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Hey there little Red Riding Hood….
That Vladimir Putin has quite a sense of humor. When asked about the progress of reform, and the need for Russia to perform a serious overhaul of the structures of its economy and state institutions, President Putin agreed wholeheartedly: "This is most important and it will certainly meet with favorable response from our partners." (ITAR-TASS 1206 GMT, 13 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0813 via World News Connection)

He also seemed aware of the failure of previous attempts at reform that were just cosmetic: "The wolf remained a wolf even in Grandma's disguise and swallowed Little Red Riding Hood after all," quipped Putin, who was noted by ITAR-TASS (Ibid.) as being "jovial" in that descriptive comment. (Now if Russia was the wolf, who do you suppose was Red? Moreover, his version of the story has an "FSB ending.")

But reform really has been the talk of the town of late: getting serious about reform; undertaking profound reform projects; finishing with reform and getting back to work; and reforming the bodies assembled to oversee reform projects to make them more flexible to the needs of reform. It almost sounds like any other modern political bureaucracy.

One of the major bureaucratic headaches of both the Yel'tsin and Putin regimes has been the task of administrative reform. The basic premise underlying the reform attempts is that corruption among state officials is too widespread, and there should be some clear manner of screening, monitoring, or investigating
officials at all levels in order to quash the graft that is siphoning resources from state coffers, allowing rampant 'shakedowns' by government employees (the police, for instance), creating a "protected" wealthy class of Oligarchs, and discouraging would-be dutiful tax-payers from fulfilling their obligations.

One of the innovations of the Yel'tsin years was a proposal by the Chubais-Nemtsov team to increase the salaries of state employees while insisting on a full disclosure of income and tax records by the civil servants. The plan worked in part, but many so-called reformers were caught in dubious 'cash transfer' schemes (advances on unwritten books and donations to non-existent foundations spring to mind), and forced to resign or at least weakened in the bureaucratic battles, thus enervating the administrative reformers.

Putin has established a new commission to study, make recommendations on and eventually oversee his own brand of administrative reform. He lobbed the project over to the Government, Prime Minister Kasyanov, who then dropped the ball in Deputy Prime Minister Boris Aleshin's court, despite the history of attempts at administrative reform by other ministers and departments within the government. As one (clearly cynical) analyst noted: "A newly created superfluous structure will analyze superfluous functions." (Report by Yelena Lashkina, ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA (RG) 13 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0813 via World News Connection)

Aleshin convened the new reform commission to discuss the best approach to streamlining the burgeoning government structures. After a two hour discussion of the task at hand, it was decided: The issue of state reform was too complex for one commission, seven would be needed, each with its own Chief and staffs. The divisions of the new state reform group are as follows: Industry and Science, to be headed by Anton Danilov-Danilyan; the Natural Resources Utilization and Agriculture section, headed by Viktor Tolokonsky; the Energy, (Tele)Communications, Transport and Construction group, headed by Andrei
Sharonov; the Foreign Economic Activity sector overseen by Yevgeni Primakov; the group for Ensuring State Security by Vladislav Putilin; the Social Obligations, Health Care, Education, Sport and Information section headed by Aleksandr Pochinok, and the State Market Regulation group led by Anton Drozdov. [RG (Ibid)]

There is some disappointment that no state group to Eliminate the Duplication of Peripheral Functions was established, but there are probably several similar groups at work already.

**For Sale: Presidential apt with panoramic views**

Those looking for a second home away in the mountains might consider a five room, fourth floor apartment in Yekaterinburg with views of a city pond and dam. The realtor's gem, listed with the local Atomstroikompleks agent, comes complete with a swimming pool, billiard room, private security, and oh yes, was also the former digs of the Yel'tsin family. The home is not as luxurious as one might expect of a presidential retreat since it dates from Boris Yel'tsin's days as a local Communist Party leader in the region, but it looks likely to fetch a fair farthing. Apparently souvenir-hungry Russians "of means" are no longer satisfied with flags or posters as remembrances from the Soviet days. The home of a former Soviet official now commands a significant price as the latest trend in nostalgia turns to real estate. (MOSCOW TIMES, 12 Aug 03 via Johnson's Russia List #7286 12 Aug 03)

**Dashing through the snow....**

After dealing with new trends among Russia's monied class, it is perhaps only fair to consider the trends among the political/state elites. It seems a certain Sports and Equestrian Factory is being kept in business by the demand from politicians and their businessmen friends for horse-drawn carriages.
The factory is apparently capable of turning out a full line from the simple, yet elegant sleigh to a horse-drawn carriage with television and air conditioning; former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin is said to have bought one, so has the former Kremlin Manager Pavel Borodin (allegedly for his boss, former President Yel'tsin). (FINANCIAL TIMES, 20 Feb 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) Moscow Mayor Luzhkov may establish a special zone in the park for horse drawn carriages, and the Presidential Administration is said to be buying them in bulk. Better get them quick before the Administrative Reform Commission hears about this!

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Scott Dullea

Russia looks for a foothold in Southeast Asia
On 4 August Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia — the first Russian head of state ever to visit that Southeast Asian country. Officially, the summit was to finalize arms purchases, sign agreements on communication and technology, and witness the initiation of the Russian-Malaysian Business Forum. (BERNAMA NEWS AGENCY, 1 Aug 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Even given the $900 million deal for 18 Russian-made Su-30MK fighter aircraft, Malaysia, two-thirds of which is covered by jungle, may seem like an out-of-the-way location for a visit from the President of the Russian Federation. Taking into account, however, the potential benefits for Russia in this part of Asia, it is clear that this two-day official visit was part of a calculated effort to continue and to enhance Russia’s decades old policy of seeking stronger influence in the region.

The trip, which was originally scheduled for 8 July but postponed due to the bombing at the Moscow rock concert, comes just over a month after Putin’s Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, met in Moscow with another Southeast Asian
prime minister, Bounyang Vorachith of Laos. During those talks the Kremlin agreed to forgive 70% of the debt which Laos owes to Russia and to allow the remaining $380 million to be paid gradually and at a favorable interest rate over the next 33 years. (ENGLISH.PRAVDA.RU, 24 Jun 03) This, may seem odd considering the debt that Russia owes its own creditors. Laos, however, like Malaysia, is a useful foothold for Russia in the promisingly profitable region.

The idea of Russian engagement in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific region in general is not new. In the late 1980’s Russia established ties with the states of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) as part of President Mikhail Gorbachev’s revised Third World policies that emphasized relations with Asian countries of various economic stages of development. Former Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov in 1996 also stressed the region as a priority of Russian foreign policy and in 1997 won acceptance for Russia into the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization (APEC), despite indications that Russia did not meet the organization’s standards for membership. (ENGLISH.PRAVDA.RU, 23 Oct 02)

There are many possible benefits for Russia to having a position of power and influence in the Far East; among them are potential profits from these military hardware and oil markets and, in some cases, useful business-like relations with elements of the Muslim world. As prospects for increased American and Chinese influences grow, the Kremlin has realized the necessity for stepping up its own activity there.

Russia has made significant efforts already to strengthen relations between itself, India and China in an attempt not only to secure stability on the continent but also to counterbalance U.S. endeavors to increase influence in Asia. Moscow and Delhi have been conducting joint military exercises and a vigorous arms trade. Sino-Russian relations have also been dynamic in the diplomatic, economic and security arenas. In May 2003, Chinese President Hu Jintao made
a state visit to Moscow where he and President Putin blessed a major oil deal between Russia’s Yukos and China’s National Petroleum Corporation worth $150 billion which envisions a pipeline to China to ship up to 700 million tons of oil from 2005 to 2030. Moreover, China has become the top customer for Russian arms sales, (ASIA TIMES, 3 June 03 via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL) #7208, 3 Jun 03) with an overall level of trade between the two countries reaching $12 billion in 2002. (RFE/RL, 26 May 03 via JRL #7196, 27 May 03)

Russia and China also are working to counterbalance outside influences through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which in its May 2003 summit set up a permanent secretariat in Beijing, appointed its first executive secretary and emphasized security measures through the establishment of its own anti-terrorist organization. (RUSSIAN CHANNEL ONE TV, 29 May 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) According to various international press sources, the organization may be considering expanding its membership.

Stressing the importance of the bond between Russia, China and India, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman A.V. Yakovenko announced that President Putin had met with his Chinese and Indian counterparts during the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York (ITAR-TASS, 26 May 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database), where they discussed the importance of mutualties and cooperation between them for ensuring stability and security in Asia. The three countries reportedly have given strong signals that they would like to join ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation that is essentially a non-aggression treaty. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESS (AFP), 18 June 03 via JRL #7227, 18 June 03) Indeed, Russia has already engaged ASEAN in the security arena, as in April 2002 when ASEAN and Kremlin officials met to discuss security in Southeast Asia; in June 2003 Russia signed a joint declaration with ASEAN for a partnership of peace, security, stability and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
China and India are certainly the major components of Russia’s plan for Asia, but Moscow is playing the entire field in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to its efforts with Laos, Malaysia and ASEAN, where Moscow is a "dialogue partner," Russia continues its business and diplomatic dealings with South Korea. In July 2003 the Joint Russian—South Korean Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation met in Seoul for its fifth annual meeting, the most significant results of which included South Korea’s expressed interest in new small energy projects in Siberia, access of South Korean automobile and automobile parts manufacturing to the Russian market, and final settlement of Soviet debts owed to South Korea. The agreement, which, in September 2003, will be finalized and signed by the respective finance ministers in Moscow, writes off $600 million of the $2.24 billion owed to Seoul and allows the remainder to be paid by 2025. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Jul 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0721 via World News Connection) Indications of improved relations on a lower level include an information sharing agreement also reached at a separate meeting in July 2003 between Russian and South Korean maritime law enforcement agencies. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Jul 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0721 via World News Connection)

Russia also has continued a working dialogue with Japan, although it gives Japan a noticeably lower priority than other Asia-Pacific countries. In June, Moscow dispatched Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko to Vladivostok to host Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. In these discussions, Japan expressed interest in building an oil pipeline from eastern Siberia to the Asia-Pacific region [(an idea not necessarily in Russia’s best interest given the more lucrative plan to build a pipeline to China), (REUTERS, 27 May 03 via JRL #7198, 27 May 03)] and in improving communication between Sakhalin and the Japanese islands; the two countries also signed a bilateral agreement under which Japan will help Russia to recycle its nuclear submarines. (RFE/RL Vol. 4, No. 26, 1 Jul 03).
The Russian Defense Ministry has also maintained communication with Japan. In April 2003, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov visited Japan to discuss possible joint military maneuvers. Then, in July 2003 General Yuri Yakubov, commander of the Russian Far Eastern Military District, followed up with a visit to his Japanese counterparts on the Japanese island of Sapporo where he and the commander of Japan’s Northern Army discussed further details of what would be historic joint ground and naval maneuvers. (ITAR-TASS, 16 Jul 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0716 via World News Connection) Indeed, the Japanese government has since announced that its self-defense forces will take part in joint exercises with the Russian Pacific Fleet in late August 2003. (ITAR-TASS, 8 Aug 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Although Khristenko, in an interview following his talks in Vladivostok with the Japanese Foreign Minister, (ROSSISKAYA GAZETA, 15 Jul 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0716 via World News Connection) played up a (previously resolved) decision to launch the next part of the Sakhalin-2 project, which involves a $4 billion Japanese investment, it is clear that Russia’s relationship with Japan remains tainted by the continuing dispute over the Kuril Islands. Furthermore, considering Japan’s well established ties to the U.S., Russia may be less willing to expend energy on improving relations with Tokyo when it could be focusing on more fertile, profitable and susceptible territory elsewhere in the region.

If Russia wants to be able to compete in this expanded "Great Game," it must focus on establishing its own role concerning the region’s stability. This may explain Moscow’s recent efforts to soothe the tensions on the Korean Peninsula, where the Kremlin may see the possibility of reasserting itself as a regional and global power by playing a leading role in ongoing negotiations. Indeed, Russia most recently has proposed that such talks be conducted in a four-sided forum (U.S., North Korea, Russia and China) or a six-sided one (with the inclusion of South Korea and Japan). (INTERFAX via the Wall Street Journal, 14 Aug 03)
Moreover, preventing conflict may also preclude an increase in U.S. military power and presence in the region.

Russia lacks the military might to compete even with the current level of U.S. military presence and capabilities in the area, although it attempts to create the perception of a Russian military presence by means of its military cooperation with Japan and India, including a June 2003 deployment of a Russian naval task force to the Indian Ocean (RTR RUSSIA TV, 27 May 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database). However, Moscow's real strength consists of its arms export industry and its oil export. Russia would like to exploit its Muslim population to strike a chord. During his visit to Malaysia, President Putin, noting that Russia is home to over 20 million Muslims, announced his desire for Russia to become a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), an organization of Muslim states that aims at protecting the interests of all the world's Muslims. (RFE/RL, Vol. 4, No. 32, 12 Aug 03) If Russia were accepted, as a member it might give Moscow a competitive edge in the race for influence in the region, at least if its actions in Chechnya were overlooked.

It remains to be seen however, if there is enough long-term support in Moscow to maintain such an Eurasianist foreign and economic policy approach or if the Atlanticist attitude will keep Russia's energy focused on becoming part of Europe and the West.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Kate Martin

POLITICAL PARTIES
And they're off...
The election campaign for the December parliamentary race is in full swing, and interestingly, it seems as though this year's politicians are taking their cues from days of yore. Advertisement on television, according to one expert, follows — uninspiringly — the program set by Boris Yeltsin, while the real money remains on rumormongering.

The popular tack is to downplay the politicians, and focus instead on voters in televised campaigns. Vladimir Yevstrafev, President of the Russian Association of Advertising Agencies, said he's seen it all before. "In the presidential campaign of the Yeltsin years everything that involved direct and seemingly accidental appearances by ordinary people played brilliantly. In the current ad campaign all the parties are using 'ordinary people.' In the end they have merged into a single stream, as if all launched by the same person," he said. (IZVESTIA, 8 Aug 03 via Johnson's Russia List #7285)

As for the rumors, they appear to indicate that Grigori Yavlinsky may be more of a political threat than many would have believed. An active campaign to convince voters that a Yabloko without Yavlinsky is in the works does, indeed, manages to accomplish the exact opposite. While two newspapers reported the recent establishment of a movement to oust the Yabloko leader, the coverage is more noticeable in what is missing — the names of any of the purported members of the political party seeking to be leaderless.

Indeed, PRAVDA.RU (4 Aug 03 via Johnson's Russia List #7276) reported that the "party's followers both from Moscow and Russian regions expressed their support to the movement," but was unable to identify anyone other than Igor Morozov, who made the announcement, and his membership in the party is disputed by party officials. Further claims, meant to bolster the argument, also weaken it. According to one newspaper, Yavlinsky's ouster is sought due to allegations of "a financial-political conspiracy with the oligarchs, usurpation of
power within the party, and the populist nature of YABLOKO activities."
(GAZETA, 5 Aug 03, via WPS Monitoring Agency, Johnson's Russia List #7277)

Yet Gazeta's own coverage belies the points it tries to make: Igor Morozov, who announced the formation of the movement, refuses to comment on the movement's members (who could, one must note, move to another party if truly interested in staying in the liberal camp while separating from Yavlinsky). Yavlinsky certainly cannot be said to have usurped leadership of the party in recent days — he was a founding and eponymous member — and while the other co-founders have departed, with some analysts apportioning some blame for that onto Yavlinsky's autocratic shoulders, all that happened years ago. The dreaded connection with the oligarchs, conversely, simply serves notice that the much-reviled Boris Berezovsky might take advantage of the pressure on Yavlinsky and sneak into the Duma through this new movement. [In a 7 August television interview, Central Election Commission Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov noted that the oligarch could participate in the elections but must present his registration papers in person, at which point he likely would be arrested. Berezovsky has said that he would return to Moscow as soon as the prosecutor-general stops inviting him. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 11 Aug 03)]

Paranoia, often with reason, remains a staple of Russian politics, and the folks at YABLOKO do not disappoint. The deputy head of the party, Sergei Mitrokhin, called the announcements of the movement "a banal black PR campaign." Morozov, Mitrokhin charged, has never been connected to YABLOKO, and is likely an "unprincipled quasi-political" individual working at the behest of Anatoli Chubais. (ROSBALT, 1 Aug 03 via www.eng.yabloko.ru) Moreover, the reported movement doesn't have any YABLOKO members, he said. (ROSBALT, 5 Aug 03 via www.eng.yabloko.ru) The head of the party's Bashkortostan regional branch, Igor Rabinovich, looked elsewhere for the culprit, and said there was a long list of groups that might be interested in forming a Yavlinsky-less movement, including United Russia, the Communist Party and the presidential administration.
Unfortunately, most of these suppositions could be true; the motivation however, is questionable. It comes as no surprise that Yavlinsky is a less-than-collegial colleague at times. Much has been said about the danger facing the two liberal parties, YABLOKO and Union of Right Forces (SPS) particularly since they have proven incapable of cooperating in any sort of a coalition to obtain parliamentary seats. YABLOKO poses little threat to any of the parties listed as likely to be behind the "movement." The only political party that could possibly benefit from Yavlinsky's ouster, or even just rumors of a weakened leadership, would be SPS, to which worried YABLOKO-ists would turn, potentially guaranteeing that SPS would clear the five-percent vote hurdle for seats in the Duma. That could be motivation however, only for the naïf who believes that Yavlinsky would disappear quietly from the political scene; if the folks at SPS know anything, it is that Yavlinsky will not go anywhere quietly.

Nor does it make sense that the presidential administration is behind this. The democratic camp is small enough to be an annoyance, but too small to constitute a political threat to the presidential party, United Russia. If both YABLOKO and SPS manage to overcome the hurdle, their representation in the Duma still would be underwhelming.

The Communist Party (KPRF) has its own problems at the moment, with yet another splinter appearing. According to KPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov, Duma Deputy Sergei Glazev decided to lead a nationalist-patriotic bloc with fellow MP Dmitri Rogozin, rather than run for the Duma on the Communist Party ticket. According to Novye izvestiya, Kremlin influences have been noted in the formation of that new bloc. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 11 Aug 03) This allegation makes more sense than similar charges concerning YABLOKO — the Communist Party does threaten the majority of United Russia, and a split in the communist nationalist forces would be beneficial to United Russia.
As to the YABLOKO situation, it could simply be a one-off attempt to see how easy it would be to dislodge Yavlinsky, in which case the rumors should die down before the September party congress. All should become clear then.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Maolmordha McGowan

Mozdok attack

At approximately 19:00 on Saturday August 1, a Kamaz truck was allowed to pass through the security checkpoints at the entrance to the Mozdok military hospital compound in North Ossetia. Seconds later the truck exploded, causing extensive damage to the hospital's administrative building. According to the on-site rescue teams, some 50 persons were killed by the blast, while more than 80 received wounds of varying severity. (INTERFAIX, 12 August 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-08012 via World News Connection)

Fragments recovered by military investigators showed that the bomb contained Ammonium Nitrate—the same fertilizer used in the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 4 August 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The blast produced was equivalent to one ton of TNT.

Speaking to the press after a meeting with his superior, Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov, Deputy Prosecutor Sergei Fridinsky stated that the installation at Mozdok had most likely been targeted due to its status as a first-line evacuation hospital. Servicemen wounded in Chechnya are typically sent to Mozdok for initial treatment prior to being transferred to other military hospitals. (ITAR-TASS, 3 August 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0803 via World News Connection)

Who is to blame?
In the aftermath of the explosion, which marked the fourth suicide attack since May [12 May, 60 persons killed in Znamenskoye, Chechnya; 14 May, 18 persons killed in the Gudermes district; 5 June, 16 persons killed in a bus-bomb near Mozdok (ITAR-TASS, 2 August 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0803 via World News Connection)], President Vladimir Putin was cited by his press service as saying, "The negligence we observe, the negligence that makes (such) crimes possible, has gone beyond all acceptable boundaries." While it should be noted that Putin did not specifically attack the Security Services, other senior Russian figures were quick to point to failures on the part of both the FSB and the MVD. State Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznyov, speaking from St. Petersburg, claimed that the Secret Services were inefficient, and pointed out that "It might have been a rush decision to transfer the guidance of the anti-terror operation in Chechnya from its former supervisor, the FSB, to the interior ministry." (INTERFAX, 1 August 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0801 via World News Connection). This "transfer" was mainly cosmetic, since the Interior Ministry is believed now to be controlled largely by the FSB.

Former FSB boss Sergei Stepashin was even more pointed in his remarks, questioning why the Mozdok attack had not been stopped: "Why did representatives of the prosecutor’s office say right after the Mozdok bombing that they had known how it was organized?" (WPS-RUSSIAN POLITICAL MONITOR, 6 August 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It would seem that Stepashin’s question is a pertinent one, given Minister for Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov’s assertion that the "Secret Services know these people by name. These are the same people who engineered the crimes in Moscow, Grozny and other Russian cities." (ITAR-TASS, 3 Aug 03 FBIS-SOV-2003-0803 via World News Connection)

Despite all these statements and allegations, it is highly unlikely that the FSB will in fact take any blame for this latest terrorist incident. No one close to President Putin has indicated that the FSB will be investigated for what is, at best, criminal
negligence to prepare for, and prevent terrorist strikes. Instead a convenient fall
guy will, of necessity, be found: the "culprit" in fact has already been unveiled. Lt. Colonol Artur Arakelyan, the commander of the Mozdok compound has been placed under arrest. He has been charged with criminal negligence and failure to carry out orders. Arakelyan had been in his post less than a month when the attack occurred. Hospital employees and local residents interviewed by Vremya MN’s correspondent spoke out in defense of Arakelyan: "They are making a scapegoat out of him," commented one of the nurses. "Once again, they will put those who are not guilty in jail, and the criminals will walk free," said a local resident.

The question remains to be asked whether the FSB is incompetent, negligent, or whether there is something more sinister at work: Is it politically expedient for Putin to allow some acts of terrorism to take place, in order to be able to claim, on grounds of "national security," that the FSB needs to expand its jurisdiction ever further?

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Kris Beasly

Big plans, no money
In recent weeks, senior Russian Air Force officers have presented their plans for the future development of their service, but as has been the case for a number of years, lack of funding will continue to limit their ability to carry out those plans. Indeed, this deficit causes consistent problems, such as poor maintenance, insufficient training, operation and support infrastructure, all of which reduce combat capability and increase mishaps.

The future
On 8 Aug 03, Air Force Commander Colonel-General Vladimir Mikhailov addressed the press before the 6th Moscow Aviation and Space Show (MAKS-2003), and on 12 Aug 03 (Air Force Day in Russia) he briefed President Vladimir Putin on the current state of the Russian Air Force and its future plans. Mikhailov said the Air Force is working on three upgraded fighters: the MiG-29SMT (which they will begin fielding in 2004), the Su-27SN fighter, and an upgraded MiG-31. He also discussed the Yak-130 trainer/light attack aircraft (a likely Su-25 replacement), the new Il-112V cargo aircraft (recently selected to replace both the An-26 and An-24 in the heavy lift role), and the upgraded Il-76MN medium airlifter.

According to Mikhailov, the Air Force will concentrate on new "army support" aircraft such as a light transport aircraft and utility and attack helicopters in the next few years. In fact, Mikhailov’s deputy, Major General Dmitri Morozov, said the Air Force also would receive 50 new Mi-28 helicopter gunships over the next seven years. In the air defense arena, the Air Force is ready to field a new long-range air defense system, the S-400, in 2004. Finally, the Air Force Chief discussed the upgrade work in progress on the remaining 15 Tu-160 strategic (i.e. nuclear) bombers being done at the Gorbunov Kazan plant. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0812 via World News Connection and AP & MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Aug 03 via Lexis-Nexis) In fact, he was so enthusiastic about the upgraded bomber, he announced one would be included in the major exercise starting this month in the Far East (GAZETA.RU, 8 Aug 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis).

Of course, all of these modernization programs have dragged on for years because of the military's funding deficit. The Air Force has purchased very few new airframes since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, despite repeated announcements of intentions to do so, and it seems unlikely the government will soon be able to fund any such plans. (AP & MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Aug 03 via Lexis-Nexis) But, let us not forget, Russia has a double purpose for all of this
design, engineering and manufacturing work: preparing for the possibility that money will be found to purchase some of these aircraft for itself and continuing to leverage the remains of the mighty Soviet industrial complex for foreign sales. As Mikhailov himself continues to emphasize "...the upgrading of aircraft keeps Russian aircraft-building facilities busy [sic] maintains them for developing aircraft of the fifth generation." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0812 via World News Connection). It is these foreign sales that provide much needed hard currency as well as political and military influence around the world (NIS Observed, Volume VII Number 14, 11 Sep 02)

While President Putin expressed support for the Air Force and its plans, he also challenged the Air Force to move into the future of warfare by asking it to think about "...rearming strategic aviation. It should carry not only powerful nuclear weapons but also powerful conventional charges." (INTERFAX, 12 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0812 via World News Connection) In other words, Putin is trying to prod the AF into, to use the current U.S. terminology, "transforming." It’s obvious that the President took notice of the way the U.S. fought in both Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and wants to equip the Russian military with long-range strike aircraft equipped with conventional precision weapons, as the U.S. has today. Russia currently has no JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munition) type of cheap, autonomous, precision-guided munition, nor do any of its aircraft have the avionics to employ such weapons, nor are its forces trained to employ the necessary tactics. "As far as high-precision weapons systems are concerned, the West has long since adopted the principle of "fire-and-forget." But Russian units need a laser beam trained at the target...The state arms procurement program specifies 80 kinds of shells for high-precision weapons systems. Not one of them has reached the troops yet." ("Can Russia Fight Iraq?" by Nikolai Poroskov in Vremya Novostei, 6 Feb 03 via WPS Monitoring Agency via CDI Russian Weekly #243)

**Current challenges**
The main challenge faced by the Russian Air Force is a severe lack of funding, which would support flying hours to keep its aviators current, new or upgraded equipment and give its people decent pay and facilities. "Like the army and navy, Russia's air force has suffered from underfunding, poor training and low morale since the collapse of the Soviet Union." (AFP, 12 Aug 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

General Mikhailov said Russian aviators are getting less than 40 hours a year flying time for experienced pilots and between 60 and 80 hours for younger crewmembers, while the goal is 80-100 hours per year. (ITAR-TASS, 11 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0811 via World News Connection) By comparison, in Western militaries, several hundred hours a year is the norm. This lack of training comes with a heavy price in lives and equipment lost. For example, General Mikhailov attributed the recent crash of a Su-24 jet, in which both crewmembers died, to pilot error due to lack of proficiency in flying at night and in bad weather. Ironically, the crash, in a remote mountain forest in the Chita Region of Siberia, came during a training flight. (ITAR-TASS, 8 Aug 03 and INTERFAX, 8 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0808 via World News Connection).

It is interesting to note that at the same time he’s citing poor training as a major problem for his Air Force, Mikhailov is setting in motion plans to train a number of Malaysian military pilots in Russia over the next few years to fly the 18 Su-30MKM fighters for which Malaysia signed a contract in May 2003. The $900M deal is a huge boon to Russia and its military industrial complex, but one has to wonder if the Malaysians will get better training than Russia’s own pilots? (ITAR-TASS, 4 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0804 via World News Connection).

While precision-guided munitions and quality training are much less of a problem for the U.S. and other western Air Forces, the lack of funding to replace aging equipment is a problem all share. The lack of new airframes produces two consequent problems: lower combat capability and higher maintenance costs due to an aging fleet. The Russian Air Force may be forced to reduce its fleet by
about 50% in the next eight years unless more funding is found to upgrade and replace planes. According to a source at the AF weapons department, "Our experts estimated that by 2011, the Air Force's fleet may be slashed by more than half unless the necessary funds are allocated to modernize and repair it."

The same source said that at least 40% of the aircraft are over 20 years old while only 1% of the planes and helicopters are younger than five years old. (INTERFAX, 30 Jul 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0730 via World News Connection) The US Air Force is facing some of the same concerns. In March 2003, General "Doc" Foglesong, Vice Chief of Staff, expressed concerns about "maintaining an ever-aging fleet of aircraft" to members of the House Armed Services Committee subcommittee on readiness. (USAF Print News, 19 Mar 03 via AFLINK website) On 25 Feb 03, USAF Chief of Staff, Gen. John Jumper told the U.S. Senate that a major stress on his service is the cost of maintaining an increasingly dated fleet. According to Jumper, "Our average aircraft is 23 years old -- the oldest we've ever had to deal with. We're facing corrosion and fatigue problems we've never seen before." The AF reports that the cost of maintaining the fleet is increasing at about 10 percent per year. (USAF Print News, 25 Feb 03 via AFLINK website)

The lack of money has produced operational concerns as well. General Mikhailov said that his service is no longer able to provide positive air traffic control over portions of Russia, especially the northern border area. "Today, on-duty radars cover mainly the western and southern borders of Russia, while in the north and internal regions of the country it ... covers only 35 percent of the territory. The problem is there and is complicated, but it could be resolved," he said. The unspoken, but obvious conclusion that he intended to convey is that money is the answer yet again. (AP & MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Aug 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

**Current success**

Despite the major funding issues however, Russia is having some success in forward deploying her Air Force. After months of discussions, it looks like the
Russian AF will soon be stationing Sukhoi’s and MiGs at Kant, Kyrgyzstan. As its share of the force, Kyrgyzstan will provide four L-39 trainers, as well as rescue helicopters. (ITAR-TASS, 11 Aug 03, 1016 GMT; FBIS-SOV-2003-0811 via World News Connection) General Mikhailov, during a recent visit to Kant, said that Russia planned to station several fighters and 400-500 servicemen there permanently as part of a new rapid deployment force, although he left open the possibility that the final numbers might change.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Dept of Defense or the United States government.

**Newly Independent States: Western Region**

By Nadezda Kinsky

**UKRAINE**

**End of the road - again**

The Gongadze murder investigation suffered another serious setback on August 1, when a key suspect died while in custody. The Ukrainian Institute for Mass Information (IMI) reported that Ihor Honcharov died in an ambulance on the way from jail to the hospital — it is still unclear why he required hospitalization, however. Honcharov is a former policeman who was implicated as one of the major suspects in the murder of the journalist Gongadze in 1999. The case has still not been resolved and is being watched by organizations and politicians inside and outside Ukraine for progress towards a solution. The beheaded corpse of Heorhiy Gongadze was positively identified just this year and finally buried by his mother and girlfriend. They are both deeply committed to trying to move the investigation forward and are being supported by watchdog organizations like Reporters without Borders. The government has been accused repeatedly of blocking the investigation, which continues to flounder.
Honcharov was due to give evidence for the Prosecutor-General Svyatoslav Piskun later this month. Last year, thirteen suspects were named in the case, all allegedly members in a gang led by Honcharov. The thirteen suspects and Honcharov were all police and intelligence officers, a fact which, along with the Melnychenko tapes, implicating President Kuchma, are the major grounds for the accusation that Kuchma and the government had a hand in the crime (an accusation they consistently deny).

Honcharov was the lynch pin in the investigation, and there is suspicion in Ukraine that he was killed deliberately before he could give embarrassing evidence. Honcharov's death was announced officially on August 5 by Interfax, but his body had already been cremated on August 3; a highly suspicious, albeit obvious, means of destroying possible evidence.

IMI has stated that it had received a letter from Honcharov before his death. The letter, the authenticity of which has not been verified by IMI, was passed to the institution with the instruction that it only be opened in the event of Honcharov's death; states that he had evidence on the murder of Gongadze — even an audio recording and a confession by the murderer. The letter does not reveal the location of this evidence, because the author did not trust the prosecutor-general's office and would only give this evidence in court with journalists as witnesses. (Zerkalo Nedeli, 9 Aug 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) It was reprinted in Ukrainian on August 7 on the Ukrayinska Pravda website (www.pravda.com.ua).

The death of Ihor Honcharov shortly before his hearing is just the latest outrage in the investigation of the murder of Heorhiy Gongadze. The growing suspicion of a cover-up and the concern that the truth will never "out" in this case, continues to discredit the Ukrainian government and erode any trust in its integrity.
In the meantime, journalists remain under attack in Ukraine. This year alone, two journalists were killed in suspicious circumstances, and many investigations from past assaults on the media are still open without hope of resolution. The latest case to raise international attention was the July 24 attack on Oleg Eltsov, who required hospitalization after an encounter with unknown attackers. The International Federation of Journalists (www.ifj.org; 28 Jul 2003) has demanded that the Ukrainian government immediately investigate this case to determine if it is connected to his professional work.

BELARUS
School's out - forever?
The pupils of an entire school in Minsk do not know where they are going to attend their lessons after summer break, if at all. The National Humanities Lyceum, a private school and the last one in Belarus to teach all subjects in the Belarussian language, was closed by the governmental education authority late in June. The official reason for the closure was that the building needed renovation, but pupils, parents and teachers have been unwilling to accept this decision. They have since been protesting and several pupils threatened not to attend school at all if they could not attend the Lyceum once school begins again in September. The protestors have targeted both the education authority headquarters and the school. By protesting in front of the school since early August, parents and pupils have prevented the purported renovations from taking place. The protestors do not believe that there really is a renovation plan, fearing instead that the construction project is only aimed at keeping the school closed through September and beyond; according to the education authority, the building will remain closed for at least 2 years for the renovations to be completed.

"The authorities are faking renovation to prevent the class from starting school on 1 September," school founder Vladimir Kolas said. (BELAPAN, 7 Aug 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) Apparently, the teachers, parents and pupils had
heard from one of the builders that there was no plan for the works or any real renovation on the building. A two-year stretch without instruction would be the death of the school, since its pupils would have to switch to new schools in the meantime and would probably not return, at least not in the same numbers.

The protests have grown as the summer went on and have been approaching a more vociferous peak since late July. Those connected to the school are aware it poses a considerable ideological threat to the government and is not under close governmental control. Opposition politicians, for example, tend to send their children to this school. Even the sheer fact that it teaches only in the Belarussian language signals a line of opposition to Lukashenka's course. A new school to replace the old one — a suggested name has been Minsk State Humanities Lyceum — would probably be organized in such a manner that it would more easily controlled by the government. The school's defenders have appealed to international and Belarussian NGO's and similar organizations. One main defender of the Lyceum has been the Belarussian civic initiative Charter 97, one of the most important voices of the Belarussian opposition. (www.charter97.org) This organization defends the establishment of a strong civil society and has placed the blame for the closure squarely on Lukashenka's shoulders. They have shown themselves particularly concerned about the need for a stable and open education, without which a democratic base cannot be built in the country.

Indeed, it is a serious concern how much Lukashenka's increasing ideological control of the country — in the form of domination over political, media as well as educational outlets — will in the long run undermine the country's strength and future.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA
The Bandit Doctor's Book

The appearance of Khassan Baiev's, The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire, is a momentous occasion, a first hand account of life in war time Chechnya. Baiev's life is a window into contemporary Chechen history. As a young man he takes us into the mountains to show us his ancestral village and tells us about the deportations, a painful memory that would inspire the quest for Chechen independence. Then comes medical school, a romance with a Russian girl, and his Hippocratic oath -- to provide treatment to everyone who requires it. Baiev's commitment to his oath is tested in two wars.

This book tells the story of the wars as experienced by a Chechen surgeon. The political struggles are in the background; in the foreground are the victims and their wounds—amputations, billowing entrails, the stench of pus and rotting flesh and dry blood, horribly deformed babies, and mother's milk running dry. What we have is an honest Chechen voice telling us about hell in beautifully crafted English prose.

To be sure, Dr. Baiev had more than a little help from journalists Ruth and Nicholas Daniloff. Speaking among friends, Baiev shared his struggles and weaknesses in ways that are alien to a traditional culture. The successful surgeon and judo champion was awkward around girls and had trouble finding a bride. During the war he was too busy for introspection. He treated dozens of patients in a day, sawing off limbs until his saw became blunt, using ordinary thread after the surgical supply ran out. But after the war, while on a medical fellowship in Moscow, he suffered a breakdown and admitted himself for psychiatric treatment. We hear about the anxieties, the sadness, and the panic attacks that plagued him.

For those who are new to the subject of the Chechen war, Baiev is a most trustworthy guide. Providing brief insights into Chechen religion, culture, and history, he never tries to explain, much less rationalize, things that westerners
may not understand. He tells us what he did, saw, and felt, omitting the politics and ideology. The only time that Baiev picks up a weapon is to stop a suitor who would kidnap his sister. Yet on the next page, he helps a friend to abduct a bride. When foreign wahhabis appear in Chechnya after the first war, to propagate an alien form of Islam and instruct Chechens that women should be veiled, Baiev was outraged, "for four hundred years we have fought against people telling us what to do." Why would Chechens require religious instruction from abroad, when Baiev's own father had risked eight to ten years of jail by secretly instructing youth in the Koran.

For the specialist, there are details that expand the existing record. Baiev's account shows clearly that civilians are the main victims of the war and he is an expert witness to grave war crimes — Russian planes bombing hospitals; Russian planes bombing civilians as they try to flee along a highway out of Grozny; signs of torture on victims' bodies; wounds and birth defects which suggest radioactivity or other types of toxins, and wounds from prohibited weaponry including fuel-air bombs.

During the second war, when Baiev worked in a makeshift hospital in a Grozny suburb Alkhan Kala he became a witness to the pivotal event of the war — the exodus of Chechen fighters from Grozny. The first to abandon the city along this route were the infamous criminal Arbi Baraev and his thugs. They left on January 5, 2000 and escaped Alkhan Kala as the federals took the town. Corroboration of the rumored federal protection of Baraev is seen in the fact the Russian soldiers refused to chase Baraev, even as Alkhan Kala natives told them where he had gone. On January 31, thousands of Chechen fighters left the city, but they, unlike the Baraev gang, ran into a minefield. Hundreds of wounded fighters, including the infamous commander Shamil Basaev wound up on Baiev's table. Having amputated Basaev's foot and provided treatment for many other fighters, Baiev became an enemy in Russia's eyes. Pictures of him were plastered at
checkpoints, on television he was denounced as the "bandit doctor." This prompted his emigration to the United States.

One of the characteristics of a captive nation is that its history is written by outsiders, foreigners who happened to pass through. For a variety of reasons, pertaining to both the history of foreign subjugation and the turmoil of the last ten years, the current generation of Chechen scholars, journalists, and politicians -- who under other circumstances would be engaged in this effort -- have neither the material nor emotional resources to grapple with the tragic recent history of the Chechens. Perhaps, in this last paragraph of my last NIS Observed, I can address those Chechens who are even now engaged in a personal struggle to write a painful history and suggest to them this book as a potential source of support and inspiration. To paraphrase William Faulkner, history is not merely the record of man, but one of the props that helps him endure and prevail.

The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire
Khassan Baiev with Ruth and Nicholas Daniloff
forthcoming in October from Walker and Company
http://www.walkerbooks.com/books/catalog.php?key=417
Fax 212-727-0984

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Joel Hafvenstein

UZBEKISTAN
Economic ties with Russia, military ties with America
On August 6, Vladimir Putin paid a whirlwind visit to Uzbekistan’s Islam Karimov in the city of Samarkand. Of all the Central Asian presidents, Karimov has been most committed to bringing his country out from Russia’s shadow. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are too weak to resist Russian military aid and airbases; Kazakhstan
accepts Russia as the regional hegemon and is trying to forge a cooperative relationship; and Turkmenistan’s president, concerned with dominating and isolating his own people, only bucks Russia’s will when necessary for his attempts to construct a hermit state. Uzbekistan, however, has pointedly rejected most of Moscow’s efforts to restore Russian domination over its former empire. The most populous of the Central Asian republics, and the one with an economy least dependent on hydrocarbons or foreign aid, Uzbekistan sees itself as the region’s potential new hegemon. The economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan are currently highly dependent on Uzbek goodwill; Karimov’s decision to close a border or pipeline can have severe effects. Karimov also has an eye on Afghanistan, where one of his clients, Rashid Dostum, is a renowned regional warlord.

Uzbekistan’s own gas and oil however, can only be exported through pipelines passing through Kazakhstan and Russia. This is the fulcrum of Russian leverage over Uzbekistan, and Putin highlighted "gas cooperation" as a key issue in the August 6 talks. (ITAR-TASS, 1213 GMT, 6 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0806 via World News Connection) Karimov has accepted that he must remain on excellent terms with the Russian gas company Gazprom. After meeting with Putin, the Uzbek President declared his interest "not only in Gazprom coming to our deposits," an issue negotiated in last year's strategic cooperation agreement, "but also in Gazprom being the pipeline operator in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan." Gazprom is interested in blocking competitor Itera’s access to Turkmen gas (see NIS Observed, 30 Jul 03); if it gains operational control of the Central-Asia-Center pipeline in Uzbekistan, it will have the power to ship all the gas Turkmenistan sells through Gazprom. Whether Karimov will be happy with Gazprom shipping large volumes of Turkmen gas through his country is another question.

On other economic issues: Putin would like to integrate Uzbekistan into an economic bloc with the more populous former Soviet states. On August 6, he
tried convincing Karimov to enter the single economic zone that currently includes Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. He lamented the low volume of trade between Uzbekistan and Russia, and called for more openness to investment (which would benefit mostly Russia) and expedited trade of cotton (which would benefit mostly Uzbekistan). Karimov did not appear as yet to be swayed by Putin’s salesmanship.

On geopolitics: Karimov said he was convinced that "Russia is reviving and taking a place that befits it in the world." (ITAR-TASS, 1055 GMT, 6 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0806 via World News Connection) However, in regard to Central Asia, he recognized only that Russia had a legitimate interest in what went on along its southern border — a border which actually does not include Uzbekistan — and added, "I hope Russia also understands Uzbekistan's role in the region."

The two presidents also discussed the efforts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO, a regional conference including China) to build a counterterrorism force. On this issue, we can expect Karimov to give only limited support, despite the threats to his own regime from guerrilla groups like the now-defunct Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. For a possible rationale behind this stance, we can look to another visitor Karimov entertained, one week after his brief summit with Putin: US Chief of Central Command John Abizaid. The two discussed the military state of affairs in Afghanistan at Khanabad Airbase, where 1,500 U.S. troops have been stationed since October 2001. (IRIB News, 15 Aug 03 via www.times.kg) The U.S. war on terror has provided the occasion for Uzbekistan to move out of Russia’s military sphere of influence. If the reconstruction of Afghanistan succeeds and the U.S. troop presence is diminished, Karimov will almost certainly try to convince the USA to retain forces at Khanabad for geopolitical reasons. Hence Karimov will pay lip service and give some support to the SCO counterterrorist force; but it cannot be allowed to succeed too well.