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Take my predecessor... please

While President Vladimir Putin managed finally to complete Russia's shimmy into the group of leading industrialized nations, and to be included in the summit host rotation of the G-8, Russian leaders of the past were keeping someone else's dance card full: Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. At issue is the long-discussed, though unfulfilled, Russia-Belarus Union and, specifically, what shape it will take eventually -- a hot topic in the halls of the Kremlin, the streets of Minsk, and both countries' airports. That shape, it seems, will be molded by the hands that hold the reins of power; while power in the Kremlin is indisputably by Putin, it seems that former President Boris Yel'tsin may be making one last grab.

Disagreements about the Union's final form became highly visible during a Putin-Lukashenka meeting last month in Saint Petersburg, and through subsequent comments to the media. In a departure from the usual public displays of mutual support, the Russian president accused Lukashenka of seeking to turn the Union into "something like the USSR," with a Belarusian veto, while noting how relatively insignificant the Belarusian economy was compared to Russia's. His counterpart in Minsk reacted with characteristic hubris, accusing Putin of "insulting the Belarus people" (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 22 Jun 02; via lexis-nexis) and warning that "certain forces" in Russia repeatedly have tried to undermine the Union Treaty. (INTERFAX, 1114 GMT, 14 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0614, via World News Connection)
To be sure, Putin reportedly has considered two alternate models of the Union: one in which Belarus would become a Federation subject, and another to follow the pattern of the European Union (KOMSOMOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 26 Jun 02; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis), although the first alternative was quickly, and emphatically, denied by any Russian government representative who could get to a microphone. Neither model resembles the original.

A week after the Putin-Lukashenka contretemps, Yel'tsin traveled to Minsk for a "private meeting" with Lukashenka in which the two men who had hammered out the original agreement on the Union discussed the change in tack Putin is following. "You and I started it. It is up to us to continue," Yel'tsin reportedly told Lukashenka. Included in the agenda was a "working lunch," although no details were published concerning the topics on which the two were working. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 22 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0624, via World News Connection) Following the meeting, Yel'tsin announced his opposition to any revision of the 1999 agreements (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 27 Jun 02; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis), which had outlined a single state with shared customs, budget and foreign policy. (INTERFAX, 0921 GMT, 13 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1213, via World News Connection) Such comments, not surprisingly, led to rampant speculation that Yel'tsin envisaged the establishment of the Union with himself at the helm and Lukashenka as his first mate. (VEK, Jun-Jul 2002; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis) While his erratic past behavior guarantees that few officials would support Yel'tsin, the former president could be counting on the backing of the communists, who have always supported the unification of the two countries. Indeed, CPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov recently decried what he saw as Putin's intentional delay of the Union's implementation.

However, Putin was quick to disabuse anyone of the notion that Yel'tsin was speaking for the Kremlin. In a gathering with 700 journalists, Putin repeatedly reminded the media representatives who was in charge: "[Yel'tsin] has his view, I
have mine, I am currently leading the country ...." (IZVESTIYA, 25 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0625, via World News Connection)

Putin's apparent goal is an entity following the model of the European Union. Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who now heads the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, racked up his own frequent flier miles with a visit to Minsk during which, diplomatically, he made the Kremlin's wishes clear. While, he assured the media, the "positions of both sides do not diverge enough to be described as different opinions," the ideal solution is "a brotherly alliance, with the necessary preservation of sovereignty." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 27 Jun 02; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis) "There are no particular contradictions in the relations, there is some roughness to be smoothed over," he added. (ITAR-TASS, 2118 GMT, 25 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0626, via World News Connection)

Following his meeting with Lukashenka, Primakov said that neither country planned to denounce the treaty establishing the Union; however, he noted, the document contains some "nuances contradicting interests of the two states." (INTERFAX, 1129 GMT, 26 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0626, via World News Connection)

Indeed, during a subsequent meeting between Putin and Duma faction leaders, assurances abounded that Russia still wants a Union with Belarus (albeit with the inevitable and inescapable "but..."). Thus, Unity chairman Vladimir Pekhtin pointed to Belarusian obstruction of the drafting of "vital documents"; Gennady Raikov, who leads the People's Deputy Group, underlined the need to choose between forming a joint state as opposed to both countries maintaining sovereignty and veto rights. Even the (ex-CPRF) Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznev, followed the suggestion that the proposed Union's parliamentary assembly could operate in the same manner as the European Parliament. (INTERFAX, 1 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis)

3
The debate over the Union highlights, if not a power struggle, at least a squabble, and Putin's rapid reaction indicates that he does not intend to underestimate the problems posed by his predecessor. After all, Yeltsin showed a remarkable ability to resurrect himself and his reputation long after most analysts had tagged him "dead in the water" (though he would be eligible for beatification if he were to succeed in regaining his former power at this stage). Quite apart from his refusal to give Belarus (and, therefore, Lukashenko) equal footing in a Union with Russia, there also is no way that Putin would allow the Union to develop into a tool for undermining his grip on power.

Perhaps equally critical to the Union's future, however, is Lukashenko's past, specifically his years of autocratic governing and contempt for the international community. As Alexander Feduta, president of the organization Social Technologies, pointed out: "The discussion concerns a nuclear power [thus] defense and foreign policy issues should in any case be delegated to the Union's leadership. Putin is certainly aware of the reaction of Russia's partners in the West and he is able to anticipate it. Even in their worst nightmare, they cannot imagine that the Belarussians would have access to the nuclear button."

(INTERFAX, 1114 GMT, 14 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0614, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Michael Donahue

FSB
Too many burdens to bear
Like children who bite off more than they can chew, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) seems to have assumed more (unwinnable) missions than it can effectively handle. While simultaneously fighting wars against Chechen "rebels,"
and having to cope with growing Islamic and nationalist extremism throughout the Russian periphery, as well as narco-trafficking, the FSB will continue actions likely to endear it to Russian President (and chief FSB cheerleader) Vladimir Putin. Losing on all three fronts, however, may well weaken the FSB in the eyes of both Putin and his constituents.

President Putin offered a glimpse into his plans on 25 June when he mentioned the possibility of allowing a Constitutional Chechnya to merge with neighboring, and ethnically related, Ingushetia. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 25 Jun 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Perhaps he (finally) recognized that military victory in Chechnya is beyond his reach, or he has come to realize that an adequate and politically subtle solution is slowly presenting itself. While resolving the draining conflict on acceptable terms would benefit all concerned, the "Putin Plan" is interesting because it seems to concede something, yet in fact does not; the ex-FSB governor elect of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov, is likely to be amenable to his fellow FSB alumnus. Regardless of the cost and shape of any Chechen peace, however, the benefits for the FSB, the other security services, and the military would be incalculable in terms of morale, personnel turnover and overall service efficiency. Without the internecine war consuming valuable manpower and funds, the FSB could focus more effectively on the problems that affect Russians every day: violence, terror and drugs.

Fighting growing Islamic extremism and ethnic nationalism throughout the hinterland, the FSB has led the Russian "counter-terror" effort in the post-9/11 era. In a recent interview, FSB officer Vladimir Svetlichny linked success in the war on terror to stemming the flow of illegal arms and narcotics, limiting the growth and influence of organized crime, combating internal political corruption, and eliminating foreign security service activities (most notably US, NATO and Chinese activities) in southern Russia. (VEK, 21 Jun 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) With the world's longest and possibly most porous border, replete with tensions from the Caucasus to Central Asia to China,
the FSB has done what it can to shape both immigration and anti-extremism policies in an effort to limit Russia's vulnerability to future peripheral conflicts and growing separatist movements. Included in these new policies is a broadly defined power to investigate extremism in order to stem the flow of racial and ethnic hostility. Used for the first time to check the growth of teenage paramilitary and "patriotic" clubs in the Krasnoarmeysky district in Volgograd, the new laws and policies have given the security services wide latitude in combating "enemies of the state" and, predictably, have given human rights groups grounds for new concerns with regard to the precarious state of civil society in Russia and its border regions. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 30 Jun 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

If victory in Russia's "war on terror" will be difficult to attain, it will be far simpler than in its war on drugs. As the Duma focuses on amending existing drug laws to curb growing addiction and the FSB spearheads the war on the illicit drug trade, Russia slowly has come to realize facts that American intelligence analysts have known for years: Not only will drugs destroy the already weak social fabric of Russian society, but the proceeds will continue to finance terror and separatist movements in contentious regions. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 26 Jun 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) With recent FSB anti-drug successes both in Vladivostok and Tver, however, Russian politicos and chekists alike may fall victim to the same delusion that plagues their counterparts in the United States: that it is, indeed, a "war" on drugs. Wars are winnable and, won or lost, eventually end. If the American experience of the last 50 years is any indication, then the FSB and Russia are doomed to increasingly expensive failure in combating the drug trade.

With three "wars" to fight, and victory probably unattainable in any, Putin would do well to learn to economize the over-reliance on the FSB. Given the myriad of demands and problems facing Russia, an appropriate division of labor among the various security services (numbering double digits) would ease the load on the
FSB in each and serve Russia, and therefore Putin, better than continued fawning on the FSB.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Luba Schwartzman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY
Out for the summer
The 2002 spring session of the Russian State Duma was extended by one day, through 1 July, so that the deputies could accept the law on alternative military service and several tax laws in the third and final reading. After the last Duma session Russian President Vladimir Putin met with faction leaders to congratulate them and discuss the conclusion of the spring session. He praised the parliamentarians' achievements "in furthering institutional reforms," including land ownership regulations, military, pension, tax and small and medium business reforms. (IZVESTIYA, 29 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0702, via World News Connection)

President Putin also spoke about some of the goals for the following session. He stressed that the primary concern of the fall session would be the 2003 state budget. In particular, President Putin noted the importance of due attention to budget provisions for national defense and social questions. Other items on the agenda will be issues concerning small and medium businesses, the de-bureaucratization of the economy, and the reform of natural monopolies. The Russian president cautioned the deputies that all "decisions must be measured and well thought out." (RTR, 1 Jul 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

POLITICAL PARTIES
Summer planning list

Russian politicians are looking farther than one season ahead -- they are already eyeing the 2003 parliamentary and 2004 presidential elections. According to a recent poll, if elections were held this month, President Putin would win 46% of the vote, and Communist Leader Gennady Zyuganov would trail with 13% of votes, while the leading democrats -- Union of Right Forces (SPS) Chairman Boris Nemtsov and YABLOKO Chairman Grigory Yavlinsky -- would receive only 1% and 2%, respectively; consequently, Nemtsov has proposed putting forward a single democratic candidate in the 2004 elections. (INTERFAX, 0755 GMT, 26 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0626, via World News Connection) Russia's democratic and liberal parties include, in addition to Nemtsov's SPS and Yavlinsky's YABLOKO, Boris Berezovsky's Liberal Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev's Social Democratic Party and Mikhail Prusak's Democratic Party. Nemtsov suggested that the candidate for the 14 March 2004 presidential election be put forward by the party that does best in the 14 December 2003 parliamentary elections, which means that campaigning by the candidates will begin extra early. (IZVESTIYA, 22 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0625, via World News Connection)

Fearing the loss of votes to United Russia, SPS and YABLOKO have managed to reach an agreement on coordinating candidatures in the single-mandate districts. This agreement was, however, signed by the seconds-in-command, Vladimir Lukin (YABLOKO) and Irina Khakamada (SPS), while the leaders of the parties failed to show up. (RTR, 7 Jul 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

There has been reluctance on Yavlinsky's part to assent to the single presidential candidate notion, but Nemtsov notes that pressure from the public and business is already beginning to have an effect: "Ten days ago, Yavlinsky publicly spoke out against this idea, and so did his supporters," Nemtsov told journalists. "He has realized that such actions spell political suicide and changed his position." (INTERFAX, 0903 GMT, 2 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0702, via World News)
Another factor weakening Yavlinsky is the greater access to media enjoyed by the Union of Right Forces.

When confronted by questions regarding the promotion of a single candidate, Yavlinsky declared that he agrees with the concept in principle, but has doubts about the possibility of implementing the idea. After more prodding, he stated that, to put forward a single candidate, the parties would first need to establish a single platform.

**Gearing for battle**

Meanwhile, the two parties will keep trying to capture the leading role in the democratic sector. Nemtsov had been relatively quiet since last September, when he lost face on the Chechen issue. He had been carried away by taking initiatives and making trips to negotiate directly with the leaders, received a rather sharp and personal reprimand from Putin, and faltered in his position -- shortly thereafter came the 11 September attack, and Nemtsov capitulated completely. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 12 Sep 01) Now, it seems that he is coming back into the political arena. In addition to the PR push on the unification of the democratic forces, Nemtsov has begun making more statements on SPS positions. And on 8-9 June, he and fellow SPS co-chairman Yegor Gaidar attended the International Democrat Union Congress in Washington. (INTERFAX, 1123 GMT, 8 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0608, via World News Connection)

Yavlinsky's team is also gearing up for battle. The YABLOKO leader has announced that his party "is ready to assume responsibility for solving problems in Russia." (ITAR-TASS, 1417 GMT, 15 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0615, via World News Connection) He has also been expressing his dissatisfaction with the work of the State Duma, accusing it of making counterproductive decisions, especially with regard to the law on alternative military service (which both SPS and YABLOKO view as emasculating the concept of alternative service) and the law
on Russian citizenship (which Yavlinsky described as "an extremely reactionary bill, which sends the message that you needn't come to Russia"). (INTERFAX, 1200 GMT, 27 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0627, via World News Connection)

All in all, it is unlikely that the democratic parties will cooperate, since they are not playing a zero-sum game. Even if they form a united front, they will lose in the 2004 elections; Putin is a shoe-in in for a second term. Rather, the democrats are facing a form of the prisoner's dilemma, in which there is an uneven tradeoff between a small gain -- getting to field the united candidate and gaining leadership of the right wing (though not getting a victory in the election itself) -- and a big loss -- giving up individual leadership and identity. It is easier for the democrats to reconcile themselves to a splintered existence and temporary electoral inefficiency in the hope of gathering power in time for the 2008 election.

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

By Ansel Stein

**Everyone’s best friend**

The past three weeks have further illuminated the dual-track nature of Russia's foreign policy - economic growth, mainly as a result of the sale of arms and petroleum products, and Russia's attempt to reassert hegemony over the NIS. These tracks converge in the calculations that determine the Putin Administration's willingness to sacrifice economic for political gain and vice versa.

**Statement of purpose**

On 25 June President Putin hosted approximately 700 journalists at his annual summer press conference, timed to coincide with the beginning of the Duma's summer break. Few of the questions asked of Putin pertained to foreign policy, perhaps in view of the Kremlin’s apparent string of recent successes in this area. Putin was at pains to stress the link between economics and foreign policy.
"The priority task for Russia today is to develop its economy and to raise the living standards," Putin said. "One cannot develop, efficiently develop without being totally immersed in world economic relations.... In order to have all this for the benefit of Russia, we need one major condition, and that is a higher degree of trust in international affairs. No one of these questions can be resolved unless one key problem in this sphere is resolved. From a country that used to be an antagonist or enemy of most of the world's industrialized nations, Russia should become a partner, moreover, a full-fledged and equal partner. This is the paramount mission of Russian foreign policy." (FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, 24 Jun 02; via lexis-nexis) The implementation of this thrust appears to have been the purpose of Putin's recent "charm offensive."

This was clearly demonstrated by Putin's visit to the G-8 summit, to which he departed the day after the press conference. At the summit Russia was finally invited to join the elite club (a process begun by Mikhail Gorbachev). It was also agreed that the G-8 summit in 2006 will be held in Russia. Finally, the original seven members of the group pledged $20 billion over the next 10 years to help Russia achieve security at its nuclear sites and destroy and dismantle some of its weapons of mass destruction. Russia not only became a partner, but walked away with tangible economic gain.

Russia's relationship with China, which has been touted recently by Kremlin officials as constituting "a considerable priority," also demonstrates the economic emphasis of foreign policy. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has gone so far as to describe Russian and Chinese foreign policy as "fully coordinated." (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 12 Jun 02) One must ask, however, what, exactly, is being coordinated? The real goal of Russia's approach to China appears to be economic. Russian-Chinese trade for the first five months of this year was 20 percent up in volume over the same period last year, reaching $5 billion. (INTERFAX, 25 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0625, via World News Connection)
Arms sales constitute the largest portion of Russia's exports to China, as well as to India. Policy coordination between Russia and India and Russia and China has to be viewed through this lens. This is certainly the view of Boris Kuzyk, head of the New Programs and Concepts Holding Company, one of seven exporters selected by Putin to handle "small" arms deals valued at less than $100 million. As he stated in a recent interview with Izvestiya, "the political vector of support for foreign markets has now been brought powerfully into play. I believe that when it comes to lobbying for Russian interests the president takes a very pragmatic stance... It is of fundamental importance to move from the trade-intermediary model toward an investment-cooperation model." (IZVESTIYA, 18 Jun 02; FBIS-CHI-2002-0619, via World News Connection)

**Newly Independent States: Western Region**

By Tammy Lynch

**UKRAINE**

**One more try for Zhyr**

While most of the results of the 31 March parliamentary elections have been confirmed and entered into the history books, three results - constituencies number 35 (Dnipropetrovsk region), 18 (Vinnytsia) and 201 (Cherkasy) - must still be determined in an election set for 14 July. Ukrainian officials, after uncharacteristically acknowledging large-scale electoral irregularities in these areas, have been forced to invalidate the original results and schedule the July poll.

The new elections, however, have not resulted in a new mentality, according to international organizations overseeing the campaign. The same organizations that found significant problems with the first elections are warning that this latest round is even worse in many ways. The Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), for example, suggests that local authorities in these regions have been given an
ultimatum from Kyiv. "These elections will become a Rubicon," CVU spokesman Oleksandr Chernenko said, "from which they either remain in power, or not." (UKRAINIAN NEWS, 19 Jun 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

This is particularly true in Dnipropetrovsk, where one of President Leonid Kuchma's loudest critics is on the ballot. Oleksandr Zhyr, former chairman of the parliamentary commission investigating the death of journalist Georgiy Gongadze, was originally said to have lost the election by approximately 700 votes to the Kuchma-supported candidate, Viktor Drachevskyi. Kuchma no doubt was overjoyed. Zhyr, after all, not only has led the investigation of Georgiy Gongadze's death (an investigation that may implicate Kuchma), but has also examined other questions that he suggests arise from information on the so-called "Kuchma tapes" -- tapes secretly recorded by the president's former bodyguard.

Zhyr, for example, has suggested that Kuchma played a part in the death of journalist Ihor Alexandrov, and charged that Kuchma and his aides ordered the "elimination" of Valeriy Malev, who, Zhyr implied, was killed because of his knowledge of illegal arms dealing with Iraq. "The commission," he said in March, "has tapes that have to do with arms exports to Iraq worth $100 million in violation of international resolutions banning arms exports to that country. President Kuchma personally approved these exports." (INTERFAX, 14 Mar 02; via lexis-nexis) Moreover, "Just days before Malev's death, the president was informed that the commission, including its chairman, had documents concerning the president's conversation with Malev on arms exports to Iraq. The president knew that I would not conceal this information," he said. (INTERFAX, 13 Mar 02; via lexis-nexis) While Kuchma has, of course, denied these charges and none of them has been proven, there is no doubt that Zhyr is not the president's favorite person. The current battle in constituency number 35 testifies to that fact.
After being told he had lost, Zhyr filed numerous complaints with officials, until the Supreme Court -- faced with mountains of evidence -- finally ruled in his favor. Since then, the register of voters in the district has "disappeared," local security services have repeatedly stopped vehicles and asked them to sign lists in support of Drachevskyi, and the newspaper backing Zhyr has had its electricity shut off, its delivery trucks harassed and the director of its printing press detained by police. Add to that forced campaigning by state workers and the situation is not an easy one for Zhyr.

Clearly the campaign suggests that, although reformers made impressive progress in the elections of 31 March, much work remains to be done. The reformist gains, for example, have not yet translated into meaningful victories in parliament; significantly, the opposition has been unable to form a new commission for the continuation of the investigation into Gongadze’s death.

The current campaign also should serve to remind international organizations that, despite the government's newly expressed desire to integrate into Western structures, clearly it is not ready to do so. Rhetoric in favor of "Westernization" is one thing; living up to Western standards of democratization is another. There is no better example of the entrenched Soviet-era mentality of many Ukrainian officials than constituency number 35. A Zhyr loss on 14 July clearly will be a defeat not only for Zhyr, but for the Ukrainian reform movement in general.

**It's a bird! It's a plane! It's burning space garbage!**

For the second time in the last eight months, the Ukrainian government is being called upon to explain what appears to be a missile gone awry. Unlike the first incident -- when a stray missile brought down a Russian passenger airliner in October, killing all 78 on board -- this recent event led to no injuries. It has, however, given rise to numerous questions about what might have happened in the air above Dnipropetrovsk.
On 4 July, the pilot of a Moscow-bound Israeli El Al passenger jet reported seeing a missile climb from the ground and detonate above his altitude. At the same time, the Russian pilot of a TU-154 airliner told ground control that he had watched "movement of a shining object" for 10 seconds, and another Russian pilot flying an Il-86 from Moscow to Turkey noted a "glow." All three reported a "flash" at an altitude above their planes.

Characteristically, the government has denied the existence of any such missile. Since Ukraine's leaders lately have had a good deal of practice at this (in addition to the downing of the Russian jet, a missile slammed into an apartment building in April of 2000, killing four and injuring dozens), their responses were given with little delay.

President Leonid Kuchma called the suggestion "absurd," and contended, "There were no exercises in Ukraine. Moreover, I imposed a ban on missile launches over Ukraine after [the October incident]." (UPI, 0340 EST, 6 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis) For its part, the military immediately trotted out its tried and true list of explanations for any suggestion of an errant missile. In one day, various members of the military claimed the sightings might have been from "a missile launched from Russia's Astrakhan training ground," "the fireworks and floodlights in Berdyansk -- a film festival was taking place there," a meteorite, or maybe "a space garbage fragment orbiting the earth." (IBID. and THE TIMES, 6 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis)

These denials clearly resemble the denials during the earlier two incidents, although those occurred during officially declared military exercises. When the missile hit the apartment building, for example, officials attempted to blame a terrorist bomb, and claimed, "All missiles launched during the exercise hit the set tasks at the training ground." (KOMMERSANT DAILY, 3 May 00; Defense and Security, via lexis-nexis) Similarly, after the Russian flight exploded over the Black Sea, a defense ministry spokesman said, "All missiles hit the targets in the
designated area.” (ITAR-TASS, 2120 GMT, 4 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1004, via World News Connection) Only after significant time had passed -- and significant evidence had mounted - did the government admit that malfunctioning Ukrainian missiles led to these tragedies.

Although the current incident did not occur during declared exercises, it did happen just three days before Ukrainian Air Defense Troops Day, suggesting the possibility that preparations for the holiday led to a launch -- either planned or errant. This possibility was anything but refuted by defense ministry spokesman Konstantin Khivrenko's latest lukewarm denial. "No exercises involving launches over Ukraine's territory had been scheduled lately," he said. (UPI, 0340 EST, 6 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis) Khivrenko also was not helped by Israeli Transport Minister Ephraim Sneh, who went on the radio to support the El Al pilot who reported witnessing the launch. Sneh contended that the pilot is a "combat veteran of the Israeli Air Force" and has no doubt that he saw a missile. (THE TIMES, 6 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis)

This leads to a number of questions. If there was a launch, was it sanctioned? And if so, by whom? Even more important, if it was not sanctioned, how did a missile happen to be launched into crowded airspace?

No matter what the answers to these questions are, the Ukrainian defense ministry is once again the subject of distinctly unwanted attention, and once again does not appear to be acquitting itself well. Both its credibility and its competence are clearly questionable, to say the least. Despite recently announced reforms, the ministry continues to be mired in a Soviet-era mentality that no one seems willing or able to confront. Whether or not there was a missile, the ministry’s programmed and ineffective response to this latest incident speaks volumes about its inner workings.
It is possible, of course, that there is some other explanation for what the three pilots reported seeing. It's a safe bet, however, that neither a meteorite flying up from earth nor burning space debris is the answer. Regardless, based upon previous experience, it will be quite a bit longer -- if ever -- before Ukraine's leaders admit what truly happened on 4 July.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Tammy Lynch

CHECHNYA
Rybkin speaks out
Ivan Rybkin, the former secretary of the Security Council, said that he is being persecuted for having crafted a treaty with Chechnya in 1997. As secretary of the Security Council in 1996 and 1997, Rybkin was one of the main proponents of a peaceful negotiated settlement with Chechnya. In two recent articles, he described his ordeal, called for ending the war by negotiating a peace with the Chechen government, and offered his services as an intermediary.

Rybkin published an open letter to President Putin in the 28 June issue of Kommersant which he prefaced by saying that in early April he had been brought in for questioning by the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor was interested in his activities as Security Council secretary relating to the preparation of the peace treaty with Chechnya which was signed on 12 May 1997. Rybkin commented that the two persons who worked closely with him on ending the war - Alexander Lebed', who was his predecessor at the Security Council, and Boris Berezovsky, who was his deputy - are no longer available for questioning. General Lebed' died in a helicopter accident in April and Boris Berezovsky is in self-imposed exile in London.
In the open letter to Putin Rybkin pointed out that "the policy of blitzkrieg and war to the bitter end has failed again." Rybkin wrote that the most recent opinion polls show that the Russian people overwhelmingly favor negotiating an end to the war. Moreover, he said, President Boris Yel'tsin had entrusted him in similar circumstances in 1996 and now Rybkin could serve Putin in the same capacity.

Rybkin elaborated on his experiences with the procuracy in an interview with Nezavisimaya gazeta on 2 July and related his political views in much greater detail. By way of introducing the interview, the paper commented that Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Putin's spokesman for Chechnya, expressed the official reaction to Rybkin's letter by rejecting his mediation proposal. In addition, the Socialist Unity Party of Russia, which Rybkin chaired, removed him from that position at its plenum on 29 June.

Rybkin told Nezavisimaya gazeta that a case, which he links to Yevegeni Primakov, had been initiated against him as early as January 1999. The former prime minister, Rybkin says, asked him questions in a very similar vein as the prosecutor is doing now. The first interview with the prosecutor took place in April 2002 and there have been several sessions since then, each lasting several hours.

Rybkin says that he cannot respond fully to questions about his work on Chechnya because he would be revealing the contents of secret documents. Hence, Rybkin says, "the archives should be opened." There was, he says, plenty of documentation, chief among which were a concept for peaceful resolution, a directive for holding negotiations, and a decision regarding commissions. He says that he is being accused of having contacts with persons wanted by the authorities and that questions probing his authority to carry out the work are being posed. Among questions such as "who appointed you?" and "Were you appointed by presidential edict or presidential instruction?", Rybkin also is being asked, " Why did you try to free hostages [held in Chechnya]?"
Rybkin compares present-day Russia to the 1930s, saying, "What is happening in Chechnya can happen in all of Russia. And is happening in Moscow! That they were able to thrash out all the news coverage ... the directives about who can be shown [on TV] and who can't. Yavlinsky and I were just the first ones to be blacklisted, I was on that list even before he was."

Rybkin chose to speak out now not only due to the pressures mounting against him but also due to Lebed's death and because "I wanted to bring to the President's attention what is really happening. The crux of the matter is that tomorrow we may have destroyed a whole nation and done more damage than Stalin did through his deportations." Finally, Rybkin called on Boris Yeltsin and Victor Chernomyrdin - who were president and prime minister at the time of the Khasavyurt Treaty and the subsequent peace treaty - to speak out.

DAGESTAN

Arrests for Kaspiisk blast

Dagestani security officials have announced that military officers have been arrested in connection with the mine explosion in Kaspiisk which killed 43 persons on 9 May. Deputy Prosecutor General Vladimir Kolesnikov, chief of the FSB's department for Dagestan Vladimir Muratov, and Dagestani Interior Minister Adilgirei Magomedtagirov announced the results of their investigations but refused to take questions. (MOSCOW NEWS, 26 Jun 02)

Kolesnikov said 50 persons had been identified and arrested on charges of complicity in plotting the blast. Rabani Khalilov, who is considered the mastermind, is at large. The mine explosion was carried out by a group headed by a certain Kazim "Abuzar" Abdurakhmanov, using an anti-personnel mine, MON-90, "which they had acquired from a military unit in the city of Buinaksk. Six servicemen, senior officers among them, have been arrested." According to Kolesnikov, the officers stole the mine from a depot and passed it over to
Abuzar's 17-man gang. Seven gang members have been arrested and charged, the remaining 10 are on the wanted list.

**Magomedov remains in office**
Magomedali Magomedov, who has been running Dagestan since the 1980s, was reelected on 24 June. (MOSCOW TIMES, 26 Jun 02) It is difficult to say precisely how many terms he has served. Magomedov was chairman of Dagestan's Council of Ministers from 1983 to 1987 and chairman of its Supreme Soviet from 1987 to 1994. In 1994, when Dagestan's constitution was adopted, Magomedov was elected for a two-year term, which was extended for an additional two years in 1996. He was reelected for a four-year term in 1998 and has now been granted another four years.

Elections in the Dagestani context also have a unique meaning. Magomedov was not elected through a direct ballot. Rather, he was chosen by the Constitutional Assembly comprising 121 members of the regional parliament and 121 representatives of local administrations. After the Kaspiisk bombing, the local press was filled with appeals asking Magomedov to remain in office. Another factor may have been the support from Moscow. Subsidies to Dagestan, which have constituted more than 80% of its budget, tripled in real terms since Putin came to power. Alexander Bespalov, the head of the United Russia party, visited Dagestan and campaigned for Magomedov.

**GEORGIA**
**A mixed bag of measures against Georgia**
In an interview with a pro-Kremlin news-service, strana.ru, a long-term hardliner, Andranik Migranyan, commented on Russian-Georgian relations. Russia has granted rebel Abkhaz nationals Russian citizenship on a mass scale, constituting a threat to Georgia's territorial integrity, because these Russian citizens may "de jure control the area for" Russia. This Russian strategy is warranted, according to Migranyan, because Georgia had maintained an independent posture, inviting
US trainers, seeking to remove Russian bases, etc. "Georgia has completely despaired of Russia ever helping it secure its territorial integrity. Hence Georgia will always cause problems for Russia in this region," he commented. Migranyan, now the head of the Reform Foundation, was a member of an advisory council to President Yel'tsin and a frequent commentator on the Caucasus. In one 1997 article he called explicitly for Georgia to be dismembered. (See PERSPECTIVE, Mar-Apr 97)

Matters have heated up again in the Kodori Gorge, which borders on the rebel region of Abkhazia. On 1 July Georgian border guards hit an anti-personnel mine in the upper part of the gorge; one border guard was killed, another was severely injured. Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia unconvincingly insist that the Georgians blew up a mine in the process of laying mines. (INTERFAX, 1 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis) In a letter to the Duma, Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of the General Staff, asserted that Georgian security structures remain in the Kodori Gorge in violation of the agreement reached in April. (KOMMERSANT, 4 Jul 02) In fact, only military Georgians were required to leave... the border guards may remain.

In the meantime, the situation around the Pankisi Gorge will again attract attention as an OSCE group arrives on the scene. Russian officials have claimed repeatedly that Chechen fighters take refuge in the Pankisi Gorge. In recent weeks the charge that Rapani Khalilov, who is accused of sponsoring the 9 May blast in Kaspiisk, is there has been added to the mix. Shevardnadze has held firm to the position that no foreign troops are needed to patrol the gorge, reasserting the position on 8 July. (CIVIL.GE, 8 Jul 02) Russian officials claim that Chechen fighters cross the border at will to rest in the Pankisi Gorge. An OSCE assessment mission will arrive this week to appraise the OSCE monitoring mission on the Ingush and Chechen sections of the Russian-Georgian border. (CIVIL.GE, 8 Jul 02) The monitoring mission has been watching the border for nearly two years and has never reported a border violation.
Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By David Montgomery

Continued threat of militants, drugs and regional security agreements
As the presence of international troops begins to lose novelty, the threat of Islamic militants leaving Afghanistan to create instability in other parts of Central Asia has followed the trajectory which began prior to 11 September 2001, with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) beginning to resurface and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) expanding its activities. While much of the activity of these militants is believed to be supported by drug trafficking in the region, which continues to remain high, the governments of Central Asia are seeking to cooperate more closely with each other to combat the threat Islamists pose.

At a news briefing on 28 June, Kyrgyz Defense Minister Esen Topoev reported that upwards of 300 IMU militants remain in Afghanistan and are seeking ways to enter Central Asia so as to destabilize the region. (INTERFAX, 0835 GMT, 28 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0625, via World News Connection) Such destabilization would force the allied efforts in Afghanistan to divert more attention from Afghanistan and Pakistan to include more active areas in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan where the IMU and HT either have small pockets of support or where local acceptance of a radical Islamic agenda is gaining popularity.

The IMU, which moved from training camps in Afghanistan across northern Tajikistan into southern Kyrgyzstan (with incursions into Uzbekistan), has expressed its objective to overthrow Uzbek President Islam Karimov and create an Islamic state in the Ferghana Valley. While reports from the Russian Federal Border Service suggest that current groups which comprise the IMU are small, disorganized and scattered, the fact that they are increasingly active and attempting to leave Afghanistan is not questioned. (ITAR-TASS, 1357 GMT, 18
In a 3 July interview, Misir Ashyrkulov, secretary of Kyrgyzstan's Security Council, suggested that the IMU's plan for destabilizing the region consisted of three parts: 1) utilizing the secretive network of HT to emphasize further discontent in the Ferghana Valley; 2) entering the region in a manner similar to the 1999 and 2000 incursions which engaged Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik troops; and 3) increasing tension between nationalities by encouraging ethnic groups to make greater political demands. (EURASIANET, 6 Jul 02; via www.eurasianet.org) The latter of these highlights the greatest indigenous threat to regional stability: increased tensions among ethnic groupings similar to the 1990 Osh riots wherein over 200 Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were killed.

As the activity of the IMU is being monitored, the HT appears to be increasing its activity as well. Eight activists from HT were detained in Uzbekistan on 20 June and Kazakh security officials warned on 7 June that the activities of HT were expanding in Kazakhstan, thus posing a greater threat to regional security. (INTERFAX, 1310 GMT, 20 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0620, via World News Connection, and RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 7 Jun 02; via www.rferl.org) Furthermore, on 1 July, two alleged Wahhabis, both Uzbek nationals, were detained in Kazakhstan. (INTERFAX, 1317 GMT, 1 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0701, via World News Connection)

Despite the heightened fear of Islamists in the region, not all of the activities can be linked directly to religious fervor. The 29 June killing of the Chinese consul in Bishkek, Wang Jiangping, and his driver, Umar Nurmukhamed, was initially linked to the Muslim separatist movement of SHAT (Free Turkistan), from the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region in China. Further investigation, however, has suggested that the murder was not politically motivated but rather concerned a business disagreement between Nurmukhamed and the suspects in the
Regardless of the incidences with political significance attributed to Islamic militants, it is undeniable that one of the major sources funding their activities is drug-smuggling. Russian border troops along the Afghan-Tajik border claimed to have seized 540 kg of drugs (245 kg of which were heroin) in June, bringing the total for the first six months of year to over 1,300 kg (with 750 kg of that being heroin). (ITAR-TASS, 0744 GMT, 29 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0629, and ITAR-TASS, 0426 GMT, 2 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0702, via World News Connection)

By comparison, during the month of June 2001, Russian border troops seized 360 kg of drugs (320 kg of which were heroin), with the January-June 2001 catch being roughly equal to 2002 at 1,300 kg (with 1,000 kg of that being heroin). (ITAR-TASS, 0924 GMT, 27 Jun 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0627, via World News Connection)

While it is difficult to assess variability in the effectiveness of Russian border troop efforts to stop drug smugglers, the numbers do suggest that the presence of international troops in Afghanistan has not stopped the primary funding source for militants in the region.

Due to the threats which the militants pose to the individual countries in the region, organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO, which includes China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) allow for a formal relationship between the members to cooperate in combating Islamic militants and threats of terrorism. Such relationships, intended to solidify regional stability, tend to be influenced by the most pressing needs of the countries involved and in part may explain Uzbekistan's recent suspension of its membership in GUUAM (the organization of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova). While GUUAM was created as a Europe-Caucasus-Asia transportation corridor, it lacked the military-political relevance of the SCO in
Central Asia. Furthermore, GUUAM's creation was viewed in Moscow as politically distancing the members from Russia, since it opposed many of the structures operating within the CIS that support Russian priorities. (IZVESTIYA, 20 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0620, ITAR-TASS, 0829 GMT, 14 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0614, INTERFAX, 1338 GMT, 2 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0702, and ITAR-TASS, 1009 GMT, 2 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0702, via World News Connection)

While Uzbekistan has been independently minded and willing to enter and leave agreements if those relationships were slow in proving their effectiveness, it is likely that external persuasion changed the decision of Uzbekistan from a complete withdrawal from GUUAM to one of suspended activity in the organization. (IZVESTIYA, 20 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0620, via World News Connection) On 14 June, the US State Department issued a statement supporting GUUAM and expressed its "hope [that] the government of Uzbekistan will reconsider its decision" on withdrawing. (US Department of State, 14 Jun 02; via http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/11127.htm)

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Michael Varuolo

Russia seeking influence through Kaliningrad

Forced to accept the likelihood of the Baltic states joining both the EU and NATO in the near future, the Russian Federation continues to try to intimidate the Baltic countries into acting in accordance with Russian desires. Moscow's most recent attempts focus largely on the isolated region of Kaliningrad and the issue of EU visa standards, which will affect the transit of non-EU citizens and goods. The Russian Duma is opposed to anticipated restrictions and has taken measures to ensure that debate and controversy continue over Kaliningrad. According to Dmitri Rogozin, chairman of the Duma's International Affairs Committee, the
Duma is holding ratification of the Lithuanian-Russian border treaty hostage until a solution to this issue is found. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 16 Jan 02; via lexis-nexis)

On the surface it appears that Russia is concerned strictly with the survival of its territorial integrity and the mobility of its citizens, who are separated by Lithuania and Poland (not to mention Belarus) from the rest of the country, but this is not entirely the case. Despite claims from the Speaker of State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, that EU standards are unfair because a Russian citizen should not need a visa to travel from one part of Russia to another, the situation is more complex. (INTERFAX, 1553 GMT, 11 Jun 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0611, via World News Connection)

In addition to the Duma's refusal to ratify the border agreement with Lithuania, Russia is seeking a regional accord acknowledging Kaliningrad's special status. "The situation is unique, and we want Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians to draft a joint proposal to be adopted in Brussels on a special agreement concerning the Kaliningrad region, to cover transit, visa and other issues," Rogozin explained. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 16 Jan 02; via lexis-nexis) Lithuanian objections to this proposal were strengthened by the EU's outright rejection of such an agreement.

The EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Gunter Verheugen, took the opportunity during a visit to Vilnius to inform Russia that "the EU will never negotiate any solution that concerns the sovereign rights and territory of Lithuania or Poland." He continued by admonishing Russia, stating that "transit corridors are by nature an instrument of the past. They do not fit at all with the idea to create a single European Space either." (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 4 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis)

For the time being Russia's move to influence Lithuanian policy appear to have been thwarted. It is unlikely, however, that Moscow will end its attempts to
pressure Vilnius towards a pro-Russian stand, a situation that Vytautas Landsbergis, leader of the opposition party Homeland Union, finds unacceptable. Landsbergis insists that "There is still delirium at the Russian State Duma about Lithuania and Poland being territories of Russia. There is no other explanation for the State Duma's demands that the president should intimidate the European Commission (EU) and insist on visa-free travels for Kaliningraders all over 'the country's territory'." (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 21 Jun 02; via lexis-nexis)