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Choking back the cheers
Boris Berezovsky has done some despicable things in his life, and I've certainly written about many of them, so it is not without trepidation that I attempt to chart a course of praise for this unctuous oligarch turned democratic crusader.

His advertisement published in the 23 September New York Times, Washington Post, Financial Times etc, and signed by a small, odd set of opportunists and dissidents is an act of desperate beauty. For the President who looked into Putin's eyes and determined him to be "trustworthy," will it provide even a moment's pause?

"Mr. President," asks the text, "are you aware….

"1. …that under President Putin the independence of the democratic institutions in Russia have been systematically undermined? (…)" [I might quibble about the difficulty in undermining something that was founded on shifting sands in the first place, but on the whole, a salient point from the advertisers.]

"2. …that the Putin government is responsible for war crimes and genocide in Chechnya?" [I fear whatever sympathy the Bush administration may have had for the Chechen cause has long since disappeared down the al Qaeda rabbit hole.]

"3. …that the…secret services were complicit in the [apartment bombings] of September 1999, when 249 civilians perished? (…)" [See previous NIS Observed (1999) for comment]
“4. …that in October 2002, during the hostage crisis in a Moscow theater, the secret services used deadly nerve gas which killed 129 civilians?” [Has there ever been a full disclosure of what agent was used in this raid and why?]

“5. …that anti-Semitism and xenophobia are being exploited by the secret services for demonizing big business…” [Yes, it is detestable that both the Yel’tsin and Putin regimes exploited paranoia about Jews, "cosmopolitans," and foreigners in general when it suited, but Berezovsky's record is not without taint on this charge.]

“6. …that under Mr. Putin more than 50% of the most important government posts are occupied by people who came from the former KGB special services?” [True, but things are so much more efficient!]

“7. …that the judiciary is used for political purposes to fabricate criminal cases and to involve the international community in suppressing political opposition through the extradition process? (…)” [Given that Berezovsky probably paid a fine farthing (solicitor's fees, of course) to beat the extradition attempt and receive asylum in Britain, he may be more sensitive about this issue than most.]

Taken as a whole, the advertisement raises important points that we can't help but hope inform the administration's evaluation of Putin and Russian policy.

The question remains however; just who is the intended audience for this ad? President Bush, to whom the text is addressed, and his advisers must surely be aware of these facts and have given them what they consider appropriate weight in formulating their policies.

If it is President Putin who is Berezovsky's (and company's) real audience, he will likely shrug off this criticism as the work of a disgruntled, corrupt former
associate. Berezovsky may have managed to embarrass and annoy Putin during his stay in the U.S., however, which may be enough to give this exile a sense of victory.

The most effective consequence of this campaign may be its ability to energize critics of Putin's Russia and U.S. policy towards it and impel them to disseminate and discuss the merits of the text (guilty!) -- perhaps even to lobby the administration for policy change. In this, I wish Berezovsky every success.

**Personnel note**

Some deputies in the Putin administration really seem to earn their keep. Dmitri Kozak, who clearly enjoys the confidence of the President, has immersed himself in some very swampy issues for the Kremlin, including judicial reform, as well as property and regional rights vis-à-vis the center. Despite the controversial and heavily contested nature of the issues he tackles, Kozak's recommendations receive a thorough hearing from the legislative branch (when necessary) and its spectrum of political views.

Fresh from his foray into the regional rights issue, Kozak will now tackle a long-standing Kremlin morass: Moldova and Transdniestrian relations. Kozak has just been named Putin's mediator in Transdniester, tasked with working towards a settlement and to help "elaborate a system of federative relations" because Moscow "has an interest in protecting Russians living on both banks of the Dniester." (INFOTAG, 0837 GMT, 22 SEP 03; Financial Times Information; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) Shouldn't Kozak be working for the Foreign Ministry?

**Russian Federation: Security Services**

By Fabian Adami

**FSB Becomes the Target**
For the first time, the FSB appears to have been directly targeted by terrorists. At approximately noon on 15 September, a GAZ-53 truck entered the compound in Manas, Ingushetia, housing the regional headquarters of the Security Service. After stopping near a corner of the building, the truck exploded. The blast caused extensive damage to the FSB building, as well as to other nearby structures, such as the Presidential Palace, and the Ingushetian Treasury, all of which are located within 200 meters of the compound. (WPS, 16 Sept 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

According to unnamed local security sources, the entire building would have been leveled, had the truck been parked along a main wall, instead of a corner. (RUSSIKA IZVESTIA, 16 Sept 03; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

In the hours immediately after the attack, the FSB announced that two of its officers, Tischenko (whose first name was not released), and Mikhail Safonov, Deputy Chief of the FSB’s Chechen Directorate had been killed. The next morning, however, the FSB announced that Safonov had in fact only been injured, and that "his life was not in danger." (ST PETERSBURG TIMES, 16 Sept 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Official figures for those wounded are unavailable, because the FSB confiscated hospital logbooks in an attempt to maintain secrecy. "Various sources," however, place the number anywhere between 28 and 48. The only other identified injured victim released by the FSB was that of Andrei Buskikh, the FSB’s acting head in Ingushetia. (ITAR-TASS, 15 Sept 03, FBIS-SOV-2003-0915, via World News Connection)

Press reports concerning the bombing indicate that the attack on what should have been a heavily defended compound was carried out with surprising ease. Construction on the building was completed just over a month ago, and the
compound was protected by little more than a wire-mesh fence. (RUSSIKA IZVESTIA, 16 Sept 03; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The entrance to the compound was supposed to have been guarded by an armored personnel carrier: Kommersant (16 Sept 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) reports that the vehicle suffered mechanical failure several days prior to the attack and was removed, only to be replaced with little more than a "metal pipe." Moreover, the guards themselves had absconded, leaving the entrance "watched" only by security cameras.

Finally, the building was still being outfitted: large numbers of trucks were entering and leaving the compound at will. (RUSSIKA IZVESTIA, 16 Sept 03; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov has laid the blame for the attack squarely on the shoulders of Chechen leader Shamil Basaev, linking the bombing with Basaev’s "Operation Boomerang," which aims to cause chaos in the run up to elections this winter. (WPS, 15 Sept 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Despite the obvious collapse of security, the FSB has moved into its entirely predictable mode of protecting its own people: It has stated publicly that Buskikh will not be held accountable for negligent security measures, because, in being wounded, he had "washed off his guilt with blood." (RUSSIKA IZVESTIA, 17 Sept 03; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Certain key questions arise which have not been asked (at least publicly): Safonov is a senior officer, who was in the region to coordinate the investigations into recent terror attacks. Did the Chechen’s have foreknowledge of his presence? Was this an assassination attempt? In other words, is the FSB penetrated at some level? There is little likelihood that this issue will ever be
Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Scott Dullea

Putin packs for camp — The ups and downs of pre-summit politics
It is possible that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov will engage in a few games of Tertz (a card game developed by Russian gangsters in the early 1900s) aboard the presidential aircraft on the way to New York this week. If they use the latest from the publishers of the daily Kommersant, "United Cards of America," then this will not be just a means of killing time on the flight—they can brush up on who’s who in Washington. This deck, inspired by the U.S. Department of Defense playing cards that depict the most-wanted Iraqi criminals, depicts the key players in U.S. politics and power. The cards also offer commentary such as describing President George W. Bush as "…sure that God has a plan for him." (NEW YORK TIMES, 20 Sep 03) But satirizing the American leadership was not the only step taken in preparation for the Bush-Putin summit on 26 and 27 September at Camp David.

Possibly the most publicized event (at least in Russia) was the visit of former President George Bush to the Russian president’s vacation home on the Black Sea in Sochi, which the U.S. Embassy in Moscow described as a "private" meeting but managed to stir up a lot of speculation about its purpose nonetheless. Other pre-summit moves included a call by LUKoil head Vagit Alekperov for the U.S. and Russia to join forces to protect key international pipelines from the dangers posed by guerrillas and saboteurs. In Washington, Russian Foreign Ministry and U.S. State Department officials met to discuss mounting Russian complaints regarding the U.S. visa process for Russians desiring to visit the States. The talks resulted in the U.S. agreeing to provide
notice on the status of visa applicants. Moscow, for its part, threatened to retaliate in kind if their officials ran into any difficulties upon entering the U.S. Another significant visitor in Washington was Aleksei Miller, the Gazprom Management Chairman who held talks with U.S. Commerce Secretary Donald Evans and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and suggested the U.S. consider purchasing liquefied natural gas in Russia. Those talks ended without discernible progress toward a deal.

A more aggressive, but mostly symbolic maneuver was made by the U.S. side when Washington, on 16 September, imposed sanctions on the Russian state-owned weapons manufacturer Tula Instrument Design Bureau for selling laser-guided artillery shells to Iran. This move should demonstrate to President Putin whether Washington is serious about its concerns over Moscow’s dealings with Iran, especially against the backdrop of Russia’s earlier support for the U.S.-backed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution that orders Iran to prove it does not have a nuclear weapons program. Moreover, these sanctions set the stage for the arrival in Moscow on 17 September of the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, John Bolton, for pre-summit talks on proliferation issues.

In this context, another development concerned the report that the U.S. will continue to provide financial support to three Russian "nuclear towns" for the conversion of their cold-war era military production. This was a timely step as the standing agreement for the assistance, which has funded projects worth over U.S.$15 million, was due to expire on 22 September 2003. (ITAR-TASS, 19 Sep 03; BBC Monitoring, 19 Sep 03 via ISI Emerging Market Database)

Considering the aforementioned events, Putin and Bush certainly will have enough to discuss during the two-day visit. Russian and various international media, not surprisingly, have deduced that the topics on the table will include proliferation, terrorism, bilateral issues, boosting economic cooperation in the
energy sphere and international issues (Iran, Iraq and North Korea). On the latter topic, Putin will need to convince his host that Russia by no means intends to cooperate with Tehran if it is found in violation of IAEA norms [assuming Iran actually complies with the resolution to submit its proof by 31 October. The IAEA’s assessment won’t be published until late November however, which gives Moscow more time to drag out its collaboration with Iran]; on Iraq, Bush may express appreciation for Moscow’s (recent) support for the U.S. resolution on Iraq - a position which Putin may hope will win Russia consideration in the distribution of oil contracts in Iraq.

The summit may produce a newsworthy announcement such as a Russian commitment to send some type of assistance to the Iraq mission (probably humanitarian or technical, as the possibility of a Russian troop contribution seems to be a closed case). However, the details of what is discussed at Camp David are probably not what the Russian guest intends to be the most important result of the visit.

The key to Mr. Putin’s success in Maryland is the spirit of the talks themselves and how they will be portrayed to the world. It will benefit President Putin to show the Russian voters that Russia has stood its ground and has stared down the giant, particularly by opposing the war in Iraq, by not compromising on sending troops to Iraq, by resisting Western pressure and continuing its cooperation with Iran, and by bringing back opportunities for Russian business in Iraq — all this while maintaining its vital relations with Washington. The news coverage of his visit with President Bush will show Europe that Russia’s ties with the U.S. are strong, though not submissive, and that Moscow does not need an alliance to play a primary role in world affairs. In other words, President Putin can demonstrate that Russia is on the road to regaining its global power status. Of course, a closer look at Russia’s balance sheets could betray this endeavor, but it is the perception of prestige provided by a trip to Camp David that is most important, for now.
Moscow & Minsk: Is this the end or just another intermission?

After eight years of discussions the Russo-Belarus Union seems to have hit another roadblock. Russian energy giant Gazprom has appealed to the Russian government to be allowed to discontinue selling gas at subsidized prices to Belarus, which has been reselling the gas to its consumers at a significant profit.

Gazprom's turnaround came when Belarus refused to sell it the 49% stake in the gas transportation company Beltranskhaz at the offered price. Minsk insisted on U.S. $5 billion — a much higher price than Gazprom thought reasonable. This sale was part of the agreement involving the discounted fuel prices. Minsk reacted to the announcement by seizing property of Russian companies in Belarus including Transnefteprodukt and Slavneft. (ITAR-TASS, 13 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0913 via World News Connection) Belarus also stalled on finalizing issues of unification, leading Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov to announce that no agreement to introduce the Russia—Belarus union will be forthcoming in the near future. (WWW.NEWSRU.COM, 6 Sep 03 via RFE/RL Vol. 4, No. 36, 9 Sep 03) Kasianov did, however, sign off on Gazprom’s appeal to end the subsidized gas pricing on 1 January 2004.

Belarussian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka traveled to Sochi to discuss the currency union issue and the gas situation with Putin at his Black Sea retreat. One Russian specialist in a Radio Mayak interview (16 Sep 03; BBC Monitoring via JRL #7328, 18 Sep 03) described the talks between the leaders as difficult and unproductive. Blame for recent hesitations falls on Lukashenka’s fears of what opening the Belarussian economy to Russia and the world might do to his regime.

Additionally, Lukashenka struck a tough bargaining stance for finalizing unification: free movement of people, commodities, services and capital; same prices for oil, gas and electricity for Belarus as for Russia; compensation to
Belarus for Russia’s value-added tax retroactive to 2000; and coverage by Russia of expenses connected with creating the single currency. The Belarussian president has retreated recently on closing the monetary union deal, insisting that it be the last step in the process of creating a common economic space with Russia. He also insists that Russia adopt a constitutional act on the formation of a union state before a common currency can be introduced — a particularly difficult pill for Moscow to swallow. (RFE/RL, Vol. 5, No. 33, 10 Sep 03)

Lukashenka apparently believes that Russia needs Belarus more than Belarus needs Russia. Perhaps Minsk is just playing hardball while it can, taking advantage of upcoming Russian parliamentary and presidential elections, in the hope that unification will resonate strongly with Russian voters and politicians will respond.

Belarus, as well as neighboring Ukraine, is geo-strategically important to Moscow’s attempts to remain tied to Europe and to retain the remnants of the old Empire. Thus, the Kremlin is unlikely to declare the relationship over. Gazprom’s economic prowess may eventually overpower Minsk’s inflexibility, and perhaps in time the agreement on a Single Economic Space signed by the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan at the CIS summit in Yalta on 18 September will serve as a catalyst in reuniting Russia and Belarus. Given the track records of the participants however, expect the going to be slow and the path, uneven.

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

By Kate Martin

**Regions under attack**
In the face of a court ruling that the federal government cannot rely on the judiciary to erode regional powers (THE NIS OBSERVED, 10 Sep 03), the center has continued its attack against any semblance of autonomy in the regions. The current effort to bring the regions in line features a three-pronged campaign: political, financial and territorial.

The political line concerns governmental interference in regional elections. Certainly the St. Petersburg gubernatorial campaign of Valentina Matviyenko, President Putin’s representative in the Northwestern Federal District, is the prime example. Matviyenko, with eight others, is running to fill the post vacated (with Kremlin encouragement) by Vladimir Yakovlev, who left the governor’s office early in order to take an (at least short-term) plum position with the federal government. Matviyenko’s opponents have complained of unfair election practices benefiting her campaign, including wiretapping and media manipulation. (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 19 Aug 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Just in case there were still voters who didn’t grasp how the wind was blowing from Moscow, on 5 September Putin explicitly noted his support of Matviyenko on national (state-owned) television. (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 5 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis) The federal largesse appears to have been effective, with Matviyenko leading in the ballot count, albeit not by enough to prevent a run-off.

Interestingly, the man who has portrayed himself as the watchdog of campaign behavior, the Central Election Commission’s (CEC’s) chairman, Aleksandr Veshnyakov, said he wouldn’t get involved, while acknowledging that Putin may have made a mistake. "The Central Election Commission is not a fire brigade that races around the country looking into every election spat," he said. (Ibid.) Such "spats," after all, despite blatant illegality, probably would distract the CEC’s valuable attention from those nasty media outlets that might actually try to inform voters about the candidates and the issues.
Matviyenko’s race is not the only regional election experiencing questionable involvement of the authorities. At least one newspaper is alleging that the Tver regional prosecutor’s office has targeted Governor Vladimir Platov, charging abuse of power resulting in embezzlement, in order to hamper Platov’s run for re-election. The purported motivation was Platov’s refusal to support a candidate nominated by United Russia for mayor of Tver in July. (NOVAYA GAZETA, 8-10 Sep 03; What the Papers Say (WPS) via Lexis-Nexis)

The second prong, the financial aspect, is bound to affect ordinary citizens most directly, with a likely curtailment in services. The draft 2004 budget before the Duma this session allocates 62 percent of tax revenues to the federal government, leaving 38 percent to the regions, although the deputy chairman of the Duma’s budget committee, Vitali Shuba, estimates that the actual split will be closer to 56 percent for the federal and 44 percent for the regional governments. (MOSCOW TIMES, 18 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis) In addition, Moscow apparently is considering budgetary "reform" that would translate into a substantial loss of tax revenue for the regions, which would then be faced with a downgrading in investment ratings that would mean even less money. Currently, certain areas -- "capital regions" such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as areas rich in extractive resources such as minerals and oil -- receive a proportion of the funds they generate. Those proportions, according to the tax reform proposed by the Ministry of Justice, would be lowered significantly or, in some places, removed completely. (IZVESTIYA, 12 Sep 03; World News Connection via Lexis-Nexis) This planned redistribution of wealth offers an interesting distortion of some old slogans: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs... once the federal government gets its cut.

The third line of attack involves the merging of regional entities, such as the much-discussed union of the Komi-Permyak Autonomous District and Perm region. A referendum on this issue is scheduled for 7 December. The referendum is likely to pass, given that 50 percent of the Perm region residents and nearly 70
percent of the residents of the Komi-Permyak District reportedly support the unification, particularly since the newly formed area is expected to have "special status." (TASS, 18 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Just how special that status will become remains unclear. The heads of the two regions began the paperwork for this in February 2003, with the stated intent of leveling out living standards between the two entities and streamlining governance. (Interfax, 1302 GMT, 17 Feb 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0217 via World News Connection) Federal government support for the proposal has been strong, beginning, at least, with the initial paperwork. However, some political figures — including Boris Berezovsky and his representative in Komi-Permyak, Mikhail Kodanev (who was arrested for conspiracy to commit murder on the day he planned to protest the proposed merger) have charged that federal involvement came much earlier, and that such a merger is one component of Putin's plan to recreate the Soviet Union. (EKHO MOSKVY, 26 Jun 03 via Lexis-Nexis) To be sure, discussion of some super-amalgamation seems to be in the works, including the cutting (by half) of the number of autonomous districts in the federation. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 9 Jun 03 via Lexis-Nexis) This would, undoubtedly, ease the governance of the already-formed super-districts.

These attempts to bring the regions more fully under central control would be slightly less worrisome if not for the general ill preparedness of the country’s system of civil defense. Several emergencies have proven that the central government isn’t as helpful as it needs to be; increasing citizens' need to rely on such a system could prove catastrophic. Indeed, roughly 500 emergency situations occurred in the first half of 2003, resulting in 560 deaths and a further 5,500 persons injured. (IZVESTIYA, 9 Sep 03; World News Connection via Lexis-Nexis) Some of those emergencies might have been avoided, if the civil defense system were a bit more effective. The lack of preparedness encompasses such issues as faulty or absent emergency communications systems, to inadequate shelters in villages and in cities. While noting that Novosibirsk has a functional system, the head of the administration for civil defense services and the
emergencies ministry for the oblast', Major General Daniyar Safiyullen, explained that facilities across the country have been allowed to deteriorate. "The fact is that the Soviet system of civil defense was entirely directed at concealing the greatest number of workers possible -- in the event of a nuclear threat, for example. For that reason a significant proportion of the defense installations was on the books of the plants and factories. At the majority of the plants nobody did anything about maintaining these installations," he said. (Ibid.) That sounds ominously like justification for a return to the Union model.

**Election news: Run, Boris, run**

You just can’t keep a good oligarch down — sure, you can take away his political power, ridicule him in the media, charge him with heinous crimes, and make his exile uncomfortable by trying to get him extradited from London, but in the end, you may find him on the ballot anyway. Such is the continuing saga of the state versus Boris Berezovsky, who after three years of battle with the Kremlin has walked away with a victory. The British Home Office granted the oligarch-in-exile political asylum. (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 12 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Then a London court ruled against Moscow’s request for his extradition. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 14 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

Few who have followed Berezovsky’s storied career would be surprised to learn that he has no intention of leaving the scene quietly. Rather, he continues to explore ways to involve himself in the upcoming parliamentary election — even though he has been kicked out of his party, Liberal Russia, during a well-publicized split; the party that supports him, which the justice ministry refuses to register, has no chance of passing the five-percent hurdle for party list seats in the Duma, even if it could get on the ballot (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 17 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis); and the front man organizing Berezovsky’s possible run for a single-mandate seat in the Komi-Permyak Autonomous District (YEZHENEDELNYI ZHURNAL, 15-21 Sep 03; WPS via Lexis-Nexis) is no longer available to help, since he has been charged with organizing the murder of one
of the leaders of the party that had evicted Berezovsky (see above). Rumors abound that the oligarch has enough support to try for a single-mandate seat in a few locations. The law does not require Berezovsky to appear in person for the campaign, so his only risk of arrest (at the moment) is if he should win and decide to appear in Moscow when the legislature convenes. However, he doesn’t really need to go that far: If he wins a seat in the Duma, he has won the war.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Kris Beasly and Paul Lyons

Finding scapegoats undermines development of a professional military
It is an accepted truth in the U.S. military that rigorous and impartial mishap investigations, often including limited immunity for witnesses and participants, lead to safer, more professional and effective armed forces. However, this does not seem to be the case in the Russian armed forces. In the U.S. military, we have an entire safety system staffed with trained safety personnel, and a clear and rapid means of validating and disseminating safety bulletins as soon as potentially faulty procedures or equipment are identified. We have specific courses to train senior officers to be investigation board presidents and these officers constitute the only personnel authorized to lead mishap investigations. In fact, the U.S. military is so serious about learning from accidents that, as an example, the governing Air Force regulation states, "Safety investigations take priority over the corresponding accident investigation" (which look at culpability) and that "Safety reports will be used primarily for mishap prevention and privileged reports [which include testimony given under immunity] will be used solely for mishap prevention. They may not be used as evidence for punitive, disciplinary or adverse administrative actions." (Emphasis added) (U.S. AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 91-204, Safety Investigations and Reports, 11 Dec 01, paragraphs 1.1.1.1 and 1.1.1.2).
In Russia tragic mishaps are usually investigated by military professionals; often however, the initial knee-jerk reaction is to fix blame on someone in the chain of command (but rarely a senior officer) before an investigation has begun, much less been completed.

The Kursk disaster is the classic case of this problem. It took over two years for the senior Fleet and Ministry of Defense officials to admit the true cause of that tragic loss of lives and national resources. But the backlash from the subterfuge and dissembling that went on early in the Kursk case seems to have only taught the national leaders to find a scapegoat immediately, revealing it to the state-run press, no matter what the impact is on that officer's career or even how that relates to the facts revealed by a complete investigation (assuming one is even done).

The latest example of this knee-jerk syndrome is the Prosecutor General's reaction to the crash on 18 September of one of Russia's Tu-160 Blackjack strategic nuclear bombers. The bomber was on a test flight following a recent engine change. In the days immediately following the crash, and before any type of investigation could be completed, many already thought they knew what happened and were attempting to affix blame. According to Nezavisimaya Gazeta (19 Sep 03; What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database), "It is reasonable to assume that the bomber crashed because of technical defects related to that engine replacement. Even Air Force spokesmen are inclined towards this theory...." But here’s the kicker: Less than 24 hours after the crash, the military prosecutor general's office of the Volga-Urals Military District began criminal proceedings. The military prosecutor's public relations chief, Mikhail Yanenko stated, "Charges were issued under Article 351 of the Criminal Code" which covers neglect of flight regulations and rules for preparation. In fact, a team of investigators, led by the regional Military Prosecutor himself (Major General Vladimir Melnikov), was on route to the crash.
shortly after it happened. Some Russian sources speculate that the commander of the unit may have tried to save money by having the engine repaired by available personnel, rather than send the aircraft back to the Kazan Aircraft Factory where it was built, and that prosecutors are looking at such a scenario. (WHAT THE PAPERS SAY-Defense and Security, 22 Sep 03, via ISI Emerging Markets Database).

Another recent example of this tendency was seen immediately after news arrived concerning the loss of the retired nuclear attack submarine K-159 on 30 August 03 as it was being towed to the breakup yard at Polyarnyi, on the coast of the White Sea. On 31 August, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov first struck a responsible note when he assured the lone survivor and the families of the lost sailors that "The investigation will be conducted very thoroughly and scrupulously and it has begun." However, with the investigation just barely started and therefore with few actual facts available to him, he took three actions more indicative of the usual scapegoat-finding methods. First, without any way of knowing if it was true or not, he told the families that the crew was not responsible. Then, at the request of the Fleet’s command and the chief military prosecutor, he relieved the deputy commander of the submarine division in Gremikha, Captain Second Rank Sergei Zhemchuzhny. Lastly, he told various senior sources that, "All imaginable safety rules were broken during the towing." To ensure that the press passed the key political message to a shocked Russian public, he closed the day by saying, "I'm not a judge. A court will determine who is guilty of the tragedy," leaving little doubt that someone must be guilty! (ITAR-TASS 30 Aug 03, 1649, 1658 and 2128 GMT; FBIS-SOV-2003-0830 via World News Connection). A scant four days later, the Chief Military Prosecutor’s office whipped out a handy pocket version of the Russian Criminal Code and charged Captain Zhemchuzhny with violating the companion to Article 351 (see above), namely the generic Article 352 (Violation of rules of marine navigation). (ITAR-TASS 3 Sep 03, 1432 GMT; FBIS-SOV-2003-0903 via World News Connection) The senior levels of the Russian leadership appear much more interested in
identifying someone to blame for the accident, rather than what caused the accident. Apparently, they were and are less concerned about improving procedures and preventing future accidents concerning the remaining 116 submarines that still must be towed to the breaker’s yard.

An especially dramatic example of "determining the outcome before the investigation starts" was Ivanov's immediate reaction after witnessing the crash of two Mi-24 attack helicopters during the recent major exercise in the Far East when he said the poor flying skills of the pilots led to the loss of all six crewmembers. While still at the scene, he denounced the "thoughtlessness, bravado and aerial hooliganism" of the trailing helicopter's crew. Although he may have been shocked by the accident happening in front of him, his position demands that he not pre-determine the outcome of the investigation. Experts, including the former commander of Army Aviation, Colonel-General Vitali Pavlov, list a number of other possibilities including a bird strike (mentioned in a radio call just before the accident), poor maintenance or even a "true accident" caused by unskilled pilots getting less than 25 percent of their required annual flying proficiency training. No one other than Ivanov seems to think the catastrophe happened because of "hooliganism." To slam the door shut on any other possibility smacks of the kind of sorry leadership that troops in the field, airmen on the flight line and sailors on the decks recognize as purely "Cover Your Behind." (TRUD, 27 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0827 via World News Connection and MOSCOW TRIBUNA, 28 Aug 03; FBIS-SOV-0829 via World new Connection) It should came as no surprise at all on the very day on which Chief Military Prosecutor Alexander Savenkov charged Captain Zhemchuzhny with violating Article 352 in the K-159 accident, he also nailed someone with Article 351, charging that "The person in charge of the flights…acted in excess of his powers and committed a crime in public office." (ITAR-TASS, 1638 GMT 3 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0903 via World News Connection)
Defense Minister Ivanov blamed a national trait of carelessness and a "frivolous Russian reliance on chance" for the sinking of K-159 and the loss of nine lives (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 2 September 2003); "aerial hooliganism" for the loss of two Mi-24s and six lives; and the possible improper installation of an engine for the loss of a Tu-160 bomber and four lives. In each case, he may be absolutely accurate...but in every case, he and the other senior civilian and military leaders of the Russian military made accusations and took punitive actions before the facts could be ascertained. The policy of searching out a suitable low or mid-level scapegoat does nothing to solve any problem or prevent any future mishaps. It simply causes the professionals to do anything to get out of the spotlight, so as to avoid immediate legal threats to their careers, and even freedom. If someone is negligent in these types of accidents, the truth is likely to emerge and wise leaders wait until that has been discovered instead of slamming the nearest responsible person with the career killers called Articles 351 and 352.

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.

NAVY

The K-159 Incident: Precursor or Catalyst?

In the wake of the Kursk disaster, the exposé surrounding the K-159 incident paints a recurring mosaic of some prevalent and disturbing themes that resonates both within and around Russia's modern Navy.

The aftermath of the K-159 incident and the details of the causative factors continue to unfold. As the events, factors and roles are deciphered, they will answer the many lingering questions specific to the K-159 incident. Equally, those answers will undoubtedly lay the framework through which to exhibit the more grandiose executive decisions concerning the disposition of the remaining 116 nuclear-powered submarine's yet to undergo reactor unloading and
scrapping. Navy Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Kuroyedov commented on September 11 that "the problem of nuclear submarine's disposal has been ignored for 40 years. We started dealing with it in 1998." (ITAR-TASS, 11 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

As the K-159 investigation continues, it appears that Admiral Kuroyedov has already formulated a conclusion for the investigation of the loss of nine sailors and their project. He is quoted in numerous sources as stating firmly that "the leadership of the [Northern] fleet had not checked the preparedness of the submarine for towing. The organization of the towing was also unsatisfactory and resulted in tragedy. The cause was quite simply nonfulfilment of those requirements that are laid down in the normative and technical requirements for towing." (INTERFAX NEWS AGENCY; BBC Monitoring International Reports, 11 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Therefore, it was no surprise that Northern Fleet Commander, Admiral Suchkov, once thought to be the heir apparent to Admiral Kuroyedov, was dismissed by presidential decree shortly thereafter.

Beyond the leadership aspects, the issue of nuclear submarine scrapping and reactor removal is firmly coupled to the capital outlay necessary for the project. Of consequence is that Russia's draft 2004 defense budget is sparking spirited debate in military and journalistic circles as to whether it is "survivalistic" in nature. From some reports, it falls short in meeting the modernization and development goals needed to propel Russia's post-Soviet military into a more capable and streamlined outfit. This coincides with recent comments by Admiral Kuroyedov concerning designs to cease construction projects in the future for additional aircraft carriers and submarines weighing over 1200 tons.

Traditionally three percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the 2004 defense budget is projected at 2.69 percent. Although seemingly not a dramatic decline, the noted lack of a projected increase in defense spending will have implications more far reaching as fleet assets continues to age, operational
tempo continues to fall, naval aviators fly less and, in aggregate, proficiency, materiel, and morale wane. It is assumed that "the amount of military spending for the next year has been understated by R49.06bn." (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 12 SEP 03; BBC Worldwide Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) In real terms, that deficit will play out fully on the panorama of "readiness" - now and in "ability" in the future. According to Krasnaya Zvezda (12 SEP 03; BBC Worldwide Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis), "33.4 percent of funds instead of last year's 34.2 percent will be directed toward outfitting, RDT&E research, development, training, evaluation and repairs.... It's the very same thing with recycling. Already today the specialists are saying that the funds allocated will in no way suffice for destroying the chemicals and taking apart nuclear submarines decommissioned from the Navy. According to available estimates, in the coming year we will be able to send no more than three or four written-off nuclear submarines on their last voyage instead of 10-15. At those rates the processing of recycling mothballed submarines threatens to stretch out for about 15 years."

That said, it appears the fiscal appropriations necessary to accomplish the dismantling effort will not soon be realized. If we take the K-159 in a broader context, that equates to the realization that Russia’s 116 remaining nuclear submarines will continue to lie in wait. As they do so, it is probable that they will degenerate exponentially and compound the likelihood of accidents like the K-159. Although much of the reporting has centered on the weather and the specifics of the towing regimen used in this case, some light is being shed on the material condition of the K-159 itself to support the towing effort. One report says that "according to a source close to the headquarters of the Northern Fleet, a storm in the Barents and loose pontoons that kept the vessel from sinking, did not play the decisive role in the sinking of the submarine. In his opinion, the K-159 sank because its hull was leaky, and water filled the stern compartments of the submarine…. according to Sergei Lappa (Commander of the K-159 docking team), water leaked to the stern part of the K-159 through stern shaft seals. Most probably, they sprang a leak during the towing of the submarine. However, the
crew did not notice the leak immediately; there were few people onboard and leakage indicators were not powered." (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 04 Sep 03; via ISI Emerging Markets database)

The fallout from the K-159 investigation will undoubtedly lead to a multitude of conclusions - many of which the Navy will be forced to field without the adequate funding to address. Perhaps, those conclusions will help solve the future issues of nuclear submarine dismantling in the near term as "decommissioned nuclear submarines remain a nuclear chain around the neck of the Navy. Each of them contains 800 kilograms of spent nuclear fuel — are we waiting for another 'submarine Chernobyl and Hiroshima'?" (RODNAYA GAZETA, 05 Sep 03 via ISI Emerging Markets database). Defense Minister Ivanov espoused similar sentiments onboard the missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov, "This tragedy was caused by a basically frivolous approach and reliance on the Russian habit of hoping things will work out anyway. This accident once again proves that all instructions, orders, and resolutions must be taken 100% seriously. Otherwise, sooner or later, there will be accidents and innocent people will die." (RODNAYA GAZETA, 05 Sep 03 via ISI Emerging Markets database).

With a second nuclear submarine disaster in recent years and the dismissal of successive Northern Fleet Commander's Admiral Popov (KURSK) and Admiral Suchkov (K-159), it's clear that the pressure to "solve" the problems of the nuclear navy (and the Navy in the grander scheme) weighs heavily on President Putin and Admiral Kuroyedov. Only with that commitment, can President Putin forgo the path of recent memory and transform the Navy into its once formidable self.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro
AZERBAIJAN
Russia has signaled its support for the Alievs in the upcoming 5 October presidential elections. On a visit to Baku, President Vladimir Putin's Chief of Staff, Alexander Voloshin, stated that Russia wants the current president’s policies to continue and later added that there are two leading candidates and that the Kremlin likes both of them- a clear allusion to Haidar Aliev and, his son, Ilham Aliev. (INTERFAX, 16 Sep 03, via Lexis-Nexis) The question is what does Azerbaijan want and can either Aliev provide it?

ARMENIA
The Armenian Parliament passed a treaty of friendship, cooperation and bilateral security between Armenia and Georgia, which was signed by the presidents Robert Kocharyan and Eduard Shevardnadze in Yerevan on 23 October 2001 (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 10 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0911 via World News Connection).

Meanwhile, Russia’s UES, United Energy Service, is in the process of projecting its power, and maybe that of the Kremlin, further into the South Caucasus with the acquisition of the largest thermal power station in Armenia, the Sevan-Razdan cascade. Through this venture, the UES also gained control of the fiscal management of the Armenian atomic plant, and thus key hydro-generation capacities throughout the country (OFFICIAL KREMLIN INT'L BROADCAST, 17 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis).

GEORGIA
IMF and Paris Club back out of Georgia
The International Monetary Fund has suspended its programs in Georgia because of Georgia's failure to implement the Fund's recommendations. In addition, the Paris Club has refused to mediate with creditor countries to get the repayment of Georgia's debts deferred. If events develop in the best possible way, the International Monetary Fund will reconsider the issue in December.
Shevardnadze Crying in the Dark...

In the aftermath of Russia gaining de facto control over Georgia’s energy infrastructure, Georgia has taken steps, for the umpteenth time, to demonstrate to the European Union and the United States its interest in forging closer links. The United States and the EU, although they have failed to do so in the past, would be wise to jump on this wagon as both have significant economic interests in the region. These take the forms of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, the planned Baku to Erzurum (Turkey) natural gas pipeline, and the fact that Georgia is a natural transit route to Asia.

Georgia’s initiatives towards the West have recently taken the forms of hosting Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas from 11-13 September, and the Turkish Foreign Minister on 15 September (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 13 Sep 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis; KAVKASIA-PRESS, 15 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0912 via World News Connection). The former visit was comprised of Presidents Paksas and Shevardnadze discussing Georgian involvement in NATO and the EU, after which President Paksas stated that it was "ready to share with Georgia its experience in joining NATO and the EU." (Tbilisi KAVKASIA-PRESS, 13 Sep 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis). The Turkish visit dealt with security interests, and indicated Turkey’s interest in Georgia maintaining a degree of independence. This interest is rooted in a desire to protect the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, while also possibly building Turkish influence in the South Caucasus.

The United States has responded tentatively to Georgian initiatives. On 10 September, the U.S. began training Georgian servicemen under the U.S. sponsored Train and Equip Program (KAVKASIA-PRESS, 11 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0911 via World News Connection), while NATO began conducting the Medceur/Rescuer-2003 exercise at Russia's former military base in Vaziani
within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program on 11 September.
(ITAR TASS, 12 Sep 03; What The Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis) However, while
President Eduard Shevardnadze announced that the two programs would
continue until Georgia joined NATO, the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard
Miles stated that the duration of the two military programs in Georgia would be
evaluated on a monthly basis (ITAR-TASS, 12 Sep 03, via Lexis-Nexis).

Yet, Shevardnadze must also deal with the reality of Russian power. This seems
to include the appointment of the former Georgian Ambassador to Russia and
State Minister, Vazha Lordkipanidze, and Tamaz Nadareishvili, the Chairman of
the (exile) Supreme Council of Abkhazia, to Shevardnadze’s own governmental
bloc, For New Georgia, in preparation for the November 2 parliamentary
elections (ITAR-TASS, 08 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0908 via World News
Connection; GEORGIAN TV1, 09 Sep 2003; FBIS-SOV-2003-0909 via World
News Connection). These events all indicate the necessity of greater U.S.
involvement in Georgia to counteract growing Russian power. The real question
is no longer whether Georgia can remain a reliable ally of the West. It is whether
it can do so without heat and in the dark.

CHECHNYA
A Renegade Train
Moscow’s main objective in conducting elections in Chechnya on October 5 is to
demonstrate to the world, and its own populace that Chechnya is regaining a
degree of stability and normalcy and thus on the road to true autonomy. The
Russian government might even want us to believe that the "improvement" in
Chechnya is due to the progressive method of operations employed by the
Federal Security Services and Defense Ministry over the past four years.
Moscow’s efforts are reflected in the 8 September decision by the Council of
Europe not to sent a monitor to the presidential elections, as it was not given
enough prior notice (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP), 08 Sep 03; via Lexis-
Nexis); the ridiculous vote taken by the disbanded Ichkeria parliament to impeach
President Aslan Maskhadov (IZVESTIYA 13 Sep 03; via Lexis-Nexis); the trumped up rumor that President Maskhadov ordered all units under his command to pull out of Chechnya (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA 15 Sep 03; via Lexis-Nexis); and the many noises coming from both politicians and military men that, in the words of General Vladmir Vasiliev, "peace is coming to Chechnya, as large scale military operations have ended, many guerillas have been killed, an amnesty has been declared and weapons have been handed in" (NOVAYA GAZETA 12 Sep 03, What the Papers Say; via ISI Emerging Databases).

A dangerous game is still underway in Chechnya however, and it is unclear how much control Moscow has over the outcome. The three major players are the Interior Ministry, working in the shadow of the FSB, the Defense Ministry with its GRU special assignment squads, and the Chechen police force under the indirect command of Chechen presidential candidate Kadyrov. Of the three forces, the Defense Ministry has the strongest presence in Chechnya (IZVESTIYA, 10 Sep 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis), but Kadyrov has the longest reach. Ahmad Kadyrov now controls a 12,000 strong police force in Chechnya (GAZETA, 15 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis), the Grozny radio and television center (MOSCOW TIMES, 10 Sep 03; Emerging Markets Datafile via Lexis-Nexis), and the military commandant in charge of the ballot boxes of the eastern highlands, Sulim Yamadaev (NOVAYA GAZETA 28 Aug, 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis). At the same time, Kadyrov is increasing his forces through the declared amnesty (GAZETA, 15 Sep 03; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis), while the Interior Ministry pours 8,000 troops into Chechnya to ensure protection before the elections. One must ask, protection from whom? Kadyrov’s men or Chechen separatists?

Moscow has fallen into a trap with Kadyrov. Although ostensibly he works for the Interior Ministry, or FSB, his recent power grabs indicate an interest to develop a separate power base. Additionally, Moscow continues to bolster his strength and independence, but Moscow cannot abandon Kadyrov as he may take his troops
into the mountains. Another problem inherent in this scenario is that Kadyrov
does not, and will not, ever control or gain control of Chechnya, especially in the
wake of these illegitimate elections. However, if Kadyrov loses Chechnya, his
backers in the Kremlin, among them Aleksandr Voloshin, head of the presidential
administration, will also lose. Thus, the Chechen republic may soon host yet
another civil war, but one mysteriously lacking in Chechen participants.

The following includes a breakdown of military personnel in Chechnya, according
to their affiliation: 15 military commanders who command 4,000 troops; the
permanently stationed 42nd artillery division (12,000 troops) and the 46th interior
troops brigade (10,000) troops; subdivisions of the Interior Ministry, to which
8,000 were added for the upcoming elections (see previous edition of NIS
Observed), and GRU special assignment squads, under the jurisdiction of the
Defense Ministry; and the Chechen police numbering 12,000. [GAZETA, 15 Sep
03; via Lexis-Nexis]. These figures do not include FSB personnel]

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

Negotiating Elections, Defense, and Economics
The major themes predominant for Central Asian policy makers were particularly
prevalent in negotiations over the past fortnight: maintaining a "sense" of
democracy, bolstering anti-terrorism efforts, and broadening economic relations.

In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, political opposition parties have been
pressured in one way or another by the governments in power. Leading up to the
20 September elections [at the city, district, and regional maslihats (councils)] in
Kazakhstan, allegations of campaign obstruction and vote rigging were rampant.
Though more than 7,000 candidates were contending for seats considered by
most to have little real political power: Local council members generally support
the government-appointed governor (not popularly elected) upon whom their influence depends. There is a fear, however, that any opposition victory would give both legitimacy and momentum to the opposition parties. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE and CENTRAL ASIA REPORT, 18 Sep 03 via www.rferl.org)

In Kyrgyzstan, an opposition coalition, For the Resignation of (President Askar) Akayev and For Reforms of the People, has been unable to get the local media, including the independent publications like "Res Publica" and "Aalam" to publish its document of opposition to the Akayev government. (RFE/RL, 19 Sep 03 via www.rferl.org) Whatever the motives of the media for refusing to publish the opposition document, one clear explanation is the fear of pressure or even sanctions from the Kyrgyz government. In an effort to be more effective as an opposition, four political parties — Dzhany Kyymyl, Manas El, Novoye Vremya, and Party of Cooperators of Kyrgyzstan — have merged to form a new party, Alga, Kyrgyzstan. (KABAR, 0751 GMT, 8 Sept 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0908 via World News Connection) The coalition leaders may have chosen the "strength in numbers" approach to challenging the regime as providing the greatest potential for success.

The Islamic Resistance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), Central Asia’s only legal religion-based political party, is no less concerned about being kept out of the political process, realizing that un-tempered criticism will result in a government crackdown. Thus, IRPT party chairman Said Abdullo Nuri refers to the situation of political parties in Tajikistan as "satisfactory… [for] parties of a religious nature." (RFE/RL, 18 Sep 03 via www.rferl.org)

Two platform keys to opposition movements are security and economy, which collectively pose a threat to the stability of the governments in power. In a broad sense, efforts are underway to establish a regional defense system and the economy is being integrated at a transnational level that fosters international support for the member states.
On the security front, Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev likely will sign a deployment agreement for Russian Su and MiG fighter planes at the refurbished Kant airfield during his September 22-24 visit to Moscow. Part of the collective rapid deployment forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Kant airfield will accommodate up to 500 personnel. (ITAR-TASS, 1325 GMT, 16 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0916 via World News Connection) Because of the U.S. military presence at the Ganci Airbase and the pending arrival of Russia troops, Kyrgyzstan was able to justify a political maneuver that resulted in the movement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) proposed anti-terrorist structure from Bishkek to Tashkent. While Russia put pressure on the SCO to move the base from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan rationalized support of the move by claiming that Uzbekistan was currently more vulnerable to terrorist threats than Kyrgyzstan. (KABAR, 0341 GMT, 8 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0908 via World News Connection) Kazakhstan, for its part, continues to lead the region in defense spending and will further increase its defense budget for 2004. According to Deputy Defense Minister Gosman Amrin, "The defense budget stood at about 11 billion tenge ($77 million) in 2000. We have 42 billion tenge ($284 million) in 2003 and we aspire to 49 billion tenge ($332 million) next year." (ALMATY EKSPRESS-K, 0001 GMT, 10 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0910 via World News Connection)

Everyone is trying to hedge their bets against terrorist-initiated instability. Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov claimed that "the aftermath of a civil war" was the primary reason for Tajikistan’s lagging economic development. (ITAR-TASS, 0745 GMT, 08 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0908 via World News Connection)

Scrambling for attention and opportunities to improve the economic situation of the country, Tajikistan has been fostering closer relations with Iran; those relations are based on cultural affinity and a renewed sense of historical connection, a desire to influence peace in Afghanistan, and the potential of trade between the two countries. (IRNA, 0938 GMT, 09 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0909;
At a pre-summit meeting of CIS foreign ministers, Kyrgyzstan’s Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov said that Kyrgyzstan was in support of economic integration and a common economic space shared with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the Ukraine. (RFE/RL, 19 Sep 03, via www.rferl.org ) This common economic space was proposed in the early 1990s by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, who continues to reach out to countries interested in Kazakh goods and resources. Nazarbaev recently hosted King Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin of Malaysia and together the leaders issued a communiqué on improving bilateral trade and economic development. (ITAR-TASS, 0858 GMT, 12 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0912 via World News Connection)

The Kazakh president also met with Romanian President Ion Iliescu where they discussed plans for developing a pipeline across the Caspian Sea over to the Black Sea port of Constanta, Romania. (ROMPRES, 0915 GMT, 11 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0911, via World News Connection) Russia has come out against laying pipelines across the Caspian (ITAR-TASS, 1444 GMT, 12 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0912, via World News Connection), but Kazakhstan, despite its close relations with Russia, is looking to develop its resources as broadly as possible, seeking economic integration throughout Eurasia. After meeting with Iliescu, Nazarbaev spoke of a "wish to develop the Eurasian Union into common economic space with open borders and integrated trade… [so that at some point a European and Eurasian Union] may merge in the future for the benefit of all." (ITAR-TASS, 0858 GMT, 09 Sep 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0909 via World News Connection) And in the case of marginally democratic countries, the perception is that greater integration means greater stability.