appointed.

When asked about the discrepancy between what he said and what he did, Kuchma referred to the upcoming parliamentary elections. "I do not want to turn the Defense Ministry into the election headquarters of any political party or entity," he explained. (UKRAINIAN NEWS, 14 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In other words, he did not want to face the possibility of losing control. Given the history of new Defense Minister Volodymyr Shkydchenko, it seems Kuchma will achieve this goal. There appears to be little question that Shkydchenko is superbly trained and has had a stellar military career. But his major qualification for this job seems to be his ability to remain silent.

In analyzing the choice, the Ukrainian newspaper Zerkalo Nedeli examined Shkydchenko's three-year stint as chief of the Army's General Staff. "During these three years," it said, "he did not give a single interview. Shkydchenko obviously avoided any publicity. It appears that Kuzmuk generated the majority of ideas and initiatives at the ministries." (ZERKALO NEDELI, 16 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It also appears that Kuzmuk may continue to do so -- serving as a "presidential advisor" on military matters. So, while there may be talk of reform, and while some cosmetic changes in fact may be occurring, nothing has truly changed at the top.

Kuchma also seems to be working hard to see that nothing changes in the parliament. With the announcement that his chief of staff will serve as the head of the "For a United Ukraine" election bloc, President Kuchma has relegated the
Gongadze tape scandal to a footnote, eliminated all talk of reforming the electoral system, and ensured that a pro-presidential bloc will continue to control a significant portion of the parliament. The bloc, which is the most significant challenger to Viktor Yushchenko's movement, unites a number of the country's oligarchs and most powerful politicians. Despite the fact that this bloc now draws limited popular support (in fact, significantly less than Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" group), the massive monetary and political resources at its disposal bode well for its success. And its new head, Presidential Chief of Staff Volodymyr Lytvyn, is known to be a master of spin. He managed, for example, to downplay very effectively charges that his voice was heard during several questionable conversations on the Gongadze tapes. His work for his president during the same scandal was, of course, no less impressive. As Zerkalo Nedeli noted, "He does not publicize what he does behind the scenes. He simply does what he does. And the people affected very seldom know who pressed the button on the remote-control bomb." (ZERKALO NEDELI, 17 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Meanwhile, Yushchenko finds himself in an interesting position, as two of the key administrators of his bloc are "Kuchma men." When Roman Bezsmertnyy (presidential representative to parliament) and Yuri Yekhanurov (presidential representative on administrative reform) began working with Yushchenko, it seemed as if the president and his former premier might have reached some type of understanding. Lytvyn's new position raises questions about this arrangement. In particular, it leaves one wondering how the two men will cope with any disagreements that may arise in the future between Yushchenko and Kuchma -- if agreements, in fact, will be tolerated at all. Once again, it seems that Kuchma has braced himself and his supporters against any challengers. His strategy has not been solely domestic, however. Kuchma's administration has also worked hard recently to increase the support given it by Russia.
After the 11 September attacks in the US, it appears that Ukraine made a choice to tie most of its responses to Russia. Increased Russian diplomacy calling for a Russia-US and Russia-NATO rapprochement has led to calls for closer Russian-Ukrainian ties. The head of the National Security and Defense Council, Yevhen Marchuk, for example, has suggested that Ukraine should cooperate more fully in the CIS (and in particular the Collective Security Treaty). Meanwhile, Russia and Ukraine continue to increase their military cooperation. Recently, Vasyl Huruyev, the Ukrainian Minister of Industrial Policy, announced that the two countries are preparing an agreement "to avoid unnecessary rivalry of their defense industries on the external markets." (ITAR-TASS, 1918 GMT, 9 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1111, via World News Connection) Clearly, Russia is concerned about Ukraine's continuing efforts to increase its share of the world arms market (last year, the country was the world's eighth largest exporter). For its part, Ukraine seems willing to risk losing at least some of that market share.

The countries have also signed an agreement restructuring Ukraine's gas debt, and moved forward with the plan to begin parallel operation of their electricity grids. But all of this is too little, according to one of the president's closest advisors, Volodymyr Horbulin. In a recent editorial, Horbulin outlined a bipolar foreign policy, suggesting that Ukraine could be both a future member of the European Union and of the CIS Collective Security Treaty. He also suggested that "the joining of efforts in the fight against international terrorism provides additional opportunities for joint movement of Ukraine and Russia into Europe." (ZERKALO NEDELI, 27 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Not surprisingly, these statements were met with concern -- if not outright alarm - - by more right-leaning political parties and organizations. The two Rukhs, for example, issued a statement urging Ukraine immediately to request membership in NATO.
Of course, no such statement would receive much attention in today's climate of Russian-Western togetherness. And perhaps this concentration on Russia by the West has helped many of Ukraine's politicians to believe they have no other choice than to "hitch their wagon" to Russia. Or perhaps -- like many decisions made in recent weeks -- it is simply the easiest choice to make, with the fastest, most lucrative short-term rate of return.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA

Show trial backfires
The trial of Salman Raduey, a notorious Chechen commander, and several other Chechen defendants is rapidly turning into a public relations fiasco for the Kremlin. Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov's questioning has failed to elicit self-incriminating confessions from the defendants, who are charged with participation in illegal armed formations and are standing trial in Makhachkala, Dagestan.

Among the defendants is Turpal Ali-Atgeriev, former security minister of Chechnya who has fully and resolutely denied any guilt. Moreover, he told the courtroom that in the summer of 1999 he contacted the Russian special services to inform the federals of the radical opposition's plans to attack Dagestan. Atgeriev said he did so because he wanted to prevent another war in the Northern Caucasus, but he said his warnings were ignored. (gazeta.ru, 20 Nov 01)

Atgeriev's testimony should come as no surprise since press accounts of his three attempts to obtain law enforcement cooperation have been available all
along. In fact it seems that not only did Atgeriev warn the Kremlin, but he also sought Moscow's assistance against the radicals.

Atgeriev met with Sergei Stepashin in November 1998 and March 1999 to develop joint crime-fighting efforts. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 3 Mar 99) In July 1999, Maskhadov sent Atgeriev as his envoy to Moscow to discuss such cooperation and prepare for a meeting between Presidents Maskhadov and Boris Yeltsin. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 21 Jul 99, and OBSCHCHAYA GAZETA, 9 Sep 99) Atgeriev was arrested in the VIP lounge of Vnukovo airport after a week-long stay in Moscow, as he was about to return to Chechnya. After a day in Matrosskaya Tishina prison, he was released due to Stepashin's personal intervention

**Primakov's striking revelations**

Yevgeni Primakov, whose term as prime minister began in September 1998 and coincided with the worsening crisis in Chechnya, described Maskhadov's difficult position in his recent book, VOSEM MESYATSEV PLUS (Moscow: Vargius, 2001, pp. 100-103). Primakov explains that the kidnapping in September 1998 of four foreign telecom workers (three British and one New Zealander) represented a personal affront to Maskhadov, who had been well received in London only a few months earlier. Maskhadov announced that he was taking the search for the hostages and the punishment of the guilty parties under his personal control. This signaled a serious effort to combat the criminal elements. At a rally in October, Maskhadov invoked blood vengeance (krovnaya mest) against those who conduct the hostage trade. Maskhadov demanded that all units not under the control of the general staff be disbanded and that opposition bases be liquidated. At the same time the head of the Shariah security announced that operations to free hostages would be held and criminal groups would be destroyed. These operations, however, were not decisive and the opposition responded with assassination attempts against Maskhadov's allies.
Primakov comments that in the context of these events "[I]t became clear that
Maskhadov thought more and more about advancing Russian-Chechen
relations." Hence Primakov persuaded the president to authorize a meeting in
Vladikavkaz. Ingushetia's President Ruslan Aushev and South Ossetia's
President Alexander Dzasokhov served as intermediaries for the meeting, which
was held on 29 October 1998. The main discussion between Maskhadov and
Primakov took place behind closed doors. Here is how Primakov describes it:

This is what I learned from that conversation:
Maskhadov and Basaev don't just represent different interests within Chechnya
such as different teips [extended family networks], or groups of field commanders
-- they also represent different ideologies. In response to my direct question
Maskhadov said, "I think that the independent Chechnya should exist in its
present boundaries, but Basaev thinks differently. He would like to try the
Chechen experiment in other bordering territories, first of all in Dagestan, through
which he can seek access to two seas, the Black Sea and the Caspian."

Basaev's program made him Russia's irreconcilable foe whereas Maskhadov
showed a willingness to discuss many problems connected with "Chechnya's
independence in the context of a single economic space with Russia, single
currency" and so forth.

Certain Russian circles have close contacts with Maskhadov's opposition.
Specifically he named [Boris] Berezovsky, who, according to him [Maskhadov]
"supports them financially, in part through paying ransom for freed hostages, and
provides radio communications." Maskhadov said that Berezovsky's main partner
was Movladi Udugov at that time the Chechen 'foreign minister.'

Maskhadov was counting on us to support him with arms, money, and to help
restore, not so much Grozny, as four or five main industrial plants -- mainly of the
petrochemical field. He wanted the reconstruction of these plants to be
accomplished by Russian regions bordering Chechnya. We decided (I had [Sergei] Stepashin, MVD minister and [Ramazan] Abdulatipov, minister for nationalities policies with me) on cooperation between the law-enforcement agencies to combat hostage-taking and criminality, the restoration of several enterprises in Chechnya, paying compensation to victims of the deportations of 1944 who live in Chechnya, and the payment of pensions for Chechen retirees from the federal pension plan.

The main result of the meeting was that in return for Moscow's fulfillment of agreements reached at Vladikavkaz and earlier meetings, Maskhadov promised to "begin a public struggle and finish off the terrorists."

After the Vladikavkaz meeting, Primakov presented a detailed report to Yeltsin and gave the appropriate directives to the ministries concerned. "The president supported the draft decrees for the MVD," writes Primakov. However, Primakov does not say whether the measures were implemented. For his part, Maskhadov removed Movladi Udugov from the position of foreign minister on 30 October, that is, immediately upon his return to Grozny. In this way, Maskhadov signaled his willingness to carry out the agreements reached at Vladikavkaz.

It is clear from Primakov's account that Maskhadov had warned the Russian government that Basaev would try to use force against Dagestan. It is obvious that Maskhadov sought Russian military and political support to suppress criminal elements that were in part funded and manipulated by influential figures in Moscow. The Vladikavkaz meeting seemed to have produced efforts to enlist Russian military support against the criminal elements. Atgeriev's consultations with law enforcement bodies followed on Maskhadov's warnings to Primakov.

So, why the war?
If the Chechen president and the security minister were seeking cooperation with Russian law enforcement against the radical elements, why did Russia go to war
against them? Primakov comments in regard to the origins of the first Chechen war that "The main difficulty lay in the fact that the Chechen question was integrated into the main political crisis in Moscow." (p. 96) The same can be said about the origins of the second war. It served Putin's political ambitions to stoke nationalist ferment through a war in Chechnya. As the renowned war correspondent Anna Politkovskaya told her Cambridge audience on 19 November, Russian officers told her repeatedly "we are fighting for a rating" in the presidential elections. Twice in one decade a war in Chechnya was used to resolve a power struggle in the Kremlin.

The current confusion regarding talks between Russian and Chechen representatives reveals that there is still no policy-making process. Talks were held on 18 November between Kremlin envoy Viktor Kazantsev and Chechen negotiator Akhmed Zakaev in the presence of Besim Tibuk, leader of Turkey's Liberal Democratic party who apparently was serving as a guarantor of Zakaev's security. No substantive information about the content of the talks or the subsequent Chechen proposal has been made public. A few days later SPS leader Boris Nemtsov suggested that the leaders of ethnic republics, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, could serve as intermediaries. Plans for drawing up a Chechen constitution were being aired by Beslan Gantemirov, a highly controversial Chechen figure who is now an aide to Kazantsev. Radio Liberty reported on 26 November that Chechen commanders meeting in the south of Chechnya endorsed Maskhadov's efforts to end the war. It also pointed out the complete confusion among the authorities: While Kazantsev speaks of further talks for the specific purpose of ending hostilities, other generals are carrying out massive cleansings aimed explicitly at capturing Maskhadov. Zakev says that the Kremlin is trying to decide whether to end the war or continue it. There is plenty of intrigue and contradictory initiatives, but this hardly adds up to a policy-making process.

Hostage's plight emphasizes state failure
The human tragedy behind the absence of policy is evident in the unfolding story of a Russian captive in Chechnya. A Russian officer, Lt. Col. Sergei Boryaev, was taken hostage on 29 September. While his fate remains uncertain, it's quite clear that the authorities only hamper efforts to obtain his release. The absence of a structured procedure for obtaining the release of prisoners bodes ill for the 300 other officers and soldiers being held captive in Chechnya.

Many Western media outlets reported that Boryaev was executed on 11 November by his Arab captors in Chechnya. However, at this writing, the execution of Boryaev remains unverified and some express hope that he is still alive. "Otherwise I would not send my man, the father of four children, to Vedeno for talks," Vyacheslav Izmailov, an expert in releasing hostages, told the gazeta.ru news service on 14 November. In his 19 November article in Novaya gazeta, Izmailov confirmed that there was reliable information from his Chechen intermediary that the Russian officer was still alive. The intermediary has helped to obtain the release of hostages in the past and carries specific proposals that are backed by an influential Chechen commander.

The federal forces remain unwilling to provide even minimal support to these efforts. Izmailov is asking for two things: to coordinate activities with GRU (which has already bungled a raid in late October) and safe passage for his intermediary through checkpoints in Chechnya. Instead, the man was held up for several days at the Khankala base for questioning.

The seemingly false reports of the execution emanate from a 13 November report from Qatar's Kavkaz Tsentr website which quotes Khattab as saying, "add one to nine" in an apparent reference to nine Russian officers who were executed in the Spring of 2000. Khattab is an Arab commander who leads a unit of roughly 200-300 radicals in Chechnya.
The Kavkaz Tsentr report uses oblique language and provides no details about the execution or evidence that it occurred. This should have tipped off reporters to seek confirmation. After all, on previous occasions they had been treated to very graphic images of executions. Moreover, Kavkaz Tsentr and Khattab specialize in sensationalism and have spread false reports on many previous occasions. Movladi Udugov, the chief propagandist of the site, purportedly has been working with Russian security services to foster the hostage trade. Instead of obtaining confirmation, Western news agencies chose to treat Khattab's hint as fact.

Negotiations concerning the release of hostages should be handled by the presidential commission for freeing members of the armed forces. But employees of this body have not been able to travel to Chechnya since June 2001 due to a lack of funding. In the budget approved by the Duma for 2002 there is no provision for work concerning the freeing of hostages. According to Izmailov's 15 October Novaya gazeta article, the budget does not provide a separate line item for the commission, which used to employ officers from the MVD, FSB, and other services.

In a radio broadcast shortly after Boryaev's abduction, Khattab promised to trade him for the release of 25 Chechen women picked up during "cleansings." Members of Boryaev's unit offered $300,000 and the release of Yakub, one of Khattab's lieutenants, but could not begin consultations about the women. "They aren't to be found. Do you understand?" gazeta.ru quoted them as saying.

The Boryaev incident reveals the woeful inadequacy of the state. In the absence of clear procedure, the task of seeking the release of hostages falls on private citizens like Izmailov, a retired MVD major, now a war correspondent for Novaya gazeta, and his colleagues. They take calls from frantic relatives and try to arrange the release of hostages with the aid of Chechen intermediaries. In some cases there are exceedingly complicated transactions which may involve
promises of clemency or the release of Chechen prisoners. But even the most dedicated efforts by a handful of journalists and human rights activists are clearly inadequate to the task at hand. "I'll be able to help one in five or one in ten," says Izmailov.

Both sides, the criminals and the state, exploit hostages for publicity. Although Khattab made loud proclamations about the release of 25 women, he never presented a complete list of names. For its part the military refused to hold "demeaning talks with the Arabs," says Izmailov to gazeta.ru. "If this was not about PR and counter PR, then we would not be talking solely about Boryaev," he continues, "but also about two other officers of the Vedeno command, also lieutenant colonels. They have been in captivity since July. No one is looking for them. There is no news of them."

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Fabian Adami and Michael Donahue

The 'war on terrorism': Impetus for new cooperation
The United States' involvement in Central Asia has provided the impetus for a new period of cooperation, especially between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The two countries have decided, independently of Russian influence, that they must work together to ensure regional stability. Relations between the two countries have not always been cordial, mainly because of long-standing territorial disputes stemming from the Stalinist period, during which time frontiers were redrawn with little consideration for ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, Uzbek President Islam Karimov has been heavily criticized by President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan because of his failure to subdue the threat posed by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).
On 15 and 16 November, Karimov traveled to Astana for intensive talks, which resulted in an agreement for the delineation of 96% of the 1,200-mile Kazakh-Uzbek border, and a deal under which Uzbekistan will provide natural gas to Kazakhstan's southern districts. (KAZAKHSTAN DAILY DIGEST, 20 Nov 01; via Eurasianet) Both presidents apparently fear that the United States will withdraw from Central Asia once its goal of defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan has been achieved.

Over and above providing assistance to US-led coalition efforts in Afghanistan, both leaders also are using the broad rubric of "terrorism" as a convenient excuse to tighten their own grips on power.

In Uzbekistan there has been a recent spate of mass arrests directed against believers of the Muslim faith, and human rights organizations are expressing deep concern over Washington's change of stance. In February 2001, the State Department said that Uzbekistan's already poor record had "worsened." But immediately following Karimov's expression of support for the US, it ceased including Uzbekistan in its "Countries of Particular Concern" category. (EURASIANET HUMAN RIGHTS, 12 Nov 01; via Eurasianet)

In Kazakhstan, meanwhile, the security services' discovery of two purported assassination plots against Nazarbaev has provided an opening for action. Prime Minister Qasymzhomart Toqayev has linked the plots to reformers in the cabinet and parliament. He has called for the removal of the entire cabinet, but most especially of Minister for Labor Alikhan Baimenov and Vice Premier Oraz Zhandosov who he claims, belong to a new movement called "Democratic Choice." Unless these officials are removed, Toqayev added, he himself would resign. (KAZAKHSTAN DAILY DIGEST, 20 Nov 01; via Eurasianet)
The United States' renewed interest in the Central Asian states does not necessarily include their internal problems, and the region's leaders are seizing an obvious opportunity to consolidate their rule.

TAJIKISTAN

Putin's last stand in Central Asia?

In light of the ever-increasing American influence in Central Asia, most prominently in Uzbekistan, during the ongoing "war on terror," Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be searching for new ways to assert Russian hegemony over this former Soviet imperial domain. Already, President George W. Bush has linked American security guarantees to the use of Uzbek air and logistics bases for military operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The giants of America's energy industry, as well as the US Department of Energy, have a significant role in the extraction and transportation of Caspian Sea oil, including owning a significant portion of the recently completed Caspian Pipeline Consortium linking Kazakhstan to Russia. Of further interest is the recent American overture to Tajikistan, until recently considered the bastion of Russian influence in the region.

Currently, Tajikistan, which shares a 750-mile border with Afghanistan, permits use of its airspace only for humanitarian and search-and-rescue operations. In a recent stopover during his Central Asian tour, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reached a tentative agreement with Tajik President Imomali Rahmonov on the possible use of Tajik airbases and the expansion of airspace permission to include military sorties. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 5 Nov 01; via Eurasianet) In an ironic twist of fate, one of the three airfields currently being assessed for suitability in handling a major American air contingent is Kulyab airbase, located approximately 60 miles from the Afghan border. During the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviets refurbished and expanded Kulyab in order to make it capable of handling both fighter aircraft and large transport planes, precisely the dual-role capability for which the US has been looking. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 5
Nov 01; via Eurasianet) While it is extremely unlikely that a single American fighter would remain on Tajik soil after the demise of the Taliban, any long-term agreement with the international community regarding use of Kulyab is likely to challenge the Kremlin's ongoing pursuit of "zones of influence" over newly independent countries.

Much like UN and NATO operations in the former Yugoslavia, post-Taliban peacekeeping/nation-building monitoring force logistics and staging bases are unlikely to be confined to the country of conflict. The proximity of Kulyab and its potential utility as an entry point for supplies and personnel make it ideal for continued use long after the last rounds have been fired in Afghanistan. The influx of personnel and capital required to expand the airfield, build logistics staging areas and airfield housing, and improve road networks into Afghanistan, could potentially jumpstart the Tajik economy and make it less reliant on "(Step)mother" Russia. Tajikistan, one of the world's poorest countries, has relied on the Russians in economic and security matters since 1991, including the use of Russian Army elements along its southern border with Afghanistan. In the light of a decade of patronage towards Dushanbe, Putin is taking continued exclusive relations for granted.

In an effort to counter growing American influence in the region, President Putin met both with Tajik President Rahmonov and with the leader of the Northern Alliance's political wing, Burhanuddi Rabbani, during a stopover on his return from the APEC Shanghai Summit late in October. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 25 Oct 01; via Eurasianet) By focusing so closely on growing American influence in the region and trying so persistently to counter it, Putin may be overlooking a more gradual loss of Russian influence in Dushanbe at the hands of the international community as a whole. In the light of past experience and current American statements, the United States has little interest in remaining in Central Asia over the long haul. Excepting possible threats to US interests in the free-market exploitation of Caspian Sea Oil, it is unlikely that America will focus on Central
Asia after the war. However, the influx of humanitarian assistance into Tajikistan, albeit destined ultimately for Afghanistan, will speed up exponentially the benefits of the global economy for the Tajiks. Already Germany has dispatched its foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, to Dushanbe in order to discuss improving the Tajik infrastructure to facilitate the movement of humanitarian support through Tajikistan. (SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, 22 Oct 01; FBIS-WEU-2001-1021, via World News Connection)

In light of the fact that the European Union as a whole provides Tajikistan with almost 20 million euros in assistance annually, to concentrate solely on competing against growing American influence in Tajikistan would be shortsighted for Mr. Putin. When all is said and done, Dushanbe will benefit economically from the current war and the post-war arrangements, and Russia may lose its hegemonic aspirations in Central Asia, but not necessarily to the rival it thinks.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States
By Michael Varuolo

Back at the beginning
Russian President Putin’s recent visit to the United States raised hopes that Russia might soften its obdurate opposition to Baltic aspirations to join NATO. Indeed, Putin's closing comments in the US encouraged personalities both in Riga and Vilnius to express their expectations that Moscow might be inclined to accept the eastward expansion of the alliance.

Membership in NATO and the EU long have been focal points of the Baltic foreign policies that view NATO as the answer to the security concerns of the three republics. Indeed, Harri Tiido, the Estonian foreign minister, went so far as to say that, "besides the traditional hard security risks, NATO would help reduce
the so-called soft security risks, like organized crime and terrorism." (ETA, 0900 GMT, 14 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1114, via World News Connection)

The road to NATO membership has been long and arduous for all three states. They have worked closely with NATO to prepare their membership action plans (MAP) and fulfill the other necessary requirements. NATO has aided in this process by providing oversight and guidance to ensure that the founding principles of the alliance are met. However, Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that all parties will seek and contribute to the development of peaceful relations with others in the international system. For the Baltic states this explicitly refers to their individual relationships with Russia. Although Article 2 does not state that members must have ratified borders, it does imply that accepted borders are necessary for the development of relations with neighboring countries.

Despite having received the appropriate documents in 1996, the Russian Duma has failed to ratify the existing borders, apparently believing that by failing to ratify deputies somehow can affect the Baltic republics' chances of NATO accession and EU membership. This is simply not a valid argument. All three of the Baltic states have clearly delineated borders, which in fact have been recognized de facto by Russia. Troops from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia patrol the borders. Not only does Russia work with officials of the Baltic states along these boundaries, but Moscow has demonstrated its acceptance of the borders in the international arena. In a recent conference in Tallinn, border guards from the Baltic republics, Russia, and other European countries met to discuss greater cooperation between their agencies. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 5 NOV 01; via lexis-nexis)

As the peoples of the Baltic states hail the acceptance, albeit de facto, of their borders and the warming of relations between NATO and Russia due to the "war on terrorism," President Putin's closing remarks warrant careful reading. "NATO
was established as a force to counter the Soviet Union. There are no threats from that country today, because that country is no more. In its place there emerged many new countries, including new, democratic Russia. Russia may prove helpful in neutralizing the threats we are facing today. Russia recognized the role of NATO in the modern world and it is prepared to expand cooperation with it. If we change the quality of relations between Russia and NATO," Putin continued, "the question of NATO's expansion will become irrelevant." (ITAR-TASS, 0419 GMT, 16 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1116, via World News Connection) This appeared to imply that he might accept NATO membership for the Baltic republics only if the alliance undergoes dramatic alteration. This does not represent a reversal of Putin's position or even a softening, but rather a reassertion. President Putin always has maintained that as long as NATO remains a collective defense pact, excluding Russia, Moscow will view expansion as unacceptable. He merely took the opportunity to utilize the American media to reaffirm this position.

Article 5 constitutes the foundation of the alliance: An attack on one will be considered an attack on all. Any change in the nature of this foundation would undermine the alliance. For the Baltic states a change in the NATO Charter which affects this security basis would be unacceptable. President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia stated this succinctly when she said, "I am aware that there are real threats and we must be prepared. This is one of the reasons why we want to become a member of NATO." (BNS, 1017 GMT, 8 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1108, via World News Connection). At the conclusion of the recent summit between Presidents Putin and Bush it appears, for the time being anyway, no progress can be noted with regard to NATO.

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