Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock

PRESIDENCY
Voloshin: close to the edge
One of the key players within the executive branch representing the Yel'tsin group, Alexander Voloshin, soon may be vacating his post as head of the Presidential Administration. The ubiquitous Russian President Vladimir Putin thus far has maintained a carefully constructed balance of political power between the holdovers of the Yel'tsin group and the St. Petersburgers (so known by their connections to the city and to Putin himself). Voloshin, along with Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, represent the most influential internal counters to a nearly complete control of the Russian government by Putin and his men.

Two recent developments have brought to light this possible shake-up inside Russia. According to Russian papers, there is some support for Valery Golubev as a potential replacement for Voloshin. Golubev's chief qualifications, other than his status as a resident of St. Petersburg and a stint as representative of the Leningrad Region within the Russian Federation Council, include reportedly knowing and working with Vladimir Putin in foreign intelligence (KGB) during the Soviet period, and then in the city's administration following the collapse of the USSR. His promotion might be "balanced" by the resignation of another St. Petersburger, Sergey Mironov, the Federation Council chairman, and his replacement by a member of the Yel'tsin "family." (CENTRE TV, 1600 GMT, 7 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Taken alone, such speculation could be dismissed as the usual sensationalistic reportage currently popular within Russia, but other events elevate it above this
status. The recent narrow victory by Putin's supporters within the Duma to pass an amendment to Russian constitutional law is a case in point. Putin's supporters succeeded in prohibiting a national referendum in years preceding presidential or parliamentary elections. The event carries implication concerning the fragility of the balance of power between the Yeltsin group and Putin's Petersburgers. Had the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) succeeded in defeating this amendment, Putin would have faced a difficult choice. Many expected that the KPRF would have forced Putin to decide between some very destabilizing national referenda concerning land reform, wages, tariffs and nationalization of resources and the equally unsavory option of buying off the KPRF with government positions that carry substantive powers. This would have led inevitably to the diminution of the Yeltsin group and perhaps the end of Voloshin's political career. Although Voloshin seems to have averted for the present being sidelined, his position does seem to be quite precarious. No love is likely to be lost in the near future between the KPRF and Voloshin, and indeed, Putin himself. If the KPRF is willing to challenge the president's power structure so openly, then it must expect a counterstrike from the executive branch. (KOMMERSANT, 19 Sep 02, and IZVESTIA PRESS DIGEST, 19 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Survey on autocracy
A recent survey concerning implementation of President Putin's executive orders shows that approximately 62% remain unfulfilled. The results cannot be judged as a true indicator of Putin's autocratic governing style because the statistics probably represent only the level of bureaucratic incompetence. As stated by the head of the Expert Institute with the Union of Russian Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Andrei Neshchadin, "They (government bureaucrats) often don't understand the problems that they are called to resolve and are unable to formulate clearly the task of proper implementation." This statement does not even account for pure corruption and malfeasance. Indeed, the survey that was not conducted, and should have been, would have addressed how many of
Putin's decrees, orders and whims have been actively sabotaged, not merely unfulfilled. (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 20 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

**Russian Federation: Security Services**

By Michael Donahue

**Fighting terrorism at home and abroad**

On the heels of US President George W. Bush's address to the UN General Assembly, in which he reiterated the position that the US might use military force to destroy threats preemptively with or without the support of the international bureaucracy, Russian President Vladimir Putin and FSB chief Nikolai Patrushev used a false analogy to threaten military action in Russia's "war on terrorism" against Georgia.

Russia has long alleged that Georgia is turning a blind eye to "terrorists" supposedly hiding in the Pankisi Gorge. Recently, however, Russian officials have intimated that Tbilisi is not just incapable of doing something about the "terrorists" it claims are hiding in the gorge, but also unwilling. While Georgian officials have long insisted that they are indeed attempting to flush out any Chechen fighters, having gone so far as to enlist the assistance of American special forces (Green Berets) to train and equip Georgia's military in counterterror operations, last week President Putin alleged that the Georgian leadership was cooperating with Chechen guerrillas and al-Qaeda terrorists in the gorge. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 19 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Georgia's stand has been supported by international observers who have visited the area.

While Putin and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze's war of words continued throughout the week, Russia reportedly moved numerous attack
planes and bombers to its main North Caucasus base (Mozdok) and intimated that it might take matters completely in its own hands. Russia's lower house of parliament has drafted a document confirming Moscow's right to "self-defense" and endorsed military strikes. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 19 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) President Bush has voiced his support for President Shevardnadze and warned Russia not to conduct military operations in Georgia, with what effect remains to be seen.

The former head of Georgian special services, and current (exiled) head of Georgia's political opposition, Igor Giorgadze, who has been implicated in attempts on Shevardnadze's life, endorsed the Russian accusations against Georgia from Moscow. He claimed that, if the Georgian security ministry were truly cooperating with the FSB, there would be no Pankisi problem, and that Georgian officials provided Chechen refugees with an opportunity to relocate to a safer location. (IZVESTIA, 6 Sep 02; What The Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) However, one must consider that Giorgadze is Shevardnadze's sworn enemy and currently resides in Russia (thanks to Moscow's refusal of Georgia's requests for his extradition). His allegations must be taken with a grain of salt, but, of course, provide Moscow officials with a supposedly "Georgian" endorsement of their claims.

In other news, the FSB has announced that Russian scientists are now targets for kidnapping and torture by terrorists seeking nuclear technologies. The reference was to the former chairman of the Department of Physical Chemistry at Krasnoyarsk State University, Professor Sergei Bakhvalov, who was abducted on 18 August and found dead 10 days later. Forensic experts reported that his body showed signs of extensive torture -- perhaps in an attempt to gain nuclear technology information from him, the FSB claimed. (ARGUMENTY I FAKTY, 20 Sep 02; What The Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Russian security services claim that Krasnoyarsk is replete with dual-use technologies
and that terrorist groups seeking nuclear, or near-nuclear, material could obtain it, if not by bribery then through intimidation, extortion and torture.

In a seemingly unrelated story, the FSB detained three men, also in Krasnoyarsk, for trying to sell more than six pounds of stolen gold. With this particular seizure, law enforcement officials report that more than 11 pounds of gold and silver (each) have been confiscated in the region alone.

It seems that any terrorist groups involved in these activities are taking needless risks. After all, Moscow is openly providing Islamic fundamentalist regimes, such as Iran, with nuclear technology, and these regimes have long supported international terrorists. Wouldn't it be more practical simply to wait for Moscow's new nuclear partners to hand over the finished product rather than to try and steal the technology and expertise piecemeal?

**Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch**

By Luba Schwartzman

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

*Charity begins at home*

On 11 September 2002, Russian anti-American sentiments surfaced. Many apparently resented the large amount of media time and space dedicated to the coverage of the tragedy in the US. Many griped that the coverage took attention away from Russia's own victims of terrorism -- over 300 persons who died in explosions (including two in Moscow on 8 and 13 September 1999, and one in Volgodonsk on 16 September).
State Duma deputies made a point of holding a moment of silence not for the victims of the terrorist attacks in America, but rather for "all who had died over the past summer" -- the victims of the flooding in southern Russia and of the automobile accident on 9 September 2002. (ORT, 9 and 11 Sep 02; via www.ortv.ru)

Sentiments in the parliament also were fueled by the discussions of opposition to the possible US military action against Iraq. The first deputy speaker of the Russian State Duma, Lyubov Sliska, told the lower house of parliament that she had received "special information" from the working group Duma-Congress that the American administration was leaning more and more toward the use of force against Baghdad. She noted that she is "against military actions in any country," [but not Chechnya?] and stressed that "information about terrorist number one Osama bin Laden reportedly hiding in Iraq does not give Americans the right to declare that state a rogue one." (ITAR-TASS, 1037 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection)

The Unity faction leader in the State Duma, Vladimir Pekhtin, suggested that the "September 11 attacks shattered the United States' illusions about its security," but "a military operation against Iraq won't restore that protection." He said that, a year after the tragedy, "it has become evident that not everyone has learned its lessons equally well," and that the United States is pursuing "a risky policy of unilateral steps in relation to Iraq." (INTERFAX, 0902 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection)

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

... Or in front of someone else's home

The National Bolsheviks went a few steps farther, of course. About 30 party members held a demonstration in front of the American ambassador's residence "in memory of the suicide pilots of the hijacked planes," to express their "solidarity with the 'rogue' countries" and advocate the formation of a coalition of
'rogue' states." The demonstrators flaunted red banners and posters reading "US - Enemy of Democracy!" and chanted phrases such as "Iraq Today, Russia Tomorrow!" and "New York Must be Ruined!". (INTERFAX, 1040 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection)

Certainly these individuals can be dismissed as extremists. But similar attitudes are already rooted in the minds of the next generation. According to the interior ministry, "some 10,000 Russians, mostly young people, are members of neo-Nazi groups." Skinheads and other "soccer fans," as they prefer to call themselves, regularly attack students, diplomats and traders from African and Asian countries, as well as from the Caucasus region, in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other Russian cities. The latest atrocity took place in St. Petersburg, where a 53-year-old Azerbaijani watermelon salesman was beaten to death by 30 skinheads. The police even seized a videotape made by the skinheads, and identified some who have been involved in previous racist attacks. (INTERFAX, 16 Sep 02; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis) But the police officers often sympathize with the youths, and little is done to punish or prevent future attacks.

President Putin's appeals to the prosecutor's office to "make active use of the mechanism of the law" under the recently passed law on fighting extremism, seems to fall on deaf ears -- or else the mechanism of the law itself cannot stand up to the metal bars used by the neo-Nazis. (ITAR-TASS, 1455 GMT, 17 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0917, via World News Connection)

To that end, a concept for a new state youth policy was unveiled on 11 September. The main principle of the concept is that the "young people do not fully understand the kind of world they live in" and need Putin to help them. Based on the model of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol), the new concept seeks to involve these youths as "an active force in society and a strategic resource for the state under the auspices of the president," and calls for
the establishment of a special presidential youth affairs council. (INTERFAX, 12 Sep 02; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis)

And yet, according to Novaya gazeta, some of these extremists are already getting orders from above. Aleksei Mitriushin, the head of the Moscow office of the strongly pro-Putin youth organization Moving Together, is also the head of the Beshnnye Zherebtsy (Crazy Stallions), one of the best organized skinhead groups. The members, too, overlap, according to Novaya gazeta -- half of the 50 Mad Stallions also belong to the Moving Together youth group. Reportedly they are well-funded, and given orders -- to sabotage an anti-globalist meeting, to get the point across to migrant workers, or to make life difficult for modern writers whose topics and language goes against their "morals." (NOVAYA GAZETA; 23 Sep 02; via www.novayagazeta.ru)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Ansel Stein

Coalition building
Capitalizing on the dissent emanating from many non-Western and some Western countries following the apparent likelihood of US military action against Iraq, Moscow has built its own international coalition of sorts. Russia has been able to call upon its Cold War-era relationships, and some newer allies, to coordinate opposition to American strategy in the Middle East. Arab reluctance to support American action has provided Russia with the opportunity to demonstrate its solidarity with the Arab world. In the days following President Bush's speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov met with the foreign ministers of the Arab states that were aligned with the Soviet Union: Libya, Syria, Egypt and, of course, Iraq. In addition he met with Amr Mousa, General Secretary of the Arab League (an outspoken critic of American Middle East policy), the foreign ministers of Jordan and Kuwait,
and representatives from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC -- members include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Oman). Each of these meetings produced a predictable call for a "diplomatic" settlement to the dispute between Iraq and the US.

On 13 September, US Undersecretary of State John Bolton, who was in Moscow to prepare for the first session of the Russian-American Consultation Group on Strategic Security (which took place on 20 September in Washington) shed light upon one of Russia's motives for taking this position. At his final news conference, Bolton responded to a question about Iraq by stating that "there will be no exchange of concessions with either Russia or other countries concerning the US stance on Iraq." (INTERFAX, 13 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0913, via World News Connection) Russia apparently had intimated that it might soften its opposition to American action in the Gulf in return for a free hand to "deal" with Georgia.

Another motivating factor for Russia is securing the $40 billion "program for economic cooperation" between itself and Iraq. In effect, Iraq will reward Russia for its diplomatic support if everything goes Iraq’s way. Moscow announced this week that it expects Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions will pave the way for signing the program. (INTERFAX, 14 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0914, via World News Connection) This would explain Russia's insistence on the quick deployment of UN inspectors. Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov announced that the first (43-member) group of UN inspectors would depart for Iraq as early as this week. Ivanov continued, "personally, I believe that one month will be enough for the inspectors to determine whether production of weapons of mass destruction exists in Iraq or not." (ITAR-TASS, 0633 GMT, 19 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0919, via World News Connection) There is general consensus among the former inspectors that attempting to ferret out in a month what previous inspectors failed to detect in years is absurd. A speedy, less-than-thorough inspection would guarantee essentially that the UN inspectors would
not find any of Iraq's well-hidden weapons. Russia's ideal scenario reads something like this: Failing to find the weapons they are looking for, the UN inspectors depart. The sanctions regime is then ended (the Security Counsel resolution will be sponsored by Russia). This clears the way for the signing of the economic arrangement and Russian domination of the Iraqi economy. This in turn extends Russia’s nouveau empire into the Middle East, along lines similar to its recent reestablishment in Armenia. What is more, America suffers a strategic defeat.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Steve Kwast and Dan Rozelle

The more things change, the more they stay the same
Moscow has officially started its journey to transform the armed forces. On 1 September, the experiment to transfer Russia's 76th Airborne Division to an all-contract service began. It constitutes a test case to see how much it will cost, and what hidden difficulties will be encountered, to transform the entire Russian military. Many smaller changes have taken place since the start of military reform. Line troops and various entities have been downsized, reorganized and renamed. Substantial money has been devoted to this cause, but it seems that all these supposed changes have achieved very little. There has been no overall improvement in the armed forces of the Russian Federation, while problems of military discipline have intensified from year to year. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 3 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0903, via World News Connection) Additionally, the events of the past few weeks highlight the fact that Moscow's goal of transforming the military may be good in theory, but very far from a reality.

President Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov both have a reasonable vision of what a vital and relevant military should be in the 21st century. They see military transformation as one of organization, training and culture, and understand that building up the respect and dignity of the military culture must be the first step. That is why they are spending in excess of 2.7 billion rubles on the
76th Airborne Division alone. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 16 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0816, via World News Connection) According to Colonel General Georgy Shpak, commander of airborne forces, construction has been aggressive since July to build new divisional housing developments, schools, a kindergarten, stores and a clubhouse. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 3 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0903, via World News Connection) These are the types of facilities that provide a sense of dignity and pride to persons serving their country. This is not cheap, however, and Moscow understands this. Last month the Russian defense ministry reported that spending in 2003 will increase 45.9% from this year. Of the additional 77 billion rubles to be spent next year, R47 billion are assigned for social spending (R27 billion on pensions, and R20 billion on increasing allowances for regular officers). (INTERFAX, 1630 GMT, 15 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0815, via World News Connection)

Money spent on quality-of-life infrastructure is useless, however, if the troops, and the military industrial complex, are not organized, trained and equipped to accomplish the mission. Putin seems to understand this point. In a recent visit to the Far East, he visited facilities and spoke of instilling a semblance of order to both the military and industry (his three themes: discipline, increasing salaries, and promoting the military as a proud "state institution"). It was no accident that Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov was by Putin's side without Chief of General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin: The rivalry between Kvashnin and Ivanov could have overshadowed the president's message. (VREMYA, 29 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0829, via World News Connection)

In addition to funding infrastructure and delivering policy speeches to the troops, Putin and Ivanov are rightly targeting training as a pivotal issue in the military's transformation. "It is impossible to accomplish this task without increasing the proportion of combat training," Ivanov said during his tour with Putin. (ITAR-TASS, 1210 GMT, 26 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0826, via World News Connection) In another speech, Ivanov stated, "I personally am very glad that our
armed forces are gradually going back to normal and do what they should be doing -- combat training." (ITAR-TASS, 1428 GMT, 24 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0824, via World News Connection) Moscow is showing a united front as it targets training and troop readiness. On 9 September, Kvashnin inspected the United Army Group units in the North Caucasus, checking the combat training and readiness of the units of the 42nd Motorized Division (deployed in Chechnya) and the 58th Army on the Russian-Georgian border. (ITAR-TASS, 1939 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection) The same types of inspection are taking place simultaneously throughout Russia. President Putin's special envoy, Dmitry Rogozin, recently visited the Kaliningrad region to analyze the state of the Baltic Fleet. (ITAR-TASS, 2143 GMT, 12 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0812, via World News Connection)

Despite such strategies, however, events in the last few weeks reflect the reality that nothing really changes in Russia. In the Volgograd region, 54 Russian soldiers deserted their post: Five had accused the division chief of staff, Maj. Shiryaev, of beating them, while the other 49 soldiers joined the deserters in a show of solidarity. (INTERFAX, 0953 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection) Desertions are routine in Russia's demoralized and under-funded 1.2 million-man army. A report in the weekly defense review of the Moscow newspaper Nezavisimaya gazeta in July quoted the defense ministry as saying that 2,270 servicemen deserted in the first half of this year. (THE WASHINGTON POST, 11 Sep 02) This type of desertion rate reflects a brutal army culture.

In addition, corruption and low morale still haunt the services at all levels. Just last month, Lieutenant Colonel I. Rachkov, a department chief at Tula's Proletarsky Rayon Military Commissariat, was caught red-handed receiving a bribe. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0820, via World News Connection) Experience shows that for each case reported, hundreds go unreported. The fact that Moscow only goes after "small fish," such as Lt. Col.
Rachkov, illustrates part of the dilemma. If the reformers went after the top ranks, the whole organization would collapse because it is a system that relies on some corruption to run. Rachkov represents an example Moscow can point out to show how serious it is about cracking down on corruption.

Morale is critically low, too. In Chechnya, officers are grumbling that Moscow is depriving them of numerous benefits. This is causing significant dissatisfaction in the ranks. Many are not happy with the course of the reforms, and discipline among the troops is disgracefully weak. There is no new equipment and there are no replacements on the horizon. Troops look at Putin's initiative to increase monetary allowances by 11-percent in January 2003 as a joke. With a 12-percent annual inflation rate, they are still going backward. (VREMNYA, 29 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0829, via World News Connection)

However, the bad news is not limited to the "usual suspects." Recently, word came that 20,000 former Soviet officers, who settled in Kaliningrad Region after the pullout from the Baltic states, can't obtain Russian citizenship. The new Russian law on citizenship does not recognize the validity of identification papers issued by military authorities. (MAYAK RADIO, 1100 GMT, 2 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-202-0902, via World News Connection) This falls into the category of "actions speak louder than words." The military rank and file looks at this apparent lack of respect for retired soldiers as an indicator of how they are valued by the country's leaders. To add insult to injury, Moscow announced that it would re-institute the system of "political officers" assigned to each major military unit. This puts the Russian military back 60 years to the days when Stalin used Political Commissars to control and coerce the military. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 9 Sep 02) These recent events breed fear, mistrust and disdain among the men and women in uniform, illustrating that the more things change, the more they don't. They are also inconsistent with any attempt by Moscow to update its military.
If Putin really wants to reform the military, he needs to start by changing Russian social norms of behavior. As long as corruption is accepted in society, there will be corruption in the military. As long as brutality is accepted in society, it will exist in the military too. And if Putin wants to return dignity and respect to the military, he has to establish policies that show that respect. He has to pay troops an honest wage, keep faith with promised retirements and provide the requisite equipment, facilities and training. Additionally, Putin needs to make some hard decisions about what units and facilities to cut. If he extrapolates the 2.7 billion rubles spent on the 76th Airborne Division to his whole military, he will go broke before he is halfway along any type of transformation.

The symbolic kickoff of Russia's military transformation may have taken place with the 76th Airborne Division test, but the grim reality of an oversized Russian military has not changed. Putin must attack the root causes of these problems and build trust with the military or he will break the Russian bank trying to transform a military that will be incapable of change.

**Into the arms of NATO**
Russia continues to do itself no favors with regard to NATO expansion. The continued threats by Russia to conduct military action in pursuit of alleged Chechen rebels in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge have yielded a not-unexpected result. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Sep 02) The growing tensions in Russo-Georgian relations are "pushing Georgia into joining NATO, which could provide for its security," according to Irakly Batashvili, chairman of Georgia's parliamentary committee on defense and national security. In fact, on 13 September, the Georgian parliament passed a resolution authorizing the process to join NATO. (INTERFAX 1319 GMT, 14 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0914, via World News Connection) While Georgia's interest in joining the alliance it not new, recent Russian aggression has caused Tbilisi to crank up the volume. President Shevardnadze has said that Georgia would announce its desire to join
NATO at the upcoming NATO summit in Prague. (INTERFAX, 1630 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection)

Russian criticism of the announcement was almost immediate. Colonel General Yuri Baluevsky, first deputy chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, denied plans to invade Georgia but stated that Russia is prepared to "offer assistance" in neutralizing the "terrorist bases" in the Pankisi Gorge. And, on Georgia's desire to join NATO, he felt that "the Georgian military is unlikely to be able to meet NATO military and technological requirements... but the political element will be given priority while reviewing Georgia's application...." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 17 Sep 02)

**Russian Navy update: Out with the old...**

Russia continues to struggle with the decommissioning of its nuclear submarine fleet. The country's difficulties were openly admitted at the recent Ekoflot 2002 international conference on nuclear security in Vladivostok. The conference, held by the Russian Ministry for Atomic Energy (Minatom), included participants from the Russian defense ministry, the Russian Academy of Science and specialists from a number of countries including the United States, Britain and Japan. (ITAR-TASS, 1058 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection)

Russia's aging fleet of navy ships and tons of spent nuclear fuel constitute a significant ecological and nuclear security issue. The concern was clearly evident in the warning made at the conference by Viktor Akhunov, head of Minatom's department of ecology and decommissioning. Speaking on the condition of ships along it eastern and arctic coasts, he stated that only 71 of 190 decommissioned submarines have had their fuel removed and that two reactors already have leaked. This leaves the remaining vessels docked and corroding, and in danger of sinking (two already did in 1997 and 1999). At present, Russia has allocated $70 million toward improving nuclear security by decommissioning and scrapping
its nuclear submarines. However, Mr. Akhunov estimated that nearly $4 billion would be needed to achieve the scrapping of 131 submarines by 2010. (THE GUARDIAN, 18 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis)

This cost estimate coincides with a meeting between US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and his Russian counterpart. The Russians clearly hope to convince the United States to foot this particular bill. In fact, the United States has provided almost $5 billion in the last 10 years toward nuclear disarmament under the Joint Threat Reduction (Nunn-Lugar) Program and has promised another $10 billion at the most recent G-8 summit. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 30 Aug 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) However, the Russian claim (and possible ploy for more money) is that US financing is directed more towards decommissioning the modern and militarily dangerous submarines and less toward older vessels.

The decommissioning and eventual scrapping of the submarines is only part of a potentially much larger problem. Lacking adequate facilities (and perhaps capabilities), the Russians have been storing the spent nuclear fuel from the submarines on an aging fleet of tankers that is well beyond its useful life span. This fact, coupled with the admission that security around the nuclear material is all but absent, raises even more questions about an already suspect Russian nuclear program. (THE GUARDIAN, 18 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis)

... In with the new

Has the Russian Navy finally overcome the Kursk tragedy? President Putin would like the Navy to believe so. In remarks last month during a visit to the Pacific Fleet, he admitted that the Navy's share of Russia's defense budget has been too small and indicated that an increase will be considered. Of keen importance to the Navy, of course, is construction of new ships. (NEZAVISIMOE VOENNOE OBOZRENIYE, 6 Sep 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)
According to Navy Commander Vladimir Kuroedov, the Russian Navy will have no more than 60 ships by 2015 if current funding levels do not improve. This is in contrast to the Navy's desires to have 12-15 strategic, 50 nuclear and 35 diesel submarines along with 50 surface combatants. This may be difficult to achieve. Current funding levels for the Navy are at 11-12% of total defense spending, which covers only about 5% of the total shipbuilding costs. (MOSKOVSKY KOMSOMOLETS, 29 Aug 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Even with forecast increases in the Navy's funding by up to 80%, the branch will be hardpressed to complete 4-5 submarines and 3-4 surface ships each year needed to meet this goal, especially when one considers, as Commander Kuroedov says, that the Navy must have 25% of the real cost for the construction of the new ships. (NEZAVISIMOE VOENNOE OBOZRENIYE, 6 Sep 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) At present ship construction is being financed at only 3-5% of actual costs. This makes construction almost pointless since the ships will be outdated by the time they are completed. In the end it will be up to President Putin to deliver on his promises. Given the economic realities, it will be difficult.

Coincidence?
A joint Russian and NATO exercise called "Bogorodsk 2002 scenario" will be held this month outside of Moscow. The exercise, as described by a NATO official, will include a terrorist act that occurs at a chemical facility. (ITAR-TASS, 16 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis) Approximately 850 individuals from over 30 countries will participate in activities including deployment, evacuations, victim recovery and air reconnaissance. The key goal of the exercise is to test the preparedness of Russia's emergencies ministry and of NATO's Civil Emergency Planning Directorate for the announced terrorist scenario. (ITAR-TASS, 0736 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection)
The Presidential Administration's Control Department recently announced that Russia is four years behind the internationally approved schedule for destroying chemical weapons. Designed to destroy 400 tons of chemical weapons by 2000 and 8,000 tons by 2002, the program so far has done little more than pay the salaries of Russian ammunition agency officials. Funding over the last five years has amounted only to 4.7% of that initially planned. (IZVESTIA, 18 Sep 02; via lexis nexis)

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Nadja Kinsky

UKRAINE
Yushchenko - a cog in the opposition's machine, or a spanner in the works?
While clear lines are being drawn in Ukraine between opposition and pro-presidential forces, there still is one person apparently undecided as to which side he's going to take -- and he just happens to be a key player, former Prime Minister Victor Yushchenko.

Three opposition groups -- the Yulya Tymoshenko Bloc, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party -- called for protests against President Leonid Kuchma to be held on the second anniversary of the disappearance of journalist Georgiy Gongadze on 16 September. While not completely rejecting participation in this protest action, Yushchenko nevertheless kept himself aloof, organizing a forum "For the Democratic Development of Ukraine" on 15 September at which he proposed a five-step plan to solve the "deepest political crisis in which Ukraine has been since independence." The first of these five steps, forming a parliamentary majority, was initiated the same day, when a declaration on forming a parliamentary majority was signed by Yushchenko and the leaders of
four government parties (The Entrepreneurs-Working Ukraine, Democratic Initiatives, Popular Democratic Party and Agricultural Ukraine). Yushchenko explained that the problem with Ukraine's government was systemic and warned that "overly personifying Ukraine's problems" would constitute an easy but inefficient solution. (RADIO KONTINENT, 18 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) To be sure, Yushchenko's stated desire to "find a democratic solution" is an admirable goal, however, at the same time he may be undermining the progress of the opposition through his indecision. The next four steps -- forming a coalition cabinet, signing a trilateral accord between president, parliament and government on joint actions, abolishing censorship and establishing a dialogue between the authorities and society -- still seem a way off.

The issues of censorship and obstruction of opposition parties came to the fore again during the runup to the 16 September protests. In Kyiv, the protests were actually outlawed in advance by decree, in Kharkov an entertainment stage was erected to block the square in which the protests were to take place, and, on her way to the protests, Yulya Tymoshenko found her plane being stopped from takeoff for dubious reasons. Media coverage before, during and after the protests was heavily criticized by the opposition, as was to be expected. The Ukraine media ethics commission on 18 September noted the pro-government bias of reports on the protests. (UNIAN, 18 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Moreover, Mykola Tomenko, chairman of the parliamentary freedom of speech committee, marked his concerns about "the obvious manifestations of state censorship." (UNIAN, 17 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) During the same week, though, the prosecutor-general publicly admitted for the first time that the murder of Georgiy Gongadze was "politically motivated." In addition, Olena Prytula, the editor of Ukrainska Pravda, which used to be Gongadze's publication, was granted protection after she voiced concerns for her safety.
When the day came, Yushchenko did decide to take part in the "Rise Up, Ukraine!" protests and led a group of his supporters to Independence Square in Kyiv, where he joined the other three opposition leaders. The four signed a very strongly worded declaration demanding the immediate abdication of the president and early elections. (For its complete text, see www.ukrpravda.com) The opposition proceeded to construct a tent city near the presidential administration with the aim of presenting its declaration to President Kuchma when he returned from Salzburg. The reaction of the authorities was foreseeable: The tent city was raided during the early hours of 17 September and 64 persons were detained -- some were held on charges concerning weapons allegedly found in one of the tents. They have since been released upon the insistence of the prosecutor-general.

Back in Kyiv, on 18 September Kuchma refused to meet with the protesters. Yushchenko denounced the raids: "No government can act like this if it really seeks a compromise with its own people," he said. Nevertheless, he softened his stance once more, stating that he had no plans to take part in the follow-up opposition rally Yulya Tymoshenko called for on 24 September.

On 23 September, the three opposition leaders seized the Ukraine TV news studio, demanding 10 minutes of airtime in order to "refute all the lies spread about the events of 16 September," according to Yulya Tymoshenko. (UKRINSKA PRAVDA website, 23 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) After negotiations with the president of the Ukrainian National Television Company, Igor Storozhuk, the protesters left the studio with a promise for airtime the next day, having caused that evening's news bulletin to be cancelled due to the occupation.

With rallies continuing and growing across the country over the weekend, on Tuesday, 24 September, the opposition moved from its previous seizure of the TV station to the presidential office building. By the afternoon, supporters
announced a hunger strike to be continued until President Kuchma was willing to talk with them and accept the resolution. Kuchma agreed to meet on 25 September with the leaders of the three opposition factions -- Tymoshenko, Petro Symonenko and Oleksandr Moroz -- but not the MPs who are in the presidential building with them and also on hunger strike. (ITAR-TASS, 25 Sep 02; via nexis-lexis) Riot police arrived late on Tuesday night to ensure that those deputies left the building. (UNIAN, 24 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Yushchenko withdrew his support from the resolution demanding Kuchma's resignation in the morning hours, but affirmed that he and his Our Ukraine faction favored the presidential impeachment in parliament. To start impeachment proceedings, 226 votes are needed in favor; however, two-thirds of the seats (301) are needed to actually effect an impeachment (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 24 Sep 02; via nexis-lexis). This gives considerable weight to Yushchenko's decision, but not enough since the nine pro-presidential parties are united in their condemnation of the opposition's moves. (INTER TV, 24 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Moreover, Kuchma declared he would not resign, following his meeting on 25 September with the opposition, so he political opponents are at an impasse.

Yushchenko's acts of commission and omission have seriously weakened the opposition to Kuchma. While he did speak out against the president during the opposition forum, his strongest statements were carefully worded to imply that the system (not the president) was at fault - and was "inefficient, nontransparent, unstable and gravitates toward dictatorship." By providing another option to Kuchma with his plans to form a coalition, Yushchenko may be strengthening Kuchma's position. Now the president can pose as being "ready for dialogue," while simultaneously ignoring the opposition's attempts to establish such dialogue.

Indecision on the part of the most important figure in the Ukrainian opposition is not new. However, recent events indicate that Kuchma is less in control of the
situation than he would have liked to be, with 50,000 protesters in Kyiv despite his ban and four parties of his supporters defecting to form a potential parliamentary majority with Yushchenko's Our Ukraine. It remains to be seen what the outcome will be and whether the crisis that began two years ago with the disappearance of Gongadze may finally reach its culmination. While Yushchenko's plan of a transformation initiated from within the parliament may make sense in terms of longer-term planning, it also runs the danger of hampering essential immediate change, and thus weakening the chances of his own plan's eventual fruition.

Moreover, the Ukrainian situation internationally is no calmer than the domestic scene. Following allegations of Ukrainian arms sales to Iraq, the US froze aid to Ukraine, spurring a financial counterpart to the political crisis. Yushchenko is attempting to have a calming influence, stating that "no emotions, but common sense should rule." (UNIAN, 24 Sep 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) How much calm, however, will a lone voice in the storm be able to yield?

BELARUS

Speedy 'justice': journalist tried and sentenced in less than a week

The week of the anniversary of Alyaksandr Lukashenka's second term in office also was the week of another anniversary. Viktor Ivaneshkevich, editor of the newspaper Rabochy, was charged with libel against the Belarusian leader a year ago, after publishing an article titled "A Thief's Place is in Prison" in the run-up to the 2001 presidential elections. The article reported corruption among the president's circle. The hearing against Ivaneshkevich resumed on 11 September, although the judge immediately closed the proceedings to the public and the media.

On 16 September, the verdict was announced: two years "limited custody" plus forced labor for "attempted libel and insulting the chief of state" (INTERFAX, 16
Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection) -- one year less than the prosecution had demanded, and three years short of the maximum possible sentence. The verdict follows two recent similar sentences on Nikolai Markevich and Pavel Mozheiko of the newspaper Pagyona.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) is campaigning for the abolition of articles 367, 368 and 369 of the penal code, which allow for such sentences and threaten freedom of the press. The BAJ has the support of Reporters Without Borders (RSF). After the verdict, RSF Secretary-General Robert Ménard reiterated his organization's demand for the abolition of those articles and for a stronger stance by the Council of Europe on the condition of the press in Belarus. The verdict, Ménard said, "smacks of what we thought was a bygone era, when anyone who made the slightest criticism of the authorities ended up in the Gulag." (REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, www.rsf.org)

MOLDOVA
Speaking in tongues
Sometimes it seems that events failing to happen are more interesting that those that do occur. While Moldova was busy with the visit of two OSCE rapporteurs, with discussions on meeting Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) requirements, and with a new round of secret talks concerning relations with Transdnestr, Moldovan Justice Minister Ion Morei made a startling statement -- all the more so because of the reaction it failed to arouse.
"Romanian and Moldovan are not two different languages," he said in a recent newspaper interview. (MOLDOVA SUVERNA, 10 Sep 02; via Transitions Online)

Not only the statement itself, but the speaker -- an official of a government that has steadily taken a pro-Moscow line and repeatedly asserted the difference between Romania's and Moldova's language and history -- seems to represent a surprising turnaround, especially given recent events. The prime minister and the president of Moldova ignored "Language Day" at the beginning of the month.
despite the status the celebration has as a national holiday. There is increasing controversy over Russian Broadcasting Services being favored over Romanian-language options. Moreover, the beginning of the school year on 2 September came amid controversy over compulsory Russian-language lessons and new history books.

Yet Ion Morei’s statements, including a call to change the wording of official documents from references to the term "Moldovan language" to "Romanian language," have come and gone seemingly without reaction. It seems unlikely that this was a mere personal opinion expressed without reflection during an interview. The question that remains is what -- if anything -- is to follow this statement: Was this supposed to test the waters, or is it, as Iurie Rosca of the opposition Popular Christian Democratic Party suggested, a sign of a forthcoming split within the Moldovan Communist Party?

**Newly Independent States: Caucasus**

By Miriam Lanskoy

**GEORGIA**

**What do the Russians want from Georgia?**

By mounting ever-greater pressure on Georgia, Russian politicians seem to be pursuing two goals -- to remove Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze and to deflect attention from Russia's failures in the Chechen war. Tasked by Putin to develop strategies for a strike against the Pankisi Gorge, the General Staff is airing scenarios for an outright occupation of all of Georgia.

Georgia has met Russia's less unreasonable demands to impose control over the Pankisi Gorge by stationing MVD and military checkpoints throughout the area. Since the start of the operation earlier this month, Georgian power structures have arrested an Arab mercenary and a dozen other suspected criminals.
Georgia has invited international (including Russian) monitors to inspect any part of Georgian territory where purported Chechen fighters or al-Qaeda terrorists are alleged to be based. (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 18 Sep 02) Hence, Russia's security goals have been met, but its political ambitions remain insatiable.

The weekly Kommersant Vlast comments that "Moscow has let it be known that while Shevardnadze is in power in Tbilisi, relations with Russia cannot improve.... Politicians who are close to him [Putin] express publicly what the head of state cannot say himself." Vlast cites an interview with Dmitri Rogozin, the president's special representative for the Kaliningrad region and chairman of the Duma's foreign relations committee, in which Rogozin "clearly stated that Russia can help Georgia rid itself of Shevardnadze if Georgia wishes this." (KOMMERSANT-VLAST, 16-22 Sep 02, carried several analytical articles about the crisis and an interview with Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov. The newspaper cited Rogozin's interview with a Spanish newspaper not further identified.)

However, two months into the current standoff, Russia still has not found a remotely palatable Georgian client. As candidates for possible pro-Russian puppets, Kommersant Vlast names Igor Giorgadze, the KGB chief who fled to Russia following his failed coup attempt in 1995 (see the previous issue of THE NIS OBSERVED); Dzhumber Patiashvili, the Communist Party boss who presided over the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989 (the event which sparked Georgia's drive for independence); Vazha Lordkipanidze, a notoriously corrupt former prime minister and political has-been; and Aslan Abashidze, the president of the Adjar Autonomous Republic who asserts his independence against Tbilisi mainly with the help of the Russian base on Adjar territory.

The daily diet of hawkish warnings, demands and ultimata from Russia's president, defense minister and foreign policy establishment has united the mainstream Georgian political elite against Russia. According to Vlast, all the
popular candidates who may replace Shevardnadze when his term runs out in two years -- Avtandil Dzhorbenadze, the prime minister; Zurab Zhvania, the former prime minister; and Mikhail Saakashvili, the former justice minister -- are solidly pro-Western.

Hence it seems increasingly unlikely that Russian pressure will produce a coup d'etat in Georgia. But the threats have not subsided. They include Putin's 11 September ultimatum that threatened unilateral intervention in Georgia. In a highly emotional press conference on 17 September, a seemingly angry Putin reiterated the threat, claiming that "Georgian authorities ... are cooperating with terrorists." (ORT, 17 Sep 02) Speaking to Vlast, the defense minister, Sergei Ivanov, reiterated the president's 11 September statement, that Russia does not need to obtain a UN Security Council resolution to hit suspected Chechen bases in Georgia unless Georgia takes "extraordinary steps to block or destroy terrorists." In fact, Georgia took such measures even before the minister gave the interview.

Russia's other goal in Georgia is to deflect attention from Moscow's political and military mistakes in Chechnya. The Russian Security Council is supposed to consider competing strategies for the Chechen campaign at its next session on 24 September. The sound and fury over Pankisi Gorge may be part of the jockeying in the runup to this meeting.

The war in Chechnya has entered its third year and victory remains remote. On 21 September polit.ru reported that Chechens had seized two television stations (in Nadterechnyi rayon and in Sumashki) and transmitted broadcasts. This means that the fighters are active in the northern and flat part of Chechnya -- they were supposed to have been chased into the mountains. These attacks come on the heels of two helicopters downed -- one of them a stone's throw from the main Russian military base at Khankala. For the Russian military, the most
convenient excuse for these failures is to point the finger at Eduard Shevardnadze.

In two conversations with former President Boris Yeltsin in August and October 1999, Shevardnadze refused to allow troops from Russian bases to traverse Georgia to open a second front against Chechnya from Georgian territory. Had Shevardnadze granted this request, his country would have been plunged into war. But now Russian generals point to the relative handful of fighters who entered Georgia's Pankisi Gorge with the Chechen civilian refugees in 1999 as the source of all evil. By the highest official estimates there are some 500 fighters among a population of 4,000 to 5,000 refugees. (Pavel Felgenhauer, a highly regarded independent analyst, estimates that there are some 40-50 hard-core "jihadists." See MOSCOW TIMES, 20 Sep 02.) If one were to believe Putin and his generals, these few Chechens are responsible for everything from sponsoring the Chechen resistance to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and to the explosions in Russian cities in 1999.

Felgenhauer argues that the Russian military can't mount an operation in Pankisi for technical reasons. The best troops are tied up in Chechnya; the terrain is nearly impassable at any time of year and soon will be covered in snow; landing troops by helicopter is risky and impractical; and bombing from a high altitude is unlikely to hit the fighters. (MOSCOW TIMES, 20 Sep 02)

For these reasons, the General Staff is considering activating Russian bases in Georgia. Nezavisimaya voennoye obozreniye outlined on 20 September several schemes for an attack on Pankisi which were presented to Putin by the General Staff. The plans presume that, beside Chechen militants, Russian forces "will confront Georgian power structures." They envisage "squeezing fighters out of southern Chechnya into Pankisi," subsequent high-altitude bombardment, and the deployment of additional Russian forces to Russian bases in Georgia to bolster the 15,000 soldiers already deployed there. "Then having smashed the
bandit groups and their bases in Pankisi Gorge, they [Russian forces] may enter the rest of Georgia 'on the tails of the retreating enemy' and from there dictate the terms of the continued existence of this Caucasian country as a subject of international law."

The general staff, under its chairman Anatoly Kvashnin, was the leading proponent of total war against Chechnya in the fall of 1999. Now it looks as though the General Staff wants to initiate a further adventure in Georgia.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By David Montgomery

Shifting Partnerships: Kyrgyzstan - Russia and Kazakhstan - Uzbekistan
As the Central Asian republics were creating their post-Soviet identities, the post-11 September presence of allied forces and consequent shift of priorities has brought about a political transformation and additional cooperative agreements. These include the developed partnerships of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization, wherein the regional powers have emphasized trade relations and cooperation in fighting potentially destabilizing forces, as well as the acceptance of Western forces in pursuit of the Afghanistan campaign. While Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan host the largest presence of US troops, with camps along the Afghan-Uzbek border and air strips in Kyrgyzstan, the intensity of these new relationships has deepened global awareness of Central Asia as a region and is leading to further development of interesting alliances. Of late, Kyrgyzstan and Russia have increased cooperation on all levels, while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have improved relations that are beginning to reflect signs of pan-Turkism.

Kyrgyzstan and Russia: common renewal
As US military actions against Afghanistan continue to be based in Central Asia and there are indications that the fight against terrorism may expand northward, Russia tries to strengthen its regional influence. For some time since independence, Russian influence on Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has been minimal. Russia's role in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan has been more manifest (given the presence of six million ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan and Russian troops posted along the Afghan-Tajik border), while the past few weeks have shown a strengthening of Russian-Kyrgyz relations.

With 400 French troops scheduled to leave Kyrgyzstan early in October and the long-term concern regarding the presence of Islamic radicals in the region persisting, Russia clearly intends to prevent growing US influence and to assert hegemony should a power vacuum be created upon the eventual withdrawal of allied forces. (INTERFAX, 1105 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection, and EURASIANET, 19 Sep 02; via www.eurasianet.org) Though officially there is Russian support for US and Western activities in the region, rumblings over their presence have started to surface. Commenting on this, Col. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, vice president of the Academy for Geopolitical Problems, stated that "Russia is being gradually pushed out of Central Asia, which has always been the area of our country's interests." (INTERFAX, 1147 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection) And while Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev was quick to welcome Western interest in his country, he is seeking also to deepen relations with Russia.

Economically, the extent of these deepened relations includes: a recent energy agreement, trade initiatives, agricultural assistance, and the increase of arms trade between the two countries. Russia is one of the largest foreign investors in Kyrgyzstan and negotiations between the two countries are aimed at creating symbiosis between the two economies. They have reached a preliminary agreement for Kyrgyzstan to export to Russia two billion-kilowatt hours of
electricity annually. This is the first time Kyrgyzstan will have exported energy to Russia and the negotiations have dealt with joint construction and operation of hydroelectric plants in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the delivery of Russian agricultural equipment (combines and tractors), and the delivery of Kyrgyz cotton and tobacco to Russia. (INTERFAX, 1445 GMT, 13 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0913, via World News Connection)

Over the last six months, trade between Kyrgyzstan and Russia has increased 30 percent. (ITAR-TASS, 1635 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection) In addition to developments in the energy and agriculture sectors, cooperation is expanding in law enforcement and development of weapons. The Russian Federal Security Service has assisted the Kyrgyz secret service in investigating the 6 September grenade attack on Misir Ashirkulov, secretary of the Kyrgyz Security Council, and over the past two weeks comments from Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov, as well as Kyrgyz Defense Minister Esen Topoev, have attested to the priority of military connections with Russia. (ITAR-TASS, 1359 GMT, 13 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0913, ITAR-TASS, 0954 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, and INTERFAX, 1118 GMT, 10 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0910, via World News Connection) In a meeting with Akaev, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized military cooperation between the two countries, commenting that "naval-technical cooperation has picked up" and encouraging an increase in arms trade between the two countries. (ITAR-TASS, 1314 GMT, 9 Sep 02, and INTERFAX, 1238 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection) (Although Kyrgyzstan is land-locked, it produced naval hardware during the Soviet period and it was at Lake Issyk-Kul that the Soviet Navy did the bulk of its submarine and torpedo testing.)

Politically, Kyrgyzstan has been careful to demonstrate the priority accorded to relations with Moscow. Thus, Akaev met with Putin (9 September) prior to meeting with US President Bush (23 September). Speaking from Sochi, Russia,
Akaev emphasized the symbolic timing of the two meetings: "It's very important to receive advice from Russia as [our] main strategic ally and partner."

(INTERFAX, 1538 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection)

Historically, Kyrgyzstan received more from the Soviet Union than it contributed, since it is relatively poor with undeveloped natural resources that are difficult to access. Recent rumblings of public discontent, including large protest demonstrations, have threatened domestic stability. Moscow's interests include keeping radical Islamists at arm's length from Russia's borders. Thus, Putin is planning to visit Kyrgyzstan again sometime before the end of the year. (ITAR-TASS, 1624 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection)

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: a greater Turkestan

Uzbekistan has been in the forefront of countries seeking distance from Russia. In part, the change of the Uzbek alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin letters emphasized Uzbekistan's non-Russian identity. Over the past year, Uzbekistan has made significant advances in its warm cooperative relations with the US. Just last week, President Bush praised Uzbek President Islam Karimov and expressed his satisfaction with the development of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. (INTERFAX, 0750 GMT, 19 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0919, via World News Connection)

Significantly, Kazakhstan, with a sizeable ethnic Russian population in the northern part of the country, has taken meaningful steps toward improving relations with Uzbekistan. On 9 September 2002, Presidents Nursultan Nazarbaev and Karimov formalized the delimitation of the Kazakh-Uzbek border - - which had constituted a point of friction, occasionally interrupting the flow of goods and people between the two countries -- and agreed on implementing the 31 October 1998 Eternal Friendship Treaty between the two countries. (INTERFAX, 0900 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection)
What is more, Nazarbaev implied pan-Turkic sentiments by suggesting an eventual unification of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. (ITAR-TASS, 1145 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection) While linguistic and cultural ties would more clearly favor unification between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan than with Uzbekistan (in more remote regions of the former Soviet Union, individuals often refer to the Kyrgyz as Kazakhs), any move toward the creation of a Turkestan (significantly through the unification of Central Asia's two strongest military powers) would indicate a shift away from Russian hegemony. Thus, the developing of Kyrgyz-Russian relations, as opposed to Kazakh-Uzbek relations, may indicate a potential geopolitical crevice in Central Asia.

**Newly Independent States: Baltic States**

*By Michael Varuolo*

**Latvia and Lithuania return fire**

As the Prague summit for NATO enlargement approaches, Russia is assuming a more aggressive posture towards the Baltic states. Despite the seeming Russian-NATO rapprochement -- which led to new cooperation agreements -- Russia continues to object to Baltic entry into the alliance. In an attempt to hamper the chances of a NATO invitation to the Baltic states, Moscow has attempted to exploit the Kaliningrad transit issue as a Russian "grievance."

Specifically, Russia continues to make demands of Lithuania concerning free-transit rights for the Russian citizens to the Kaliningrad Oblast', to accuse Latvia of building a NATO radar site aimed at signals intelligence collection in Russia, and to assert that all three Baltic states are preparing for the deployment of NATO nuclear weapons within their territories. Of all these and numerous other accusations and complaints, only the Kaliningrad issue has gathered any international support. Russia has been successful in avoiding negotiations of the
issue with the party concerned -- the Lithuanian government -- and instead has persuaded the EU that the issue is between Russia and the EU, not Russia and Lithuania.

Negotiations on the issue of Kaliningrad transit are scheduled to commence again on 30 September in Brussels. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 17 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0918, via World News Connection) According to Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's ambassador for Kaliningrad issues, Moscow is optimistic about the chances for a positive solution to the transit problem. He claims that the EU is receptive to the new Russian proposal on Kaliningrad because Moscow has abandoned its demand for a special transit corridor. Instead, Rogozin claimed, Russia had proposed a new "transparent international transit" system of trains and buses which could be subject to police control. (PAP, 17 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0917, via World News Connection) Should this "compromise" solution be accepted at the upcoming Brussels meeting, Russia would have been able to marginalize Lithuanian input into the negotiations and to impose Russia political objectives upon Lithuania.

However, the Baltic states have not resigned themselves to passive acceptance of Russian interference. On the contrary, rather than assuming a subservient position, they have formed a front with one another as well as with other governments that support the Baltic states in their efforts to re-integrate themselves into Europe.

Following repeated unfounded assertions by Russian officials, Latvia and Lithuania launched a united campaign to rebut claims concerning the putative deployment of nuclear weapons on Baltic territory. Latvian Minister of Defense Girts Valdis Kristovskis began the process by stating that the deployment of nuclear weapons was not under discussion. "If Russia had only once discussed this issue with Latvia's Defense Ministry or Defense Minister, it would not have had to spread this information," he said. (BNS, 1206 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-
Kristovskis was supported later in the day by Prime Minister Andris Berzins, who questioned the motives behind the Russian assertions. "It is provocation, an intentional wish to influence the pre-election situation [in Latvia], to create fear and panic among the people," he said. (BNS, 1510 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection) Almost simultaneously, Linas Linkevicius, the Lithuanian defense minister, refuted the Russian accusations. He hinted at a long-held Baltic belief, stating "We might have similar fears about Russia's nuclear weapons deployed in the Kaliningrad region." (BNS, 1657 GMT, 16 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0916, via World News Connection)

Kristovskis' comments marked the second time in six days that the Latvian defense minister had publicly dismissed Russian claims and accused Moscow of trying to meddle in Latvia's affairs. On 11 September, Kristovskis addressed Russian concerns about a radar station, which is planned for construction in the eastern part of Latvia. He called the allegations concerning the radar's signals collection abilities "absurd" and "groundless." (BNS, 1559 GMT, 11 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0911, via World News Connection)

Support for Latvia's and Lithuania's willingness to take a strong stand in refuting Russian claims also has been apparent. Denmark's defense minister, Svend Aage Jensby, met with Latvian representatives and reaffirmed his country's commitment to support Latvia on a variety of defense-related issues. (LETA, 1022 GMT, 18 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0918, via World News Connection) Lithuania, meanwhile, was supported by Poland, which established a permanent Lithuanian liaison office within the NATO Unit Headquarters located in Szczecin. (PAP, 1520 GMT, 18 Sep 02; FBIS-EEU-2002-0918, via World News Connection) Additionally, Poland agreed to aid Lithuania in its attempt to integrate its Baltic air-observation capabilities with NATO assets. (BNS, 1425 GMT, 9 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0909, via World News Connection)
The Baltic states also received a significant political boost from Brussels, when an anonymous source from NATO headquarters informed the press that at least four countries have been given the green light for the next round of enlargement, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania comprising three of those states. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 1509 GMT, 18 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0918, via World News Connection) This report was welcome news for all three Baltic capitals, indicating a fresh vote of confidence from an international community that may be finding its political voice once again.