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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock

Putin and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs

With parliamentary elections on the horizon, and in view of his quasi-alliance with big business, President Vladimir Putin's stance on deregulation and reform of the Russian economy has become more cautious. In order to avoid financial and economic turbulence that could erode his support among powerful lobbyists and the populace, he will not halt the deregulation and reform; however, the process will not continue as before. A case in point is the current controversy over the deregulation of the electrical sector, notably Anatoly Chubais' United Energy Systems (UES). (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 17 Jan 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Putin has made an arrangement with the powerful group of businessmen known as the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE) that in essence has delineated separate sectors of influence. As Igor Vurgens of the RUIE explains, "the agreement stipulates that we do not interfere with politics. Our area is economy. On the other hand, the president does not influence the competitive economic fight." (KONSERVATOR, 20 Dec 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) RUIE serves as the contact point between the Kremlin and big business. It has maintained a fairly consistent lobby vis-à-vis the Kremlin to encourage reform and deregulation. In May of 2002, members of its board met with Putin and pushed a reformist agenda concerning the Central Bank and currency turnover. (VREMYA MN, 25 May 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In effect, Putin is allowing the tycoons a chance to extend their financial freedom and economic influence.
In some areas, the government's policies are not aligned fully with the RUIE, but business influence is apparent. Reform programs in the energy sector have been on the government's agenda for some time now, with UES at the forefront. Ideas advocated by Anatoly Chubais include a breakup of UES into smaller corporations. The large corporations within the RUIE do not see this as a favorable development. The plan has been debated in the Duma for some months now, as the Kremlin seeks a compromise that would allow for restructuring to take place without alienating commercial interests that stand to lose a good deal of money.

Some papers have noted that the coming elections also may have motivated the Kremlin's deceleration of reforms. The administration has voiced no denial. In fact, the Kremlin Chief of Staff, Alexander Voloshin, said in December that "the quality of reform is no less important to us than its pace," a catchphrase that means a considerable shift toward a slower rate of reform.

This combination of imperatives, from both the elections and the lobbyists, has taken a toll on Putin's approach toward oversized industries such as the electrical sector. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 18 Dec 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Recently a Duma vote on UES's reform effectively was prevented, because of what is widely seen as lack of support by the administration. The bill will remain in legislative stasis until a more convenient time politically. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 24 Dec 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

SECURITY SERVICES

Another job well done?

In what appears to be an annual event, leaders of the FSB gathered with senior editors of the Russian media to reflect on the many "successes" of the security service during the previous year. From Kaliningrad to points east, reports extolling the triumphs of the agency flooded the Russian media, including such FSB victories as the seizure of a paltry 1.5 kilograms of unspecified drugs, along
with 10 kilograms of marijuana that reportedly were destined for Kaliningrad. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 19 Dec 02; via Lexis-Nexis) The FSB directorate for Kaliningrad also announced proudly that it had denied 27 foreigners access to Russia for such offenses as "collecting information about the socio-political and economic situation in the region" and "attempting to gain access to classified military facilities."

Still, 2002's end-of-year report from Kaliningrad is less impressive than the "successes" celebrated by FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev at a similar FSB/media lovefest in December of 2001. In contrast to the petty drug busts and "capture" of those pesky information seekers of 2002, Patrushev in the previous year cited 43 special operations in Chechnya, the killing of 1,500 guerrilla fighters, and the closure of 76 rebel bases, just to name a few. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 16 Jan 02) Thinly shrouded by the pomp and circumstance of these recent announcements, the tragic events of the October 2002 Moscow theater incident that left 129 hostages dead remained conspicuously absent from the headlines.

During his 2002 address, Patrushev had skillfully sidestepped the controversy surrounding the questionable apprehension and sentencing of Russian Navy journalist Grigory Pasko. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 16 Jan 02) The Pasko case dates back to November of 1997, when the journalist was detained by the FSB at a Vladivostok airport for carrying papers which the FSB alleged contained state secrets. In fact, the information was readily available in the public domain. Following an extended period of legal wrangling, including acquittals, Pasko ultimately was sentenced to four years in prison; he rejected an immediate offer of amnesty, refusing to admit guilt. Following his indictment Pasko was sent to the Ussuriisk hard labor camp, which is run by the justice ministry. (AGENCY WPS, 16 Jan 02; via Lexis-Nexis)
Now eligible for parole, Pasko has sparked further controversy. Key figures at the heart of this newest scandal are Alexei Simonov (chairman of the Glasnost Defense Foundation) and Russian Justice Minister Yuri Chaika. Chaika reportedly stated that Pasko had "refused early release," a claim that Simonov immediately characterized as "simply a lie, a public lie." In a judicious response, Deputy Justice Minister Yuri Kalinin attempted to cover Chaika's tracks by stating that his superior had been misinformed. (AGENCY WPS, 16 Jan 02; via Lexis-Nexis)

Simonov has asked President Vladimir Putin to help obtain the journalist's release on parole, in the face of comments from the justice ministry that Pasko's refusal to admit guilt could hinder his release, although an admission of guilt is not officially required for parole. "Parole is a result of the manifestation of state will. If you say that there is such a will, Pasko could be relieved from his unfair and undeserved punishment," Simonov's request reads. The foundation is not alone in seeking the president's support. The general director of the Russian PEN Center also has written to Putin with a similar request. "The Ussuriisk penitentiary facility, under pressure from certain forces that we believe convicted Pasko illegally, is preventing him from exercising his right for parole," said Alexander Tkachenko's telegram. (INTERFAX, 1204 GMT, 14 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0114, via World News Connection) The administration of the penitentiary holding the journalist is scheduled to forward a recommendation about his parole to court this month.

As the Pasko saga continues, actions of the justice ministry and FSB remain difficult (if not impossible) to anticipate. However, a degree of media scrutiny leads his lawyer to believe that the journalist's chances for parole are promising. (ASSOCIATED PRESS WORLDSTREAM, 16 Jan 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

**FSB to be replaced by...science?**
As if the increased attention commanded by the Pasko case were not enough, the FSB now may face a new competitor in providing security for Moscow and other large Russian cities. FSB Director Patrushev appears to have acknowledged as much in a foreword to a recently published book titled "Terrorism in a Megapolis: Assessing Threats and Safety." In an excerpt from the foreword (and acknowledgement of the obvious) Patrushev states, "The fight against terrorism is not a monopoly of the special services and law enforcement agencies. It is a matter of concern for the whole civil society, and all bodies of state power and administration." (ITAR-TASS, 1432 GMT, 15 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0115, via World News Connection) The system described in the book was developed by a group of Russian scientists who recommend a "comprehensive, systematic" approach to countering terrorism in large cities. One would hope that any additional introduction of "science" into the FSB playbook would employ significantly more research than had been conducted prior to the heavily "scientific" approach used by the security services during the Moscow theater raid of October 2002.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Scott Fleeher

Dangerous games
The Russian campaign to supply nuclear technology to the world's "rogue nations" took two steps forward last month, as Moscow continues its attempts to revive influence amongst the former Soviet Union's allies, especially those whose relations with the United States currently are strained. This is not only dangerous to the United States and its allies, but potentially also to Russia herself. If any state has been exposed to the proliferation of conventional arms, it has been Russia-as far back as Afghanistan and currently in Chechnya, Russian servicemen have been killed by Russian arms.
SYRIA

On 14 January, the Russian foreign ministry announced that Moscow had agreed to build a nuclear reactor to power a desalination evaporator facility and provide electricity to Syria, where it is not uncommon to receive four hours of electricity a day. According to the statement, "Syria is showing great interest in [Russian] high-technology achievements, research programs and projects and in setting up joint ventures and establishing direct contacts between research centers" in the two countries. (INTERFAX, 1439 GMT, 15 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0115, via World News Connection) The communiqué coincided with the arrival of Syrian Vice President Abd-al-Halim Khaddam in Moscow to begin talks aimed at raising the profile of the Russo-Syrian relationship, which has been lower in recent years.

The Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) initially confirmed that discussions were ongoing, while stressing that an agreement was "not ready." Minatom later partially recanted this assessment by stating that the foreign ministry had made "several mistakes." (THE FINANCIAL TIMES, 16 Jan 03; via Lexis-Nexis) Regardless of which version is correct, clearly Russia has not ruled out the possibility of providing Syria with nuclear technology, although the Syrian government is internationally recognized as a violator of human rights and a sponsor of terrorist organizations (some of which appear to be unfriendly to Moscow). In this context, it should be noted that Putin has just cut back the list of nuclear technologies and equipment that had been banned for export until now.

According to statements made by Khaddam and President Putin, at their joint press conference, it is only natural that Russia should share advanced technology, including military hardware, with Syria because such dealings had been the basis of their relationship during the Cold War. Putin stated that Russian experts have specific plans for launching large-scale projects with Syria, including in the military-technical sphere. Such cooperation, he said, has "always played a large role in relations between the two countries." (ITAR-TASS, 1205
Khaddam concurred, stating that "the time has come for Russo-Syrian relations to resume the right course." (ITAR-TASS, 1121 GMT, 15 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0115, via World News Connection) It should be recalled that Syria still owes about $10 billion for weapons received during the Soviet era, although there has been talk of Russia writing off much of that debt for a new arms deal.

Despite all of the statements, however, it is unclear how much was accomplished during Khaddam's visit in terms of cementing a specific deal (in contrast to Putin's December visits to China and India). For example, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov denied that the talks focused on the sale of the Igla missile system to Damascus. (ITAR-TASS, 1510 GMT, 15 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0115, via World News Connection) One possible stumbling block to specific deals, including nuclear projects and military equipment, is the aforementioned Syrian debt (although Moscow has chosen to ignore similar debts owed by other Soviet-era allies). Khaddam did mention that the debt issue had been discussed in Moscow and was now in the resolution phase, but Russian officials did not echo these words. (ITAR-TASS, 1409 GMT, 16 Jan 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Rather, a good portion of the discussions focused on coordinating policy concerning American efforts to disarm Iraq. As might be expected, Russia and Syria announced that they had agreed on a joint posture, particularly in the UN Security Council. (INTERFAX, 1427 GMT, 15 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0115, via World News Connection)

IRAN
On 25 December, Russian Atomic Energy Minister Aleksandr Rumyantsev and Iranian Vice President (and head of the Atomic Energy Organization) Gholamreza Aqazadeh signed a protocol -- prepared in Moscow last summer -- in which Russia agreed to speed up the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant and Iran agreed to consider building a second power generation unit
there. In addition, the document regulates the supply of nuclear fuel for the first power generation unit at Bushehr for part of 2003. Iran and Russia also signed a separate agreement stipulating the supply of fuel for Bushehr by Russia over the next 10 years. (ITAR-TASS, 1235 GMT, 25 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1225, via World News Connection) It will be recalled that the Gore-Chernomyrdin Agreement, unilaterally abrogated by Moscow, committed Russia to refrain from transfer of nuclear know-how to Iran.

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

By Kate Martin

**Combat pay due for working in the office?**

Media Minister Mikhail Lesin had little sympathy for journalists who find themselves on the wrong end of a fist. In an interview with Rossiyskaya gazeta, Lesin said he would not provide special protection to media representatives; attacks against them are, apparently, an occupational hazard. "[O]ur fellow journalists are beaten up not only in Russia - this happens everywhere. In our country aggression against journalists happens more often because they are always present where events are most heated," the media minister said, clearly missing the irony that many attacks occur in newspaper offices which journalists would have a difficult time avoiding. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 26 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1226, via World News Connection)

Lesin seems to imply that most violence against journalists occurs in the line of duty; however, a recent report from the Glasnost Defense Foundation hints that the journalists are most often targets rather than merely hapless victims. Nineteen journalists died of "unnatural causes" in Russia in 2002, according to Boris Timoshenko of the foundation. "Speaking about these statistics, we do not
mean intentional murders. However, in many cases the circumstances surrounding the journalists’ deaths look very strange, and in some cases their deaths were preceded by threats and pressure," Timoshenko said. Last year’s statistics put 2002 above the average for journalists’ deaths per year. The foundation’s website reports that 148 journalists have died since 1992. (INTERFAX, 1147 GMT, 14 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0114, via World News Connection) No mention was made of suspicious but non-fatal attacks on journalists and newspaper offices.

REGIONS
Baby, it's cold inside
Thousands of individuals have spent recent frigid Russian winter nights without heat, thanks in large part to faulty pipelines, according to the emergencies ministry. The combination of wear and tear on heating supply pipelines and extreme weather conditions made for a dangerous situation in many regions across Russia. Over 23,000 persons and 20 administrative complexes in eight communities in the republics of Karelia and Komi and the Leningrad and Novgorod regions were without heat at the beginning of January. The ministry reported that similar problems were experienced in Kaliningrad region, as well as in the Volga, Urals and Far Eastern districts. Nor were city dwellers exempt: Cold weather damaged heating lines in St. Petersburg as well. And, although Moscow’s pipes have not been affected, 272 persons have died from the cold in the capital, while over 2,100 have sought medical treatment for hypothermia in the past four months. (INTERFAX, 1038 GMT, 9 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0109, via World News Connection)

President Putin met with some of the regional governors to discuss the heating crisis, but offered no federal band-aid. Speaking with Sakhalin Governor Igor Farkhutdinov and Karelian Prime Minister Sergei Katanandov, Putin placed the responsibility for dealing with the crisis squarely on the shoulders of municipal authorities. Still, in a subsequent meeting, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov
promised that the cavalry would come to the rescue: The Leningrad and Far Eastern Military Districts will provide fuel for those regions. (ITAR-TASS, 1936 GMT, 8 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0108, via World News Connection)

The heating crisis fired up at least one MP, Lyubov Sliska, who wants the officials responsible to be punished severely. The current practice, of charging a fine equivalent to 200 minimum salaries, is insufficient, she said; higher fines, and possible jail terms, should be considered. (ITAR-TASS, 1143 GMT, 14 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0114, via World News Connection)

To be sure, the crisis was not entirely due to obsolete pipes. In fact, the prosecutor's office in Karelia has opened eight criminal cases related to heat supply cuts to schools and apartment blocks. Heads of local administrations and managers of local enterprises are being blamed for negligence and abuse of power. (ITAR-TASS, 1206 GMT, 14 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0114, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Steve Kwast

State of the Armed Forces report focuses on reform
Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov submitted his end-of-year report on the state of Russia's armed forces, calling 2002 a year of progress toward sustainable development of the forces. While Ivanov certainly trumpets the military's successes, the report is unique in the frank discussion (by Russian standards) of the military's difficulties. Problems noted in the report range from outdated equipment to training, crime and social problems as well as high rates of suicide. (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 10 Dec 02; BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis)
Stressing the changing world situation, the report specifically mentions the new Russia-NATO Council and how the developing cooperation will enhance global security and stability and promote what Ivanov calls "the correct understanding of the Russian Federation's position by the world community." However, Ivanov also emphasizes that the threats faced by Russia have not been reduced but simply changed. "The actions of radical Islamic forces in the North Caucasus and ...of international Islamic groupings ...pose a special danger for Russia," the report says, linking (not surprisingly) international terrorism to the need for Russia's actions in Chechnya. Ivanov uses these circumstances to call for continued reform of the military, more emphasis on counter-terrorism and, of course, increased funding.

For his part, Ivanov, while not totally forthcoming about all of the military's serious deficiencies, does acknowledge some of the more significant and growing problems: "...The situation remains difficult. Today, we still haven't overcome the most urgent social-housing problem and the continuing rapid obsolescence of weapons, military equipment and materiel, and the inadequate provision of combat and mobilization readiness and troop training is present. You know very well the causes of the state of affairs that has developed. And if we are unable to fundamentally change the situation in the near future, then Russia will have nothing with which to resist new challenges and military threats."

Under a section labeled "Challenges," Ivanov lists what he sees as the three most pressing problems: First is the qualitative state of weapons and military equipment. It is no secret that much of Russia's military equipment and weaponry is becoming outdated and/or unusable. The limited military budget has prevented the purchase of badly needed new ships, aircraft and other weapons. Because of this, Russia's arms producers have focused their attention on customers elsewhere. According to the report, the answer to this problem is daily coordination and monitoring of the military-industrial complex's activities and linkage with the military's requirements. The question here is: Who will be in
charge of monitoring? The second most urgent challenge is the conversion to contract, or volunteer, military personnel. The lack of funding and support for adequate care, housing, meals and especially pay for contract forces has, to date, failed to attract the needed personnel and made this program largely a failure. No doubt that the bloody fighting in Chechnya also plays a part. The last of the three urgent concerns is the widely publicized lack of housing for troops and their families. Even with the construction and housing certificate programs that have been instituted, close to 168,000 servicemen do not have adequate living arrangements.

The extremely poor treatment of servicemembers, which really should be Ivanov's top concern, is given credible recognition in the report. Even with prior pay and benefit increases, the report states, "a radical improvement of servicemen's living conditions and the enhancement of the prestige of military service still have not taken place." Ivanov does not ignore the inevitable results of the hardships suffered by Russian servicemembers -- crime and suicide. Citing numerous statistics that show significant reductions in all types of illegal activity committed by servicemen, the report still admits that "crime remains at impermissibly high levels in formations and military units of the North Caucasus, Siberian and Leningrad military districts, in the Northern and Pacific fleets, and in the Airborne Troops."

In an interesting departure from the relative honesty of the report, evasion of military service is called the greatest proportion of all crime at 30%. Later in the report Ivanov states, "Crimes associated with servicemen's infringements on the lives, health, honour and dignity of their fellow servicemen persistently occupy one of the leading places in the overall structure of crime." Nowhere are crimes against servicemen linked to the high rate of draft evasion. The final concern expressed by Ivanov is the rate of suicide among military servicemen. At 27% of all deaths, suicide is the leading cause of death in the Russian military. The report does not address the roots of this problem.
Other difficulties also plague Russia's military, according to the report. Russia's defenses against terrorists, Ivanov says, "have not been completely worked out." The many military facilities holding nuclear and chemical stocks should be of special concern to the Russian government. The lack of training for air defense units is also noted, as is the inability of different forces and branches to operate together. Pilot flight time is another training area where reductions have been noted.

**Military reform: generals and politicians are part of the problem**

Last year's developments concerning military reform reveals some strong points for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov on this topic. Several of their initiatives show an awareness of the need to attack the root cause of current military dysfunction. However, a lack of concurrence of this vision by senior military officers and a lack of legislative support by the Duma have resulted in an overall failing grade for the year.

The fundamentals of an effective military are to train, organize, equip and motivate the troops to carry out the mission. President Putin and Defense Minister Ivanov seem to understand this axiom by virtue of the initiatives they instigated. For example, last year's improvements in organization and training initiated by Putin and Ivanov resulted in an increase in the combat capability of Russian ground troops. The commander in chief of Russia's ground troops, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Col.-Gen. Nikolay Kornil'tsev, outlined the success in a recent interview: "The organizational and methodological help provided by the high command to commanders had improved the quality of exercises and training. Before the high command was set up, each directorate chief solved problems in the Ground Troops' interests independently. There was no unified command or profound consideration for the troops as a whole. With the establishment of the high command, objectives are being accomplished in an integrated way and are subordinated to the overall goal: ensuring the troops'
combat and mobilization readiness." (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 26 Nov 02; via Lexis-Nexis)

In addition to organizational and training initiatives, Putin directed major cuts in forces to make more effective use of the limited funds available for military reform. Russia now has only 1.1 million soldiers, sailors and airmen in the armed forces under the Ministry of Defense, not including those in a dozen other agencies such as the border guards, the interior ministry and the railways. This contrasts with the 2.8 million-strong Soviet Red Army that the country inherited 10 years ago. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 18 Dec 02) Other initiatives highlight the attempt to cut forces this year. According to Defense Minister Ivanov, "from 1 January 2003 the structure of the headquarters will be optimized." He went on to say that the military administrative overhead must be cut in half to bring it in line with proportional management practices. (ITAR-TASS, 1141 GMT, 20 Nov 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1120, via World News Connection)

Putin and Ivanov also are targeting the low morale of the armed forces. "Improving the material circumstances of the corps and raising their pay is one of the main areas of Russian army reform. In addition, upon their return from contract service, service personnel must [be enabled to enter] into any civilian university, even a prestigious one," Ivanov said. (ITAR-TASS, 1144 GMT, 21 Nov 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1121, via World News Connection)

These organizational, training and motivational initiatives, along with the increase in defense spending, all march the military in the right direction. But at each turn senior military officers and Duma deputies who are comfortable with the status quo resist change. One example is the military reform experiment taking place with the 76th Airborne Division. As soon as the experiment in Pskov started, Russia's top general, Chief of Staff Anatoly V. Kvashnin, cut its $85 million budget by 25% and withdrew an initial offer to provide apartments for new recruits. The situation became so bad that over 40 of the new volunteers walked
out in protest, which sent the all-volunteer experiment into an irrecoverable tailspin. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 18 Dec 02)

It's not just the general officers like Kvashnin who don't fully support Moscow's vision of reform. Junior officers continue to use brutality and terror as motivational and disciplinary tools. Such practice is inconsistent with any type of volunteer service consisting of professional soldiers. On 5 January, 24 Russian soldiers deserted their post because of continual abuses they suffered from officers in their unit. (INTERFAX, 0716 GMT, 5 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0105, via World News Connection) This is just one of thousands of cases last year alone. These desertions highlight the disconnect between Putin's vision of reform and the officers' implementation of that vision. Defense Minister Ivanov identified the problem in a recent press conference: "A reason for mounting desertions from army units is the poor work of commanders. All these desertions have one thing in common, that is that ...commanders do not wish to perform their duties." (ITAR-TASS, 1830 GMT, 5 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0105, via World News Connection) Ivanov hit the mark. There can be no reform unless the leadership down through the organization (the commanders) understand, agree with and support the vision and mission. This is not the case in the Russian military.

In addition to military officers standing in the way, the legislature is not doing enough to support reform with the necessary laws. For example, when the actual law raising soldiers' pay finally was drawn up by the Duma, the advantage gained by the increases was nullified by the elimination of other military benefits. The end result was the Duma saving face with a good public relations bill as money was shifted from military benefits to military pay. Another glaring example is the Duma's handling of the urgent need for increased military police in the armed forces. That initiative, which carries a large price tag, has been gathering dust in the State Duma for five years now. (VREMnya, Internet Text, 24 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1231, via World News Connection)
Politicians and officers digging in their heels on reform make an already bad situation worse, especially concerning troop morale. One symptom of that low morale is the rampant drug use in the Russian military. According to Maj.-Gen. Aleksandr Arutyunyan, the deputy military prosecutor, "The spread of drug addiction poses a threat to the combat ability of the Russian armed forces." As many as 287 criminal cases and 400 servicemen, including officers, have been processed over the last three years with many of them also involved in illegal arms sales. (INTERFAX, 23 Oct 02; via Lexis-Nexis)

The end result of this year's initiatives by President Putin and Defense Minister Ivanov has been failure. Until they can get the Duma and the senior military officers on board, their initiatives will be derailed in the execution. This fight must be won at the top in the hearts and minds of those who carry out the president's will. Only then will the culture begin to change. Only then will the money be properly targeted to bring about real change. Unless that leadership changes, next year will be the same.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Miriam Lanskoy and Scott Fleeher

UKRAINE

To be or not to be Ukrainian

Preliminary results of the first post-Soviet census taken in Ukraine were announced on 6 January 2003, just over a year after the census had been held. The census of 5-14 December 2001 showed an overall drop in the population to 48,457,000 persons, in contrast to the 51,450,000 residents counted in the 1989 census. (UNIAN, 2 Jan 03; BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis) Full figures will be published later in 2003. In addition to the population decrease, the census showed some fairly major demographic changes, such as a noticeable aging of
the population. Most attention, however, has been paid to data referring to ethnic and national identity.

Individuals identifying themselves as Ukrainian constitute the largest share of the population (77.8%); the next largest group, Russians, amounts to 17.3% of the population. This marks a significant change in the balance of ethnicity, with a 26.6% decrease in the Russian share when compared to the 1989 census results. (UNIAN, 2 Jan 03; BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis) The development certainly is due in part to the fact that the last census was taken when Ukraine was still a part of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, there had been a steady decrease in the number of self-declared Ukrainians, through falsification by the Soviet authorities in the census results, as well as false answers supplied by Ukrainians in the belief that a Russian nationality would allow them special privileges.

In earlier censuses, the nationality was set at birth, based on the father's ethnicity and regardless of personal affiliation or where one lived. In the post-Soviet years, the role of national identity has undergone a substantial change, from an internal classification to an affiliation with a country with national symbols and a state language. It seems understandable, then, that there would be a marked increase among Ukrainians in the affiliation to Ukraine. While the breakup of the Soviet Union saw many demographic shifts in the populations of its former republics, it is not the case that Russians necessarily moved to what was now Russia: A large Russian minority population remains in many of the post-Soviet republics, including Ukraine.

One of the most important aspects of the debate that has erupted over the new official ethnic balance is language. The status of the Russian language in Ukraine has been an issue for a long time; many Ukrainians fear that the Russian language easily could be strengthened vis-à-vis Ukrainian. The discrepancy between ethnic affiliation and language becomes apparent from the figures: Only
67.5% of the population cited Ukrainian as their native language, and 29.6% Russian. While this still constitutes a decrease for the Russian language, it is less stark than the delineation via ethnic identity. However, it is also likely that the number of persons actually speaking Russian in daily life is far greater than these numbers imply, especially in regions where Russian is the predominant language such as the Eastern oblasts and Crimea (where there are more Russians than ethnic Ukrainians). Oleksandr Mayborada, an ethnic relations professor at the National Academy of Science, commented that "While people may consider Ukrainian their native language, it doesn't mean that they use it. [...] Ukrainian may be their native language, but Russian is the language of communication." (KYIV POST, 10 Jan 03; via www.kyivpost.com)

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there has been an ongoing campaign for Russian to become Ukraine's second official language, with a particular focus on the use of Russian in classrooms. As recently as December 2002, Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov complained vehemently about the discontinuation of Russian-language instruction at Ukrainian universities, linking the issue moreover to use of Russian in all CIS countries as "common heritage." (ITAR-TASS, 6 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1206, via World News Connection)

Language use is one of the markers that show very clearly the divide between the western and eastern regions of Ukraine. The debate also highlights that there is still some way to go along the way toward a firm national identity to be accepted by the Ukrainian population on the whole. Olexy Haran, a professor and director of the School for Policy Analysis at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, stated that "There is a belief that the Ukrainian language is spreading. But in a country where only one-quarter of the newspapers and magazines are published in Ukrainian, the figure is not unusually large. It does show that we are not experiencing a radical Ukrainization." (KYIV POST, 10 Jan 03; via www.kyivpost.com)
The data have led to an outcry on the part of the Russian population that results were falsified in order to undermine its role in Ukraine. Similar accusations are to be heard from the Ukrainian nationalist camp, which charges that the figures of Russians and Russian-speakers have been artificially increased. The distrust towards these data, as well as their importance to the country, illustrate some of the struggles of a relatively new country with a large population in establishing its own national identity. In a similar vein, a poll recently was undertaken to establish the perceived national symbols of Ukraine. The results were in part predictable, in part surprising and cause for concern: While more respondents named the flag and the state emblem (10%), many also cited bread and wheat (8.5%) and, on a negative note, poverty and social vulnerability (7.5%). (ITAR-TASS, 14 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0114, via World News Connection)

BELARUS

Back again

After lengthy talks at the end of last year, a new OSCE mission reopened its offices in Minsk on 13 January. Foreign staff members of the mission are to begin their work on 3 February. The head of the new office has not yet been named. This appointment will be made in The Netherlands, which took over the OSCE chairmanship from Portugal at the change of the year. Belarusian approval of the appointment is one of its conditions.

The mission had been closed down last year after the Belarus authorities refused visa extensions for mission employees. The uncooperative stance of the Belarus leadership in combination with its bad human rights record caused 14 European Union states, followed by the US and Norway, to issue an entry ban on Alyaksandr Lukashenka and 14 other Belarusian high officials. After talks between the OSCE and Belarus resumed in Vienna, an agreement was signed on 30 December outlining the mandate of the new OSCE mission in Minsk. Friction between the West and Belarus had been growing for some years.
Lukashenka alleged that the OSCE mission was interfering in the state's domestic affairs, particularly in the context of the 2001 presidential elections.

OSCE spokesman Richard Murphy outlined the mandate of the new group: "The new office will assist the Belarusian government in further promoting institution building, in further consolidating the rule of law, and in developing relations with civil society in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments. [...] Secondly, it will assist the Belarusian government in its efforts in developing economic and environmental activities. And thirdly, it will monitor and report accurately on the above-mentioned objectives." (RFE/RL POLAND, BELARUS, AND UKRAINE REPORT, 14 Jan 03)

As soon as the accord was signed, the Belarus authorities voiced the demand that -- since a return of the OSCE to Minsk was assured and proof of cooperation by Belarus had been established -- the travel ban on President Lukashenka and the other officials should be lifted immediately. Belarus Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastou stated on 30 December that "We value relations with the EU as a whole and with each specific country that is a EU member, and would like them to have the same reciprocal attitude toward us," adding that Belarus also wished to reopen a dialogue with the United States. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 3 Jan 03)

Voices from the OSCE offices sounded more cautious, however, and the European countries and the US have not rushed to lift the ban. A US spokesman talked of "an important first step" and added that "real progress depends on cooperation on the ground that respects the role and mandate of the organization's mission." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 3 Jan 03; via Lexis-Nexis) The new mission no doubt will be limited in its activities, but its progress and freedom surely will be watched closely by the international community. Monitoring of human rights and media freedom, two major areas, are not within the agreed realm of the mission's responsibilities, which has been one cause for concern. The question remains whether or when the US and European countries
will decide that the Belarus authorities have proved their willingness to cooperate enough to lift the travel ban.

**MOLDOVA**

**Light at the start of the tunnel?**

The closing months of 2002 yielded little in terms of progress with regard to the removal of Russian troops and equipment from the disputed Transdniester region of Moldova. In minor contrast, the opening days of 2003 provided mixed signals, along with a dim, yet nonetheless discernable, glimmer of movement.

As faint as it may have been, the "glimmer" appeared in the form of 28 rail cars full of engineering and medical equipment that departed the region for Russia during the first few days of January 2003. (ITAR-TASS, 8 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0108, via World News Connection) For those who consider the exodus of Russian troops and equipment from Moldova a positive event, this movement did in fact mark at least some minimal form of progress. However, the fact that the train was loaded with engineering and medical equipment (instead of ammunition and/or soldiers) indicates that what might appear to be a step in the right direction by Moscow may in reality represent the latest installment of procrastination in the resolution of the Transdniestr question.

In stark contrast to the visible progress symbolized by a train leaving the station were the terse words of Deputy Commander in Chief Lieutenant General Valery Yevnevich. "Rumors about the withdrawal of our troops from there [Transdniestr] are groundless... As long as our group, including peacemakers from the joint forces, remains in the region, there will be law and order there," he said. (ITAR-TASS, 10 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0110, via World News Connection)

So the new year in Transdniestr is characterized by law and order maintained by "peacemakers" in an area known globally for its black market and illegal arms trade, along with the departure of a train full of the one set of items that likely
would have been welcomed if left behind. Seasons change...and OSCE agreements are amended...but some things remain just plain reliable.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy

ARMENIA
Kocharian visits Putin
Armenian President Robert Kocharian met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin on 17 January. Putin thanked Kocharian for "his attention to the needs of Russian servicemen" stationed in Armenia, particularly in view of the newly arrived soldiers from one of the bases still occupied by Russia in Georgia in violation of international agreements. (CHANNEL ONE TV, 1800 GMT, 17 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Kocharian claimed that Russian-Armenian military cooperation proceeds on the basis of the CIS Collective Security Agreement and is not a threat to third countries, such as Azerbaijan. (ARMINFO, 1550 GMT, 17 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Kocharian also stressed that Russia is "the state with which we have the closest and most capacious relations," and which also has the biggest Armenian diaspora. Kocharian repeatedly emphasized his preference for secondary education in the Russian language, which is still practiced in many Armenian schools. (ITAR-TASS, 1601 GMT, 17 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

AZERBAIJAN
'Southern' Azerbaijan on the agenda
In anticipation of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visit to Baku in March, the Azeri press has raised the issue of the rights of ethnic Azeris in Iran
(estimated to be as high as 24-30 million, that is, more than three times the population of Azerbaijan). The main complaint raised by the Yeni Musavat newspaper is that there the Azeri language is forbidden in public life and is not a language of instruction, despite constitutional guarantees. Another long-term project has been to open an Azerbaijani consulate in Tabriz, where ethnic Azeris are compactly settled. The consulate was supposed to open in January but has not. The biggest complaint concerns Iran's detention since 12 December of "hundreds" of peaceful Azeri protesters. (YENI MUSAVAT, 13 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

GEORGIA
Russia violates embargo on Abkhazia
For the first time in 10 years a train from the Russian city of Sochi arrived in Sukhumi, Abkhazia on 25 December 2002, breaking the CIS-mandated embargo of the secessionist republic. Despite Georgian protests, the train has been running regularly ever since. (PRIME-NEWS, 1212 GMT, 10 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Officials of the Russian transportation ministry initially refused to discuss the matter with their Georgian counterparts and now are insisting that the train belongs to a private company. On 16 January, the Russian envoy for Abkhaz conflict settlement talks, First Deputy Foreign Minister Valeri Loshchinin, defended the resumption of rail traffic, claiming that economic ties can foster resolution of the conflict. (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 0920 GMT, 16 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

President Eduard Shevardnadze said that Georgia would raise the issue at the next discussion in the UN Security Council scheduled for 31 January and that Georgia may refuse to renew the mandate for the continuing presence of Russia's "peacekeeping" force which expired on 31 December 2002. (RUSTAVI-2 TV, 1700 GMT, 13 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Others in the government favored more immediate
measures. Merab Adeishvili, Georgia's transportation minister, told journalists of his readiness to cut communications and transport services to Russian military bases on Georgian territory. (PRIME-NEWS, 1212 GMT, 10 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) According to a policy articulated by Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagharishvili, the embargo against Abkhazia can be lifted in all directions on two conditions: that Abkhazia begins status talks with Georgia, and that ethnic Georgian refugees are returned safely to their homes in Abkhazia. (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 1339 GMT, 10 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Georgia's protests to Russian officials concerning the resumption of rail traffic and the mass distribution of Russian citizenship to the Abkhaz have yielded some limited results and Western attention. On 16 January, the Georgian press reported that the OSCE and NATO's Partnership for Peace had affirmed their readiness to finance the removal of Russian bases in Akhalkalaki and Batumi, assuming that Russia will fulfil its commitment to evacuate them. (PRIME-NEWS, 1039 GMT, 16 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The Abkhaz have agreed to resume negotiation on Abkhazia's status. The talks will be held in London this month with Georgia's Minister for Special Assignments Malkhaz Kakabadze and Abkhaz "Foreign Minister" Sergey Shamba. (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 1824 GMT, 17 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) A Georgian parliament delegation headed by Speaker Nino Burjanadze is scheduled to visit Moscow 20-25 January to discuss the Abkhaz crisis and new allegations that Arab and Chechen militants produced ricin poison in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge. (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 1320 GMT, 14 Jan 03; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Delimiting boundaries and reforming constitutions

Stalin's National Delimitation Program left a legacy of contested territory that still haunts the Central Asian republics. The initial design of the delimitation plan created a reliance on Moscow as the mediator of regional conflict. The borders, logical only in light of their regionally destabilizing context, were porous and a tolerable technicality for individuals living in the border regions of a Soviet Union that did not restrict inter-republic travel. While the collapse of the Soviet Union has forced the republics to address the issue of contested boundaries and revisit the problematic delimitation of Soviet cartographers, the ever-present tension along the boundaries has been especially evident over the past few weeks.

Since independence there have been numerous discussions on the issue of delimiting borders. The past year alone has seen the playing out of these politicized negotiations between China and Kyrgyzstan as well as between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 22 May and 25 Sep 02, respectively) The past month, however, has seen riots over the Kyrgyz-Tajik border; closure of the Kazakh-Uzbek border; tensions along the Turkmen-Uzbek border; and death due to land mines along the Tajik-Uzbek border.

THE KYRGYZ-TAJIK BORDER

The most glaringly illogical designs of national borders inherited from Stalin can be found in the Ferghana Valley, where territories of one country are surrounded by that of another. The southwestern part of Kyrgyzstan, for example, encompasses "island" territories over which Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have administrative jurisdiction. This affects transportation. For example, the only way to get to Isfana, one of the westernmost points of Kyrgyzstan, is by traveling through Tajikistan. (Likewise, the only way to travel from the east to Batken, the
provincial capital of southwestern Kyrgyzstan, is to go through the Sokh "island" of Uzbekistan.)

The Tajik enclave of Vorukh is one of the "islands" of Soviet construction. Home to around 40,000 ethnic Tajiks, Vorukh is separated from Tajikistan by 20 km of Kyrgyz land. In the spring of 2002, tensions arose as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan began erecting border posts on disputed land. (KABAR, 14 Jan 03; via www.times.kg) (A December 2002 Kyrgyz-Tajik commission identified approximately 21 square km of disputed territory between the two countries. (EURASIANET, 8 Jan 03; via www.eurasianet.org) On 3 January 2003, over 300 Tajiks from the Isfara region of Tajikistan (the section north of Vorukh from which originates the only road that connects Vorukh to Tajikistan proper) destroyed a Kyrgyz border and customs posts. (ITAR-TASS, 1126 GMT, 4 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0104, via World News Connection) In retaliation, the next day approximately 100 Kyrgyz destroyed a Tajik border post. Both sides have agreed to negotiations eventually leading to a delimitation of the borders, (AZATTYK, 15 Jan 03; via www.times.kg) but anything less than an open border disrupts trade and perplexes local populations who do not see the need for the new border posts. And while the borders between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan became less porous with the 1999 invasion of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), (THE NIS OBSERVED, 10 Jul 02) the border issue has been unresolved for over 10 years, leading locals to interpret (albeit fluidly) and subsequently accept (albeit possessively) borders of local and unofficial construction.

THE KAZAKH-UZBEK BORDER

Despite substantial progress in the delimitation of the Kazakh-Uzbek border, (THE NIS OBSERVED, 25 Sep 02) Uzbekistan moved to close its border with Kazakhstan at the beginning of the new year. According to Nurmat Otabekov of the Uzbek Ministry of Health, the reasons for the closure were to prohibit the spread of infectious disease and "stop low-quality food from entering Uzbekistan." The more realistic reasons for the border closing, however, were to
stop smuggling and the outflow of money from Uzbekistan (along the border, there is a thriving black market currency exchange of the Uzbek Sum), and an attempt to boost the domestic economy by encouraging production of local consumer goods that are otherwise purchased in Kazakhstan. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 12 Jan 03) The result, though, is a disruption of trade and an increase in border tensions.

THE TAJIK-UZBEK BORDER
In late December 2002, two more Tajik residents from the Isfara district of Tajikistan were killed along the heavily mined Tajik-Uzbek border. Since the Uzbeks began planting antipersonnel mines along the border (in response to the 1999 invasion of the IMU), more than 70 civilians have been killed and dozens more have been wounded. Tajikistan repeatedly has protested, but Uzbek authorities have ignored the complaint in deference to claims of border security. (ITAR-TASS, 0644 GMT, 30 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1230, and MASHHAD VOICE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 3 Jan 03; FBIS-NES-2003-0104, via World News Connection)

TURKMEN-UZBEK TENSIONS
The most recent tensions between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were related to the 25 November 2002 assassination attempt on Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 4 Dec 02) In mid-December, the Turkmen National Security Ministry raided the residence of the Uzbek ambassador to Turkmenistan in a search for Boris Shikhmoradov, the former Turkmen deputy prime minister who was a suspect in the coup plot against Niyazov. While the Uzbeks did not respond by moving troops to strengthen the border, they did view the act as a violation of international law and diplomatic damage control ensued. Though tensions remain, both sides have rhetorically tried to diffuse the awkwardness of the situation. (INTERFAX, 1447 GMT, 20 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1220, via World News Connection)
**Issues of Reform**

In addition to the border threats endemic to the region, internal threats also have emerged. Roughly placed under the rubric of reform, political change (or at least the growing pains associated with the young republics) has been unavoidable.

**CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM**

In response to calls for his resignation and to appease a dissatisfied public increasingly active in opposition protests, (THE NIS OBSERVED, 22 May 02) Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev has scheduled a national referendum aimed at changing the constitution. The envisioned changes would: 1) replace the current bicameral parliament with a unicameral parliament in 2005; 2) merge the Court of Arbitration into the Supreme Court; and 3) allow for the establishment of political parties based on religious or ethnic principles. The new constitution also would increase state control over national education. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 15 Jan 03, and ITAR-TASS, 1107 GMT, 13 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0113, via World News Connection)

While the referendum approach to implementing political change is laudable, the outcome of the referendum likely is intended to increase Akaev's legitimacy for the remainder of his term. The Aksy riots and regular protests that ensued weakened his control over the state. Opposition figures have protested that there has not been enough time to review the proposed amendments properly, though Akaev has countered criticism by describing the constitutional changes as a compromise intended to appease the opposition. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 15 Jan 03)

**JUDICIAL REFORM**

The Kazakh Conference for Democratization and Civil Society Development has maintained that the Kazakh constitution needs to be amended to obtain proper electoral representation. (INTERFAX, 1619 GMT, 10 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0111, via World News Connection) While the Kyrgyz referendum likely will
bolster such calls for constitutional reform in the region, the Kazakh Supreme Judicial Council has taken its own steps towards implementing change through the introduction of a jury system. Kairat Mami, chairman of the Kazakh Supreme Court, remarked that "judicial procedures involving juries will not only stimulate the principle of trial competitiveness but will also be a significant step towards democratizing the society and state." (INTERFAX, 1057 GMT, 23 Dec 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1223, via World News Connection)

VIOLENT AND EXTRINSIC REFORM

The Kyrgyz and Kazakh steps towards democratic reform are no doubt welcomed by the West. However, the recent assassination attempt against Niyazov was acknowledged by some as a welcome expression of a desire for reform. A report by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) argues that "there is no other way to achieve systematic change and stop the dangerous spiral of decline than for Niyazov, one way or another, to leave." (ICG, 17 Jan 03; via www.crisisweb.org) Extrinsic calls for the need to reform are seldom voiced so blatantly.

Meanwhile, the October 2002 speech by British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray still causes debate. In light of the West's increased economic support for Uzbekistan (due to its cooperation in the allied actions against Afghanistan), Ambassador Murray stated bluntly that "Uzbekistan is not a functioning democracy, nor does it appear to be moving in the direction of democracy." (EURASIANET, 14 Jan 03; via www.eurasianet.org)

These concerns and internal urges for reform, coupled with the challenges that tensions along borders present, speak of a region having to negotiate a political and national identity in a mutual relationship with its neighbors who share a Soviet past yet are forging different futures. One hopes that the delimitation of boundaries as well as constitutional and judicial reforms will go far to improving
the lives of ordinary citizens perplexed by political actions that do not appear to benefit them.