Policy coordination initiative

Last week President Vladimir Putin called for the creation of a Russian Center for International Scientific and Cultural Cooperation under the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (ITAR-TASS, 6 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0206, via World News Connection) When translated from politics-speak, the proposed center's goal essentially is to enhance the coordination of a single foreign policy under the foreign ministry. At first glance this would seem to be the case already; after all, in regard to foreign policy, what seems more suitable than the foreign ministry? However, a review of recent foreign initiatives indicates that Putin's foreign policy decisions are divided among various organs, including Vladimir Rushailo's Security Council, Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov's own branch, Sergei Ivanov's defense ministry and finally, Igor Ivanov's foreign ministry. For instance, in regard to recent discussions surrounding Russian "peacekeeping" forces in Georgia, Defense Minister Ivanov briefed President Putin on the current situation and "whether the mandate of the peacekeeping forces is to be extended." Moreover, on the previous day, Security Council Secretary Rushailo had been holding discussions with the Georgian leadership while in Tbilisi.

Additionally, Russian PM Kasyanov spoke recently in America on international security as well as "the question of re-establishing the Russian-American intergovernmental commission for trade, economic and technological cooperation." (INTERFAX, 31 Jan 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0131, via World News Connection)
The indication that Putin is taking steps to consolidate the policy-making apparatus constitutes a potentially significant development, as far as the "players" in the policy arena are concerned. Thus, the presidential press service noted that the center's focus will be on "enhancing the coordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in implementing the single state foreign policy, as well as developing economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign states." (ITAR-TASS, 6 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0206, via World News Connection)

One should note the absence of military affairs in the list of subjects in which the foreign ministry should enhance cooperation between Russia and foreign states. Apparently, enhancement of Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's role is not to come at the expense of Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov's influence. The same cannot be said for Kasyanov, Rushailo and others who operate outside the foreign ministry. This falls in line also with the many rumors surrounding Kasyanov's and Rushailo's future prospects and General Prosecutor Vladimir Ustinov's investigation of their close aides. Kasyanov and Rushailo still maintain a good deal of influence, as evidenced by their recent forays into foreign policy. However, Putin clearly is working to undermine them systematically and organizationally, in a way that has the advantage of being politically more subtle and pragmatically more effective than the general prosecutor's route. Nearly everyone hears of the investigations underway, and rumors of those yet to come. However, a seemingly minor reorganization to increase coordination under the foreign ministry is hardly the stuff of legend, and even less likely to feed the rumor mill.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Fabian Adami

A battle royal: Berezovsky, Russia's 'Osama bin Laden,' wanted alive
Boris Berezovsky and the FSB have been embroiled in a battle for several years. In recent weeks, however, there has been an obvious escalation in the war of words on both sides, with the FSB stepping up its campaign to have the exiled oligarch extradited from the United Kingdom, and Berezovsky continuing to air his allegations against the security service.

Until now, the charges levied by the FSB and the prosecutor general against the tycoon were related almost exclusively to his business activities. However, recently, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev filed new charges which attempt to link Berezovsky to Chechen separatists. In doing so, the FSB clearly believes that, given the current world political climate and America's "war on terrorism," the United Kingdom, Berezovsky's current residence, will find it much more difficult to refuse extradition.

With the support of his predecessor, Nikolai Kovalev, Patrushev has described Berezovsky as Russia's "Osama bin Laden." Patrushev, furthermore, stated that his agency was in possession of documentary evidence that Chechen factions received and continue to receive funding from outside sources, including Berezovsky. (INTERFAX, 5 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0205, via World News Connection)

According to the Russian Political Monitor, the FSB's evidence stems directly from events that took place during Berezovsky's tenure as deputy chair of the Security Council. In that capacity, Berezovsky was assigned the task of securing the release of hostages taken by Chechen fighters. Specifically, the FSB has seized on an incident from 1998 when the magnate transferred some $2 million to Shamil Basaev for the "reconstruction of Chechnya." The transaction was reported at the time and bore an official character, as Berezovsky was the deputy secretary of the Security Council and Shamil Basaev was the prime minister of Chechnya. The funds were earmarked for restoring a cement factory. Now the FSB charges that Berezovsky must have known that the money would be used to
purchase weapons to continue the war against Russia. In relation to these accusations, Berezovsky has been charged with "Organization of Illegal Armed Formations," under Article 208 of the Russian Criminal Justice Code. (RUSSIAN POLITICAL MONITOR, 31 Jan 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

If the FSB believed that Berezovsky would let these allegations go unanswered, they were mistaken. In the last two weeks, two interviews have appeared with Berezovsky, in Gazeta and The New York Times. The dialogue with Gazeta centered largely on the question of Berezovsky's "financial support" for the Chechen separatists. Berezovsky admitted that he knew several Chechen leaders personally, and that he had indeed transferred $2 million of his own money to them. However, he maintained that the payments had been officially sanctioned by the government, and made fully public. (GAZETA DAILY, 31 Jan 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

In terms of attacking the FSB directly, however, the interview with The New York Times was of much more significance. During this interview, Berezovsky claimed that he possessed evidence that the apartment bombs in Ryazan and Moscow were deliberately planned by the security services in order to provide President Vladimir Putin with a convenient excuse for the launching of another Chechen war. Berezovsky added that this material was "no less [incriminating] than the evidence the United States had that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the World Trade Center attack." (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1 Feb 02)

This is not the first occasion on which such an accusation against the FSB has been made. In September 2001, Lt. Col. Alekandr Litvinenko, an FSB defector to Britain, claimed that he had similar evidence, which was later published in a book titled The FSB Blows Up Russia. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 12 Sep 01) Moreover, Berezovsky alleged that the liquidation of TV-6, which he owns, occurred because the station was about to air a documentary that would offer the general public proof of the FSB’s guilt. In March 2000 NTV broadcast "Ryzan
Sugar," a program that persuaded many that the FSB had attempted to blow up a building in Ryazan. It's possible that Berezovsky, working with NTV executives who also fled Russia, may come up with another program about Ryazan. So far, however, Berezovsky has offered no new information concerning the bombings in Moscow or Volgadonsk.

Since 1 February, the director of the Moscow FSB, Viktor Zakharov, has stated publicly that "all of the people involved in the attack are known," some have been brought to justice, and the remaining perpetrators will be found. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 7 Feb 02)

Understandably, the FSB is nervous that one of the agency's and Putin's most fervent critics is still at large and refusing to be intimidated by further allegations. Since the FSB has yet to present any of the evidence against Berezovsky that it claims to possess, it is unlikely that the British government will agree to his extradition.

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

By Luba Schwartzman

**MEDIA**

**Kiselev's 'touch'**

On 2 February 2002, a popular Russian joke site (www.anekdot.ru) contained the following one-liner: "Liquidation of companies within three days -- quick, cheap, 100% guarantee -- Yevgeny Kiselev." This joke, of course, erred on the short side. Actually, it took a full six days from the time Ekho Moskvy offered a home to 232 TV-6 journalists, including Kiselev, before the Cypriot company Leadville Investments Limited (which owns 50 percent + 1 of the liberal radio station's
shares) sent its managers a letter proposing a completely new list of board members. The candidates were all representatives of Gazprom or Boris Jordan's NTV. (EKHO MOSKVKY, 1200 GMT, 8 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Aleksei Venediktov, Ekho Moskvy's editor-in-chief, promised that, if this change were implemented, the management and the leading journalists would leave the radio station, and reapply for the tender of the frequency under the title of "Radio Arsenal." He pointed out that, last summer, the primary shareholders reached an agreement splitting nine spots evenly between Gazprom, Vladimir Gusinsky and Ekho Moskvy journalists. (NTVRU, 8 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

The power, the press (and the pressure)
This latest media scandal erupted in time to be discussed at last weekend's international conference -- "The Power of the Press and the Press of Power" -- sponsored by the Union of Right Forces (SPS), the Davis Center of Harvard University, and Moscow State University's (MGU) Journalism Department. The violations of press freedom reviewed included the closure of TV-6 and increased pressure on regional media outlets.

At the conclusion of the conference, a public council on the freedom of the press was created. The council's membership will include SPS Chairman Boris Nemtsov and Co-chairwoman Irina Khakamada, Dean of the MGU Journalism Department Yasen Zasursky, and a number of prominent journalists and academics. The council will first gather after the 27 March decision on the tender for the right to broadcast on TV-6's frequency and will discuss "the most acute and urgent problems of the mass media." (ITAR-TASS, 1957 GMT, 9 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets) It's not clear, however, why the council does not meet before the contest to monitor the progress of the process or how effective the council will be with members such as government-faithful presidential advisor Andranik Migranian.
After the conference, Nemtsov's SPS also submitted to the State Duma a draft law which would limit the participation of the state in the mass media and a request for the creation of a committee to monitor the TV-6 contest. Both were turned down. (NTVRU, 9 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

**Strength in numbers**
According to some sources, TV-6 journalists will have help in their quest to regain control of the frequency. Boris Berezovsky declared that he will give TV-6 journalists $1.2 million through his New York-based Foundation for Civil Liberties. (NTVRU.com, 28 Jan 02) Berezovsky's Kommersant newspaper also reported that a consortium of Russian oligarchs -- including Anatoly Chubais, Roman Abramovich, Alfred Kokh, Aleksandr Mamut, Mikhail Deripaska, Mikhail Friedman, Mikhail Khodorovsky and Vladimir Yevtushenkov -- will invest in the new company. According to Kommersant, Kremlin administration head Aleksandr Voloshin has already approved the idea, and Boris Nemtsov opined that the key advantage of the consortium will consist of the fact that no one will have a controlling share in the holding, allowing for editorial freedom. Kiselev would be expected to remain the general director of TV-6. (NTVRU, 9 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

**Who wants to be a TV-heir?**
The competition that the TV-6 team -- which submitted its tender as OOO (Limited Liability Company) TV-6 -- will have in the contest is rather varied. Sports Channel 7TV and the Olympic Committee are responding to President Putin's recent plea for increased national attention to fitness, hoping to create an all-sports-all-the-time channel; the Liberal Democratic Party's Vladimir Zhirinovsky also has expressed the desire for national airtime; LUKoil is eyeing the channel; and rumors are flying that statements by Orthodox Church representatives concerning the importance of "coordinating work in the sphere of mass media" are not being pronounced by chance. These and other entities are
expected to apply for the tender by the 6 March deadline. (NTVRU, 9 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

Many are worried that the outcome of the contest is already pre-determined, but Press Minister Mikhail Lesin insisted that the process will be as honest and transparent as possible. He also promised that "the government will reduce its presence on the media market." While he agreed that there "undoubtedly is a threat to the freedom of speech," he attributed the current situation to the "question of property" and a lack of a code of behavior for media relations with the public, business and the authorities. To demonstrate the fairness of the state to the media, he pointed out that, of the approximately 3,000 media-related suits annually filed in courts, 60 percent are resolved in favor of the media. (INTERFAX, 1255 GMT, 6 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0206, via World News Connection)

**Trial balloons or court fiascoes?**

It will be interesting how two suits recently filed in connection with the liquidation of TV-6 play out. The first was submitted by the Moscow Independent Broadcasting Corporation (the owner of TV-6) against the court bailiff who launched the liquidation of the station, and will be heard in the Moscow arbitration court on 28 February. (INTERFAX, 1040 GMT, 5 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0205, via World News Connection) The second was registered with the Supreme and the Constitutional Courts by Moscow resident and TV-6 fan Vera Afanasieva, and asserts that her freedom of access to information has been violated. (NTVRU, 1 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

In related news, on 1 February, Kiselev's Land Rover was confiscated by the police, pending the payment of the 5,000-ruble ($170) fine from the libel suit submitted by former Kaliningrad Governor Leonid Gorbenko. (NTVRU, 4 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)
POLITICAL PARTIES

You are what you read

This winter is not unique in the challenges it's presenting -- from avalanches and influenza epidemics (quarantines were announced at schools in 14 regions) to electricity blackouts and floods. Life is especially difficult for the federation's approximately one million homeless children, as President Putin and Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matvienko recently discussed. But young persons even from the most fortunate families have to navigate through a world of drug use and the spread of disease, racial and religious intolerance, and political and economic turmoil.

Therefore it should come as no surprise that some 50,000 youths have chosen to join the pro-Putin Moving Together movement that is strongly reminiscent of the Komsomol (Union of Soviet Youth). One difference: They recently resumed their project to "cleanse" the bookshelves of works by "harmful" writers such as Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin and Karl Marx. Their original plan was to hand out Boris Vasiliev's book of stories about war, but the author refused to cooperate, so the young "reformers" opted to provide books by Ivan Bunin, Aleksandr Kuprin and Nikolai Leskov. The "cleansed" writers won't complain. They can't. They're dead.

Other politically involved youths, however, did challenge the judgment of "harmfulness." Several followers of Nationalist-Bolshevik writer and politician Eduard Limonov showed up at one of the trading points with samples of the latest fad in literature -- books about President Putin. The confrontation that ensued was worthy of being on a Jerry Springer show. (NTVRU, 10 Feb 02; via www.ntvru.com)

Limonov's supporters are garnering attention just in time. The Nationalist-Bolshevik party has nominated him for the 31 March State Duma elections. He
Whom are the Russians courting now?
In a continuing effort to forge a unique foreign policy approach, Russia has grown increasingly close to two potentially fragile allies, India and Iraq. Moscow's push toward these two friends is the result of two key factors. First, Russia has longstanding military sales connections with both countries, including a number of co-production deals in the case of India and the (previous) export of high-tech air defense and early warning components to Iraq. However, the current approach has resulted from a particular effort by President Vladimir Putin and his foreign policy chief, Igor Ivanov. Clearly, the objective of Russian goals towards states such as India and Iraq is to find a niche among countries that, for very different reasons, do not enjoy a close relationship with the United States and its allies. This effort is somewhat reminiscent of the non-aligned movement founded in the 1950s by India's Nehru and further championed by Yugoslavia's Tito during the 1970s and 1980s. (NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT ONLINE; via www.nam.gov.za)

Ultimately, Russia appears to be primed to become the focal point for states desiring to chart their own course away from US influence. This includes the aforementioned contracts with India and Iraq, as well as significant efforts in Asia (see THE NIS OBSERVED, 24 Oct 01), and ongoing diplomatic initiatives in South America. (see THE NIS OBSERVED, 28 Nov 01)

New Delhi and Moscow
Over the past three weeks, a number of high-level diplomatic meetings between New Delhi and Moscow have focused on increased military cooperation and political harmony. Military cooperation has taken pre-eminence for some time since India is rapidly building up its power projection capability, and views with concern the current close relationship between the US and Pakistan.

Russia and India are continuing to discuss an upgraded version of the Brahmos cruise missile. The Brahmos has been under development by a joint India-Russia consortium since February 1999 and is capable of launch from a variety of platforms. (THE ASIAN AGE, 6 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In addition, the Indians have begun preliminary discussions on the possibility of leasing up to four Tu-22M3 long-range bombers, and an initial exchange of proposals has taken place for a co-production deal for the Il-214 transport aircraft. (ITAR-TASS, 0625 GMT, 6 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) These deals come on the heels of larger weapons packages that have been discussed extensively, including co-production deals for the MiG-29 fighter and a number of surface combatants.

 Concurrent with these military agreements, Russia has given a clear signal that it is foursquare behind India on a variety of regional issues, most notably the terrorist operations against India that New Delhi assumes are conducted from Pakistani territory. Though the Pakistani government denies the allegations, the Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, has said, "[Russia] condemns all acts of across-border terrorism against India, including the terrorist attack against the Indian Parliament in December last year." (RIA NEWS AGENCY, 1614 GMT, 3 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) That is among the clearest statements to date placing the origin of attacks in Pakistani territory, though not directly implicating Pakistan's leadership.

Ivanov did take Islamabad to task, using a somewhat less aggressive tone, but nonetheless placing responsibility for regional tensions squarely on the
Pakistanis. "Pakistan must take sustained and irreversible steps to end cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and create a conducive environment for the resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue," he said. (PTI NEWS AGENCY, 1901 GMT, 3 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) India followed with a statement supporting Russia's approach to arms reduction and to the ABM treaty. (PTI NEWS AGENCY, 1901 GMT, 3 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Moscow sees advantages in throwing its weight behind India. First, such a stance allows the Russians to put themselves in a position to counterbalance the growing US influence in South Asia. Most notably, it keeps in check potential Pakistani excesses while under the "protection" of the US and ensures that Pakistan cannot try to leverage its unique place in the "war against terrorism" against its neighbor. Second, Russia can insert itself in the role of crisis solver or at least a major participant in finding the solution to an international crisis. Ultimately, Putin and Ivanov will take advantage of calculated opportunities to raise Russia's international visibility. In the near term, Russia's foreign policy team is likely to continue to keep the pressure on Islamabad while supporting New Delhi. However, given the long-standing enmity between these volatile nuclear powers, Russia's steps will be taken with a dose of caution.

Aziz in Moscow

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz has made several visits to Moscow over the last few weeks. The purpose of his visits was twofold -- to increase cooperation between the two countries and once again to solicit assistance from Russia in Baghdad's ongoing effort to reduce or even eliminate the trade sanctions against Iraq. Most interesting is the fact that Russia has continued an overt relationship with Iraq.

Aziz visited Moscow to close deals on several important projects between the two nations, including the restoration of several power plants in Iraq by a Russian
consortium of companies. This undertaking will restore full power capacity to Baghdad for the first time since the Gulf War. (ITAR-TASS, 0106 GMT, 1 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In addition, Aziz noted that the "development of economic relations between Moscow and Baghdad was given a prominent place in our talks." (ITAR-TASS, 1840 GMT, 26 Jan 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Trade between Russia and Iraq is dominated by military hardware, but includes also a variety of manufactured goods, petrochemicals, and other raw materials. Indeed, Aziz announced, "Russia has become Iraq's biggest trading partner." (ITAR-TASS, 1910 GMT, 24 Jan 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Of more pressing concern to the Iraqis is the specter that the US-led "war against terrorism" soon could be bearing down on Baghdad. With that in mind, Aziz met with anyone and everyone from whom he seemed able to solicit help, including Foreign Minister Ivanov, members of the Duma, and a multitude of media representatives. Aziz sought and received a strong condemnation from the Russians regarding possible attacks against Iraq and the continued extension of UN sanctions against Baghdad.

"Russia is not prepared to support the extension of the international anti-terrorist operation onto Iraqi territory," Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said. (ITAR-TASS, 1323 GMT, 3 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Ivanov also chastised the US for applying "double standards" to the anti-terrorist operation.

Following a meeting with the speaker of the State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, Aziz made it clear that he expected and was promised full Russian backing and, in return, offered Iraq's support of Russian efforts in Chechnya: "Despite the fact that Iraq is an Islamic State, it fully backs Russia on Chechnya." In addition, Aziz said that "the US wants to have under full control the entire Middle East and the Gulf zone, but this is not suitable for Iraq as an independent state." (ITAR-TASS,
Moreover, the Iraqi deputy prime minister did receive assurances from Selезнев that "Russia is flatly against air strikes."

Russian diplomats and leaders have long opposed the UN sanctions and have been supportive of the Iraqis. These stands are unchanged. One manner of support, apparently, is the encouragement of a renewal of communication between Iraq and the UN. "Russia attaches great significance to the dialogue between Iraq and the UN Secretary General over all the complex issues concerning the Iraqi settlement," Ivanov said. (RIA, 1111 GMT, 24 Jan 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Ivanov also suggested that Iraq should join in the fight against regional terrorism, noting that Baghdad is the key to regional stability. (ITAR-TASS, 1614 GMT, 24 Jan 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

A close relationship between Iraq and Russia is useful to both countries. The Iraqis are gaining unfavorable world attention due to their support of terrorism and continued development of weapons of mass destruction. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 9 Feb 01) They need a friend who can wield clout on the international stage. They also need Moscow's assistance in moving and buying Iraqi goods. Russia, for its part, seems to appreciate the notion of being able to leverage support for the Iraqis against the US and is regularly in the forefront of countries opposing continued sanctions against Iraq. Supporting Iraq is an opportunity to do something the US opposes, but much of the rest of the world -- including Western Europe -- does not. So, it is likely that the strong Iraqi-Russian tie will continue for the foreseeable future and even grow. However, should the US decide to deal with Iraq, Russia would be hard-pressed to offer Iraq anything other than diplomatic support.
State of the armed forces

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov met with President Vladimir Putin on 1 February to provide an update on the state of the Russian military. According to published reports, 91,000 military personnel and 14,500 civilian billets were cut from the rolls of the defense ministry by the end of 2001. One concern Ivanov raised with President Putin was the continued, but slowly improving, imbalance between maintenance and development expenditures.

A breakdown of the Army and Navy budgets for 2001 indicates that 56% was spent on maintenance (opposed to 70% in 2000) while 44% was allocated to development expenses (30% in 2000). Still, the Security Council goal of 50-50 could be reached by the end of 2002, Ivanov said, although 2006 is the targeted deadline. (KOMMERSANT, 1 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) If less money was budgeted for maintenance in 2001, what impact did that have on the military throughout Russia? One significant indicator is energy.

In the dark

What do Russian utility companies do when the military doesn't pay its electric bill? They pull the plug. Russia's Unified Energy Systems (EES) head Anatoli Chubais stated "the debt owed by the Defense Ministry to EES totals some 2.8 billion rubles ($93 million)." As a result, Chubais directed EES subsidiaries in late January to begin cutting electricity. Thus several military facilities in and around Russia's Pacific port of Vladivostok lost power. The Primorsky Krai prosecutor-general's office recognized these actions as "lawful." The most controversial move was the cutting of power to the Russian Space Control Center, reportedly
endangering multimillion-dollar spy satellites and temporarily severing communications with Russian and US astronauts on the space station. (ITAR-TASS, 30 Jan 02; via RFE/RL Newsline) Meanwhile in central Siberia on 25 January the Chitaenergo Power Company cut power supplies to various military facilities, including eight army garrisons, two air force bases and an air-defense unit. (ITAR-TASS, 5 Feb 02; via RFE/RL Business Watch)

**Not my problem**

In response to the energy crisis in Siberia and in the Far East districts, Defense Minister Ivanov said "Higher electricity tariffs were not accounted for in the budget allocations for 2001, and the Defense Ministry does not have the money nowadays to pay its debts to energy companies. The cost of electricity in Kamchatka alone rose by 45% in 2001. You know, I cannot transfer the money from the Black Sea Fleet or Northern Fleet to the Pacific. It may jeopardize security of the country." Moreover, he said, "the Defense Ministry does not have anything to do with [the military's energy debt crisis]." (KOMMERSANT, 1 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) How can the defense minister not be responsible for defense expenditures? The energy crisis didn't happen overnight. During the final readings of the 2002 defense budget, few if any measures were taken to accommodate an always volatile power industry and prepare for any unexpected 2001 energy expenses. Ivanov seems unwilling to shoulder accountability or oversight for the defense budget.

**According to the finance ministry**

While Defense Minister Ivanov washed his hands of the whole affair, the finance ministry referred to the whole situation as an over-dramatization, and claimed that funding for electricity soon will come from the treasury to the military. According to the Russian Joint Energy System (RJES), which is owed 1.5 billion rubles by various military districts, "money for electricity was provided to the Defense Ministry late in 2001 but the military failed to distribute it among units and formations, and the money returned to the treasury." (NEZAVISIMAYA
GAZETA, 29 Jan 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) On 4 February it was reported that the defense ministry transferred 40 million rubles as a partial payment toward its estimated 200-million ruble debt to RJES. (STRANA.RU, 6 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) The money ensures that power will not be cut again to strategic installations in the far east for now.

Demographics
What will the professional army that Russia hopes to build in the future look like? One prediction is that in 10 to 20 years, one-half of the Russian army could be Muslim. While birth rates in Russia and Europe have declined steadily, high birth rates among ethnic Muslim populations in the Caucasus and Central Asia have remained level. Unrest in those predominantly Muslim regions has caused a migration north to Russia. Thus Russia now must place an increased emphasis on meeting the needs of its Muslim citizens, including those who serve in the military.

While Russia has acknowledged its growing Muslim-Russian population, to date there are no mullahs in the Russian Army and Muslim soldiers have no mosques in which to pray. Construction of military chapels or mosques was not high on the priority list during Soviet times when most bases were built, although recently inroads have been made by providing chapels for Russian Orthodox military personnel. The Russian military now must provide daily praying time, suitable ethnic rations (not the boiled lard still served to soldiers), and observe hygiene standards prescribed by Islam for Muslim servicemen. (ROSSIYA, 6 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) This will be critical to Moscow's plans for a professional army, since Russia must draw from the existing population.

Mixed reviews
So far the integration of Chechen youths into the military has met with various levels of success, according to a recent interview. Forty draftees from the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast', serving tours of duty in the peaceful setting of central Russia, reported that they were being treated well and were able to stay together, which provided some stability and unity in a somewhat foreign setting. However, less success was visible in Tula, where 130 soldiers (mostly from a single rayon in Chechnya) were drafted into the army during November and December 2001. They refused to submit to their commanders and take a military oath of allegiance to Russia, so the military broke up the group and they now are serving in eight different regions (excluding Chechnya) throughout the country. Still, military commanders seem satisfied with these recruits and have suggested that an additional 500 Chechen "volunteers" be drafted in 2002. (RFE/RL RUSSIAN FEDERATION REPORT, 6 Feb 02)

**Diversification, Russian-style**

Russia's presidential envoy to the Volga federal district, Sergei Kirienko, addressed the subject of ethnic and religious problems during the World Economic Forum in New York two weeks ago. Kirienko stated that the difference between Russian and European approaches may be best illustrated by the fact that "in Russia [when] we discuss Muslims, we say 'we,' but in Europe and the US, Muslims are referred to as 'they' or as 'others.'" Kirienko went on to say that if the 21st century brings a clash between Muslims and Christians, then Russia will act as a buffer. (RFE/RL RUSSIAN FEDERATION REPORT, 6 Feb 02) How much is wishful thinking, and how much is fact? Does anyone truly believe that Russia's approach to Muslims is any kind of model to follow? Even though Muslim draftees are being spread throughout Russia, are they truly trusted by their commanders? How soon before a Muslim becomes Russia's defense minister?

The successful integration of Muslims into the military will be the real challenge, and one that encompasses policy as well as accommodation of religious
requirements. For example, Muslims view the war in Chechnya as evidence of repressive Russian policies, and ethnic Russians often portray Chechens as terrorists. Trust will remain elusive.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Getting the media ready

This week, the parliamentary election campaign officially opens in Ukraine. Now that all the parties and blocs have been solidified and electoral candidates have been registered, it's time for the real work to begin. In Ukraine, this means that it's time to get the media under stricter control -- under the control of the president, that is.

Toward that noble end, President Leonid Kuchma this week succeeded in his attempt to remove Rukh founder Ivan Drach as the chairman of the State Committee for Information, Television and Radio. Drach, a poet and former Soviet dissident, was the last holdover from Viktor Yushchenko's government, overseeing a committee with significant power over media licensing procedures. During his tenure on the committee, Drach concentrated heavily on trying to increase usage of the Ukrainian language and expressed his displeasure with the level of foreign (generally meaning Russian) influence on the country's newspapers and television stations.

As such, Drach's deputy chairman, Stepan Pavlyuk, one year ago threatened to "re-register those newspapers that failed to fulfill their license obligation" to publish in Ukrainian as well as in Russian. (VYSOKYY ZAMOK, 12 Jan 01; BBC World Monitoring, via lexis-nexis) These ideas, however, were not embraced by the majority of government officials and the committee met only with limited
success. Kuchma, therefore, was able to imply that this lack of progress was the reason for removing both men. The "information market" must be protected from foreign influence, he said. "We will soon be left with nothing. We are not protecting ourselves." (UKRAINIAN NEWS AGENCY, 10 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The irony of such a statement from the man who has overseen a significant increase in Russian ownership of former Ukrainian state assets must not have been lost on Drach.

Pavlyuk was the first to go -- in November. But despite Kuchma's desire to dismiss Drach at that same time, the chairman held on until 7 February, when he was replaced by Ivan Chyzh. With that appointment, the committee's chairmanship swung from the right to the left. Chyzh spent several years as a member of Oleksandr Moroz's Socialist Party before founding his own leftist bloc called "Justice" two years ago.

Despite Kuchma's attempts to claim that the committee was not fulfilling its obligations, the more likely reason for the dismissals of Drach and Pavlyuk became clear when Kuchma complained that the committee had "taken a side" in previous elections. "I would like the committee," he explained, "not to take the side of any political force but to create equal conditions for all the participants in the election process." (IBID.) Strangely, Kuchma has not suggested the same course of action for his aides, prime minister or cabinet members. After all, if he did, who would be left to run the campaign of the pro-presidential electoral bloc, For a United Ukraine? Shockingly, it would seem that the prohibition against "taking a side" refers only to those supporters of Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc, the most dangerous rival to For a United Ukraine.

By dismissing Drach, Kuchma finally has removed from his administration the last person associated with Yushchenko. Perhaps more important in the long term, however, he has removed a man who spent decades working toward an independent Ukrainian identity and state, and against the continued
"russification" of his country. The move is significant not only for its timing relative to the election, but also for its timing relative to the president's recent reorientation eastward.

Drach is not the only recent purge victim. On the same day that parliament rubber-stamped Kuchma's request to dismiss Drach (7 February, which was coincidentally the last working day before the start of the election), the body dismissed two members of the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting (NCTRB). Mykola Kniazhytskyi, a journalist and host of the interview program "Freedom of Speech" on ICTV, protested loudly against his removal from the committee. "Nobody made any complaints to me," he said. "You cannot dismiss someone from his job without reason." (UKRAINIAN NEWS AGENCY, 8 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Unless, of course, you're beginning an election.

The impetus for Kniazhytskyi's removal, as well as that of fellow journalist Mykita Poruraev, became clear when parliament appointed Yurii Shkarlat to the committee. Shkarlat's chief qualification seems to be that he spent a year as the deputy head of President Kuchma's press service. (UKRAINIAN NEWS AGENCY, 10 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It seems that his loyalty will not be a question.

This is a fact not lost on other members of the NCTRB. Council Chairman Borys Kholod said simply, "I can see nothing but political ambitions here." He continued, "Hard blows are being dealt to the media, one after another." (UKRAINIAN NEWS AGENCY, 7 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) To be sure, the NCTRB should be careful that the stones it throws aren't too large. The committee has presided over a worsening situation in the country regarding press freedom and media independence for years. But it seemed as if it was about to take an important stand -- supporting the relatively objective and critically acclaimed television channel One plus One.
On 1 February, Kyiv's economic court ordered that the popular channel be shut down and its airtime be put out to tender. The order followed a lawsuit filed against the NCTRB by AITI TV -- a small television company whose financial support, like most television channels in Ukraine, is difficult to track. The company, which shared airtime on UT-2 with One plus One, charged that its competitor had been given airtime illegally by the NCTRB. The economic court agreed, and the NCTRB responded swiftly with an appeal and public statements of support for the channel. "Without much thought, a single judge attempted to close a popular television program," council member Viktor Leshyk said. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 7 Feb 02)

Indeed, the channel is extremely popular -- so much so that the media trade publication Variety profiled it in 2001. It credited the station, which broadcasts only in Ukrainian, with helping to develop "a sense of identity for a nascent nation," and noted that the channel claimed 80 percent of the viewing market in western Ukraine. In the east, however, its viewership dropped to 20 percent. Regardless, when averaged throughout the country, the station commanded a 50-percent share of the viewing audience at that time, besting its primary competitor, INTER, a Russian-language channel that includes rebroadcasts of Russia's ORT. (VARIETY, 1 Oct 01; via InfoTrac)

The attack on One plus One (and the NCTRB) no doubt is related primarily to a combination of electioneering and the worsening political fortunes of one group of oligarchs vis-à-vis another. The money behind One plus One comes from The United Social Democratic Party (run by financeer Hryhorii Surkis and politico Viktor Medvedchuk), the former party of power that now finds itself on the outside of Kuchma's inner circle. Medvedchuk's recent ouster as speaker of parliament serves to further underscore this point.
Regardless of the reason, the loss of One plus One would mean the loss of an important part of the media tapestry in Ukraine, and the most important victory yet for those who would limit freedom of the press. The attack on One plus One, the removal of Ivan Drach, and the dismissals at the NCTRБ highlight a distressing trend in a country that claims to want to join the Western club.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

GEORGIA
Ready to cleanse Pankisi

Russian and Georgian representatives have announced plans to repatriate Chechen refugees from Georgia's Pankisi Gorge to Chechnya. The number of refugees is estimated at 7,000 to 8,000 and is comprised mostly of women and children. Peter Kessler, a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that the agency is concerned that refugees who fear for their safety due to the ongoing conflict may be forced to return. The UNHCR does not encourage the refugees' return. (Voice of America, 9 Feb 02; via Chechnya-s@yahoo.com)

If the plans are implemented, they may constitute one of the grossest violations of international human rights even by the standards of this war. Forcing civilians into the zone of military activity is prohibited by the Geneva Convention. A demonstration of 300 persons in the village of Duisi in the Pankisi Gorge expressed the fears of the refugees and indicated that they will not go willingly. "We don't want our children to be killed. We only just escaped," said one woman. "A [refugee] woman who was eight months pregnant went back home. She was raped, killed, and burnt. Seven children became orphans," recounts another. (RUSTAVI-2 TV, 1700 GMT, 8 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
**Abashidze arrives in Moscow**

Aslan Abashidze, the president of Georgia's Adzharia region, recently arrived in Moscow to hold talks about Abkhazia. Most observers were puzzled when Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze appointed Abashidze as his personal representative for regulating the Abkhaz conflict. A serious rival to Shevardnadze in the last presidential election, Abashidze has cultivated ties to the Russian military and the Abkhaz leadership. Under his direction, Adzharia has achieved a greater degree of economic well-being than other parts of Georgia -- due to revamping of the port of Batumi -- but it contributes little to the Georgian budget. When difficulties between Tbilisi and Batumi arise, representatives of the federal government travel to Adzharia because Abashidze won't go to Tbilisi.

(NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 9 Feb 02)

How will Abashidze use his connections with Russian military and Abkhaz leaders? To steer the negotiation process out of the current dead end or to nudge Shevardnadze out of the driver's seat?

**Abkhazia snubs UN**

On 5 February, Abkhaz representatives repeated their refusal to receive a framework document developed by representatives of the UN and the Friends of Georgia group. "Our position on this issue remains unchanged. We will not consider this document. Boden [UN representative] has not presented anything to us because we refuse to discuss this document in principle," said Astamur Tania, an aide to the Abkhaz rebel leader Vladislav Ardzinba. (GEORGIAN TELEVISION, 1400 GMT, 5 Feb 02; BBC, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

In its 31 January 2002 resolution 1393, the UN Security Council strongly urged Georgia and Abkhazia to begin substantive constructive negotiations using the document "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi" as the basis of such talks. This resolution, like previous resolutions
on this topic, recognizes Abkhazia's status as within the state of Georgia.
(UNO.ORG, 31 Jan 02)

The latest "Report of the Secretary General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia" from 18 January 2002 regards the document as "a significant step forward." The Group of Friends of Georgia and the UN support the document, which is the culmination of two years of negotiations. Although the specifics of the text have not been disclosed, it's being portrayed as a blueprint for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The process is stymied now due to Abkhaz refusal to receive the document.

The Abkhaz leaders do not link their continued intransigence to any security concern; rather, they are unwilling to negotiate on the basis of any document that designates Abkhazia as part of Georgia. The two key demands of the Abkhaz leadership -- that Georgian refugees cease the protest action on the Inguri bridge and that Georgian armed forces pull back from the Kodori Gorge -- are being met. As of 9 February, the protesters have given up their action and vacated the bridge. (KAVKASIA PRESS, 1545 GMT, 9 Feb 01; BBC, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) According to a protocol signed in mid-January, the Georgian army unit which entered the Kodori Gorge in October will begin to pull out this month. (ITAR-TASS, 1955 GMT, 18 Jan 02; BBC, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

How can such a tiny and vulnerable fiefdom as Abkhazia afford to snub the UN Security Council? Perhaps because, just as the Security Council was adopting its resolution on 31 January, several aircraft "entered Georgian airspace from the North and bombed an area" in the Georgian-controlled part of Abkhazia. The Georgian parliament speaker Nino Burganadze called for bringing the incident to the attention of Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo, who was visiting Georgia at the time. (KAVKASIA PRESS NEWS AGENCY, 0830 GMT, 31 Jan 02; BBC, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
CHECHNYA

Why did the five helicopters sink?

Actually, the helicopters fell but the Russian black humor mill draws comparisons to the Kursk. The Russian wit plays on the president's comment to Larry King. When asked, "what happened with the submarine?," Putin responded "it sunk" and smiled impishly. (CNN LARRY KING LIVE, 2100 EST, 8 Sep 00; via lexis-nexis) One can safely rule out the possibility the helicopters were attacked by foreign submarines, but many other colorful versions of how they "sunk" are being vented in the press.

Officials suggest that the rash of helicopter crashes is not related to the war -- rather it is the outcome of the helicopters being old, pilot error, and a shortage of spare parts. FSB spokesman Alexander Zdanovich attributed the helicopter losses to equipment malfunction. (ITAR-TASS, 9 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Similarly the state-run strana.ru news service reported on 7 February that of the nine helicopters downed in Chechnya in 2001 only three were shot down. However, for at least two of the recent crashes -- the ones that resulted in the deaths of MVD and General Staff generals -- there are indications that forces besides aging equipment played a part.

The incident about which we have the most information was the downing of the helicopter in Grozny on 17 September 2001 with two generals and six colonels of the General Staff on board. On that occasion a hard-hitting reporter, Anna Politkovskaya, happened to be on the scene and reported that the helicopter was shot down over the center of the city and that in the conditions obtaining there at the time only federal servicemen could have shot it down. Politkovskaya said that the city was "blockaded," and "the controls were so tight you couldn't even move between different districts within the city, let alone make your way out of Grozny." Among others who could confirm her account, she names FSB General Platonov, who holds simultaneous appointments as deputy to FSB Minister
Nikolai Patrushev and as deputy to United Energy Systems Director Anatoly Chubais. Platonov was trapped at the same checkpoint and can corroborate Politkovskaya’s account. (INDEX ON CENSORSHIP, January 2002)

A truncated version of Politkovskaya’s article appeared in Novaya Gazeta on 20 September, yet the full article which provides crucial details remains unpublished because defense ministry officials pre-empted the publication. According to Politkovskaya, "If these details surface, [MOD officials] openly told our chief editor, then that’s the end for you." The details, she continues, "indicated the military themselves had downed the helicopter." After the abridged version appeared in Novaya Gazeta, members of the defense ministry "who declared such claims to be false, now conceded they were true." (IBID.)

Far less is known about the circumstances leading to the loss of four helicopters over the last three weeks. On 7 February an Mi-8 transport helicopter "fell" in Grozny, killing 8 of the 10 servicemen aboard. The helicopter belonged to the search and rescue service of the 4th Air Army. According to a 7 February report of the state run news service strana.ru, initial evidence points to technical malfunction or human error.

On 3 February two helicopters were supposed to escort a convoy that was evacuating wounded border guards. After the convoy turned back due to bad weather conditions, one of the helicopters (an Mi-8) made a forced landing in North Ossetia and the other (an Mi-24) "disappeared" in the vicinity of Khankala military base near Grozny and has not been found. (RADIO LIBERTY, 4 Feb 02)

On 29 January, an Mi-8 helicopter "was shot at, fell, and burned up completely" in the Vedeno region, claiming no casualties. (STRANA.RU, 7 Feb 02)

On 27 January an Mi-8 helicopter carrying high-level MVD officers exploded in the air over Shelkovsky rayon in Chechnya. The investigation into the causes of
the explosion is ongoing, with Russian authorities citing either a bomb or careless use of a grenade launcher by those on board as the most likely causes of the crash. An article in Novaya gazeta favors the possibility that a member of the crew mishandled a grenade launcher, a version first suggested by Federal Minister for Chechnya Vladimir Yelagin. The article downplays the possibility that a bomb could have been placed on board, commenting "The MVD group of forces has much more serious and strict protection than the Ministry of Defense grouping." (NOVAYA GAZETA, 31 Jan 02)

However, Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, commander-in-chief of the Russian interior ministry troops who is heading the departmental probe into the crash, is not sure that the explosion came from within the aircraft. Tikhomirov said that the cause of the explosion and the "direction of the shock wave" will be determined by reassembling the pieces of the helicopter. (INTERFAX, 8 Feb 02; via lexis-nexis) Similarly, Moscow viewers relate that the RTR television network broadcast footage of the helicopter which indicated that something had penetrated the wall of the helicopter -- the metal was bent into the body of the craft. The procuracy, the MVD and the Putin himself have launched investigations into the incident.

Among the 14 men killed on 27 January were 4 MVD Colonels and 2 MVD generals, Deputy Interior Minister Lieutenant General Mikhail Rudchenko and his deputy, Lieutenant General Nikolai Garidov. (CHECHNYA WEEKLY, 5 Feb 02) This brings to four the number of generals killed in helicopter disasters in Chechnya over the last six months.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Michael Donahue

KYRGYZSTAN
Partnership of convenience
Having played an important role for the humanitarian and military aspects of the American-led "war on terrorism," Kyrgyzstan is poised to enjoy economic aid and the development that comes with a burgeoning relationship with the Western world. Unfortunately it seems that few besides Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev and his close circle of supporters will benefit at all.

One should count Ravshan Gapirov, Azimbek Beknazarov and Sherali Nazarkulov among those who will not benefit. Together the jailed human rights activist, the arrested member of parliament, and the dead hunger striker, respectively, illustrate forcefully the political and social crises that President Akaev currently faces. Gapirov, sentenced to a multi-year jail term in late 2001, was convicted of fraud. However to even the most casual observer it appears that the trial itself was the true fraud. Gapirov's human rights organization, Pravosudie, had been supporting an Islamic separatist group called Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and thereby threatened the authoritarian government of Akaev. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 9 Jan 02; via Eurasianet) In light of the present crackdowns on Islamic movements throughout Central Asia, undertaken presumably as a means of fighting international terrorism yet continuing a pattern of suppressing opposition, one can easily discern the government's true reason for prosecuting Gapirov.

Perhaps more troubling than the Gapirov case is the issue of the political crisis hanging over Bishkek as a result of the political silencing of opposition leader Azimbek Beknazarov. Beknazarov was arrested last month on abuse of power charges stemming from a 1995 murder case in which he served as the Toktogul District prosecutor. He stands accused of not filing charges against the murder suspect and of improperly detaining relatives of the victim. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 9 Jan 02; via Eurasianet)

In most states such charges, if substantiated, would result in punishments ranging from official reprimands to removal from office. The charges seem trivial
in a country like Kyrgyzstan, which is hardly known for the uniform application of the law. One begins to understand the extreme nature of the government's stance, however, when Beknazarov's recent political positions are taken into account. As chairman of the Kyrgyz parliamentary committee on judicial and legal reforms, two subjects in which President Akaev apparently has little interest, Beknazarov had become quite vociferous in his denunciations of the president's decision to resolve border disputes with China by ceding Kyrgyz territory to Beijing. Beknazarov's arrest immediately aroused vocal protest in and around Bishkek, including more than 400 hunger strikes, according to the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 2 Feb 02; via Eurasianet)

Among those protesting was Sherali Nazarkulov, who died following a 22-day hunger strike. His death has mobilized the parliamentary opposition, which has called for the president's resignation and has made inferences about the possibility of violence if Akaev does nothing. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 2 Feb 02; via Eurasianet)

One must wonder what President Akaev plans to do to quiet his detractors in order to ensure continued foreign aid and the development of the partnership with the West that has begun as a byproduct of the "war on terrorism." One must wonder, because Akaev is not around to explain it for himself. Conveniently on vacation in the midst of this turmoil, Akaev is banking on increased foreign aid and investment to provide the economic turnaround that the country desperately needs. Kyrgyzstan, currently saddled with $1.5 billion in external debt (primarily to Turkey and Russia), is counting on the revenue and employment of the 12-month renewable lease of the Manas airfield to the United States (and consequent construction jobs) to improve substantially the country's economy. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 25 Jan 02; via Eurasianet)

Unfortunately for Kyrgyzstan, it appears as though President Akaev is focused on securing the short-term financial situation rather than resolving the crippling graft and corruption that will prevent long-term economic growth. By focusing on
getting as much out of the "war on terrorism" as he can, Akaev is gambling that America will stay engaged in Kyrgyzstan for the long term. This, however, remains to be seen. While the United States certainly seems intent on maintaining a presence in Central Asia, such a presence may shift to those countries that control a share of the Caspian Sea fuel reserves.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Michael Varuolo

Cooperation is paramount for the Baltics

Cooperation between the three Baltic countries has developed to a level where now they can more effectively provide for their citizens as well as contribute to the international community. Since regaining their independence, the Baltic states have developed numerous joint projects aimed at enhancing their overall security and well-being. The ability of these states to integrate their respective systems with each other and with the international community has led to a series of Baltic projects -- BaltNet, BaltSea, BaltBat, etc. -- which have helped them in their efforts to obtain NATO and EU membership.

Communication between the three countries is very good and has led to interagency cooperation and the regular exchange of information. Government officials are comfortable with their counterparts and openly discuss their concerns with each other in order to seek solutions before issues reach crisis level. A good example of such cooperation is in the area of border control. On 1 February, the leaders of the various border services again met to discuss issues of relevance, including illegal migration, automobile theft, forged documents, contraband goods and narcotics traffic. Additionally, they exchanged information about criminal trends, crime detection measures, and how to improve information sharing between the various intelligence services of their states in order to
apprehend criminals. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 1450 GMT, 1 Feb 02, FBIS-SOV-2002-0201; via World News Connection)

Such cooperation has aided in law-enforcement efforts in all three countries. The latest crime rates for Latvia indicate that this cooperation has paid dividends. Partly as a result of inter-state coordination, law enforcement operations netted 10.2% more convictions and an overall increase in detection of criminal activities by 7.5%. (BNS, 1510 GMT, 6 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0206, via World News Connection)

Nor is coordination/cooperation limited to the borders of the Baltic states. The Lithuanian government reached an agreement with the United States to install radiation monitoring devices along the border with Belarus. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 5 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0205, via World News Connection) The goal of this venture, which involves five different US departments, is to be able to detect accurately the radiation levels of trains as they transit from Belarus into Lithuania -- a health and environmental concern that Vilnius has been trying to address for a long time.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also are looking to show how they can provide assistance to the international community. All three have accepted invitations to deploy troops to Afghanistan as part of the international "war against terrorism." As a show of solidarity with the international community, 30 Baltic soldiers will join the Danish contingent. (BNS, 5 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0205, via World News Connection) Such international cooperation seeks to build upon the Baltic states' previously established pattern of participation within international defense coalitions. During previous participation in both Bosnia and Kosovo, Baltic troops distinguished themselves while working intimately with Danish and other NATO/Partnership for Peace countries.