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Putin’s defense sector appointees

President Vladimir Putin’s recent appointment of Major-General Alexander Bururtin as defense sector advisor conceivably may be an exception to primarily politically motivated moves. Bururtin, known for his professionalism, is a veteran of the General Staff Directorate of Operations in the Russian Army. He does not appear to enjoy direct connection with Putin’s St. Petersburg group of bureaucrats. The retired general will advise Putin on matters relating to defense industry and military-technical programs. (KOMMERSANT, 21 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

In another, closely related, appointment, Boris Aleshin has been elevated to the office of deputy prime minister in charge of military-industrial and technical matters. These appointments seem to signal an attempt to quell the squabbles that have plagued the defense sector in recent years. Nevertheless, one should not assume that the Kremlin is changing its approach as to how, and from whom, advice is taken. As one Russian newspaper reported, "In making his latest decisions, Vladimir Putin was guided by information received from the special services and the presidential administration." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 28 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Thus, the president continues to rely on his FSB connection and the "apparat."

Gref, Kudrin and Kasyanov

Currently German Gref is recovering from illness in Germany. Speculation abounds as to whether the beleaguered economic development and trade minister is likely to return, following the scathing reprimand he received recently
from his nominal boss, Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov. According to some reports, Gref suffered a nervous breakdown following the meeting some weeks ago, offered his resignation (which was refused) and has yet to recover. Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin, Gref’s ally, has denied that Gref will resign. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 23 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

**Guidance from above**

In its 10-year history, the annual presidential address to the parliament has never been postponed as late as this year. It is now scheduled tentatively for 14 May. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 22 Apr 03; via Johnson’s Russia List) Although the date of the address is not mandated by the constitution, the unstructured method of its planning this year is cause for much speculation in Russian political and media circles. The official line is that the speech simply is not ready yet, and that the date of the address is not as important as its content. Critics claim that President Putin may be exploiting the late scheduling for any of several reasons: At this time many journalists and analysts are on vacation, it may follow President Bush’s visit to St. Petersburg, and/or the Kremlin has needed to rewrite the foreign policy content as a result of fallout from the Iraq war. (MOSCOW TIMES, 29 Apr 03; via Johnson’s Russia List) Then there are the accusations that the timing of the address is meant to convey an image of stability as his reforms have lost steam or that he is tired of addressing major issues or unwilling to push through any unpopular measures near election time. (IZVESTIA, 24 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Indeed, Putin is keeping an eye on the approaching parliamentary elections. He warned the Federation Council to be wary of Duma activity in the coming months, asserting that election campaigns generally hinder the legislative process and sometimes lead to the passage of populist laws that are financially infeasible. He asked the Federation Council to veto any such legislation. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 28 Apr 03) The upper house’s speaker, Sergey Mironov, assured the president that the senators were aware of their responsibility to pay attention to laws
submitted by the lower house. (ITAR-TASS, 25 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Of course, the president first emasculated the Federation Council before deciding to use it against the Duma.

Recently Putin also reinforced the role of the presidential envoys as overseers of regional affairs. On 22 April, the president issued instructions to the seven plenipotentiary "supergovernors." In effect, he is expanding their powers, empowering them to ensure that regional laws conform to federal legislation; raising personnel policy to the regional level; devoting significant attention to bills on land reform; providing all means of federal assistance to the regional judicial systems and judges to aid them in establishing and maintaining their independence from the regional executives and legislatures; (RUSSIA TV, 23 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) and concentrating on the transition of regional legislative assemblies to a different elections system. (ITAR-TASS, 23 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0423, via World News Connection) The president also gave his envoys operational oversight of the use of subsidies within the regions. These were unwritten instructions so as not to distort the "power vertical." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 24 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The Kremlin’s intent to direct all levels of governance also is evident in a recent draft law on local self-government. A commission headed by Putin appointee Dmitri Kozak produced the new draft, which is being criticized for its centralizing impact. The proposal sets new criteria for territorial and administrative boundaries, takes power away from mayors and empowers city managers (whose appointment would stem from regional assemblies), relieves local governments of the burden of unfunded federal mandates as well as the responsibility for education and healthcare (stripping them of some authority in these fields), and shifts control over the flow of revenues. The Putin-appointed committee sought little input from the municipalities themselves in drafting the
Despite the unofficial nature of Putin’s verbal decrees, and the need for parliamentary approval of the draft law, these developments illustrate the Kremlin’s continuing efforts to centralize authority in Russia.

**Russian Federation: Security Services**

By Scott Fleeher

**Murders and theories come in sets of three**

As the investigation into the recent murder of Duma Deputy Sergei Yushenkov continued to dominate Russian headlines, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev outlined three theories as to who might be implicated in the assassination. (The criteria for listing suspects are political, business and personal.) Patrushev also negated the notion of establishing a special commission to look into the murder. (ITAR-TASS, 23 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0423, via World News Connection)

The formation of a special commission has been proposed by Alexander Gurov, chairman of the Duma Security Committee. Patrushev dismissed the need for any such commission, touting the world-renowned efficiency of Russian bureaucracy. The FSB director said that the investigation should be conducted by those legally authorized to do so, adding that "any other interference in these actions leads to inefficiency and haste in investigating crimes."

Analyst Dr. Amy Knight implied that Patrushev is motivated by different concerns: "Don't even think about it…that [the] murder of Sergei Yushenkov was politically inspired. Because when you start considering motives, it leads you straight to President Vladimir Putin's security police," she said. (TORONTO GLOBE & MAIL, 23 Apr 03; via RFE/RL Security and Foreign Policy)
Focusing on the rash of deaths by unnatural causes among liberal lawmakers, Knight referred to the unsolved murder case of Duma deputy (and FSB critic) Galina Starovoitova. At the time of Starovoitova’s November 1998 murder, Vladimir Putin sat at the head of the FSB. Although he had vowed to find Starovoitova’s murderers, the case has yet to be solved. (RFE/RL Security and Foreign Policy, 30 Apr 03)

The day after Yushenkov’s murder, commentator Andrei Cherkizov offered another postulate of groups who might "need" Yushenkov dead. In his list of suspect groups, Cherkizov included defense ministry officials who profit from continuation of the war in Chechnya, persons who wish to expedite the extradition of Boris Berezovsky from Great Britain, and FSB officers angered by Yushenkov’s efforts to prove allegations that the FSB was involved in the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings that killed 300 (EKHO MOSKVY, 25 Apr 03; via RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly) to provide political cover for Putin to resume the war in Chechnya.

Anything other than the status quo is unlikely to emerge during the course of the Yushenkov investigation. Conversely, any doubt concerning the possible implications for lawmakers speaking out against those who caused the renewed war in Chechnya, or against the questionable practices of the FSB, may indeed have departed with the soul of Mr. Yushenkov.

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

By Ansel Stein

**With friends like these, the Iraqis need no enemies**

In recent weeks, the Kremlin has continued to talk out of both sides of its mouth regarding Iraq. "We should first of all think about the Iraqi people and about
security in the Middle East. The international community should combine its efforts to help the Iraqi people to restore peaceful life, " Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov said on 28 April. (INTERFAX, 1221 GMT, 30 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0430, via World News Connection) Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin announced that Iraq has enough oil reserves and sufficient infrastructure to be "quite solvent" to pay its debts to Russia. He said on 19 April that "any new government [in Iraq] must become a legal successor to Iraq's debt to Russia." (ITAR-TASS, 1619 GMT, 19 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0419, via World News Connection) Saddling a rebuilding nation with collection notices to the tune of $8 billion is, apparently, the Russian way of helping Iraqis to restore peaceful life. The Iraqi people are fortunate that Hussein did not sign the $40 billion development deal with Russia discussed last summer to ensure Moscow's diplomatic support.

Once again on the right side of a Middle Eastern tyrant
Having used obstructionism as its primary diplomatic tool to help Iraq, Moscow has decided to wield it again, this time for Syria's sake. Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov swung through the Middle East last month, stopping in Damascus and Cairo for talks that centered on the situation in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The trip was timed to precede (and preempt) Colin Powell's visit to the region. On 28 April, Saltanov met with Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar'a in Damascus. Both sides reportedly agreed to coordinate actions aimed at "continuing international efforts aimed at halting the foreign occupation of Iraq and preserving Iraq's national sovereignty and territorial integrity." (ITAR-TASS, 1403 GMT, 28 Apr 03, FBIS-SOV-2003-0428, via World News Connection) Such an "us versus them" approach, pitting Russia and Syria against the US coalition, will no doubt reinforce Russo-Syrian relations. Given the tougher line the United States has taken toward Syria in recent weeks, Damascus could use a friend like Moscow.

Hot prospects for Russian influence? Maybe not
Success in aligning with Syria, however, belies a general waning of Russian influence in the Middle East, and to a certain extent throughout the Muslim world, resulting from the eclipse of the Hussein regime. Almost as soon as hostilities commenced in Iraq, the Russian arms industry was touting potential military deals resulting from the performance of Russian-manufactured arms against American forces. And where military hardware went, military and diplomatic influence were sure to follow. Yet, the routing of Iraqi armies by American forces offered no evidence of the purported superiority of Russian weapons. That may have cooled a potentially hot market. One of the prospects for reviving Russian influence in the Middle East was supposed to have been the United Arab Emirates, a major purchaser of Russian arms in the last few years. It was revealed last week, however, that the UAE currently is interested only in the modernization of Russian military ammunition used by the UAE army. (ITAR-TASS, 1654 GMT, 19 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0419, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Kate Martin

Where have all the Russians gone?
Information from last year’s census, just released, indicates that the Russian population is continuing to decrease, due to a combination of emigration and low birth rates. Indeed, the first post-Soviet data collection puts the Russian population at seventh internationally, behind China, India, Indonesia, the United States, Brazil and Pakistan. (ITAR-TASS, 1049 GMT, 24 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0424, via World News Connection)
The Russian State Statistics Committee announced that 145,290,000 individuals live in Russia currently, almost 2 million fewer than the population in 1989. This isn’t too startling: The committee had released preliminary numbers along those lines last autumn. However, at that time, Nationalities Policy Minister Vladimir Zorin had claimed that the figures indicated an increase in the population. "Despite all of the complications that the country is enduring, its permanent population is increasing," Zorin said, reporting that the largest increase was recorded in the central and southern federal districts, Moscow, Dagestan and Chechnya! (INTERFAX, 1234 GMT, 15 Nov 02; BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis) [Of course, the war in Chechnya makes some of the figures suspect, except, perhaps, to government officials. Vladimir Sokolin, the chairman of the State Statistics Committee, reassured radio listeners in January that, while actual figures were not compiled, "in 1989 there were already almost a million people in the Chechen Republic, something like 980 thousands or almost a million. And you will see that we regrettably do not have the most recent figures, but one can trust the visual impression: we have the highest birthrates -- in Chechnya and Dagestan and in a number of southern regions. It means that even with their rate of births, if we project it to the year 2002, and even considering that many Russians had left and so on, it means that their population should roughly be that. And the census has only confirmed this." (EKHO MOSKVY, 31 Jan 03; Official Kremlin International News Broadcast, via Lexis-Nexis)]

To be sure, Zorin’s information on increases in Moscow and some southern regions was on the mark even if his final analysis was not. According to the State Statistics Committee, 7 million immigrants entered Russia, while 3 million emigrants left the country in the past 10 years. Approximately 27 million individuals moved residence within the country. Much of that relocation, it appears, was into cities and away from rural areas. More than 73 percent of the population now lives in cities, the census figures indicate, while nearly one-third of all villages are deserted. Indeed, 13 cities now have populations over one
million, although the trends are far from even: Figures indicate a 17 percent increase in Moscow’s population, while St. Petersburg experienced a drop of 6.4 percent. (ITAR-TASS, 1049 GMT, 24 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0424, via World News Connection) Villages have not fared as well: Over 12,000 villages are completely deserted, while 22 percent of all rural villages contain settlements of fewer than 10 persons. Much of the decrease in population occurred in the northwest and central regions, while the southern regions (with large non-Russian minorities) on the whole experienced an increase in residents.

According to Sergei Kolesnikov, the deputy chairman of the Statistics Committee, the population has grown in Dagestan (by 43 percent), Kabardino-Balkaria (20 percent), Stavropol territory (17 percent) and Krasnodar territory (11 percent). (ITAR-TASS, 1720 GMT, 23 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0423, via World News Connection)

The low birth rate factor (1.2 percent less than what is needed to maintain population numbers) has caused some concern. Last year there were 1,396,800 births and 2,331,400 deaths -- 85,200 more and 76,500 more, respectively, than in 2001. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Feb 03; via Lexis-Nexis) Not surprisingly, Russian academia held a roundtable recently to look into the problem. The prognosis is not good. Igor Mitkov, senior lecturer at Moscow State University’s Sociology Department, noted that by 2050 Russia's population will have lost between 40 and 70 million persons.

While various reasons for the decreasing birth rate were identified — including the economy — roundtable participants eventually agreed on one root cause: the increasingly vilified mass media, which, participants charged, have propagandized family planning, foisted alien ideals on the people, and advertised nontraditional methods of birth control. One of the main measures to surmount the demographic crisis proposed was to bring the mass media under state control and to keep an eye on their moral tone. Other proposals also were discussed -- ranging from the elaboration of a special state demographic
program to the creation of an expert consultative body under the State Duma, the introduction of lessons in the Orthodox religion in schools, and restoration of the prestige of large families. (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 3 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0403, via World News Connection)

Life expectancy is another factor, of course — the birth rate is insufficient to make up for population loss. The average life expectancy for men is 58.5 years (below the level during the Soviet period), while women on average live 72 years. (ITAR-TASS, 1049 GMT, 24 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0424, via World News Connection) The crime rate contributes to those numbers, according to State Duma Security Committee Chairman Alexander Gurov. Gurov reports that crime causes over 150,000 deaths each year in Russia, while another 50,000 become victims of fires, suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse. (ITAR-TASS, 1159 GMT, 22 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0422, via World News Connection)

REGIONS

What if you held an election and nobody ran?
The Norilsk city election commission had to postpone the scheduled mayoral election until 19 October, due to a lack of candidates. That lack was not the result of apathy, however, but rather was due to an unsupportive electoral atmosphere.

The election is necessary to fill the opening created when former Mayor Oleg Budargin became the governor of Taimyr in January. Four individuals had been in the running — the trade union leader of Norilsk Nickel, Valery Melnikov; the head of the Norilsk City Council, Sergei Shmakov; a department director of Nornickel, Leonid Fraiman; and a lawyer from Krasnoyarsk, Alexander Gliskov. (ITAR-TASS, 1049 GMT, 30 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0430, via World News Connection) However, all four candidates dropped out of the race days before the polling was scheduled to take place. Melnikov had been the front runner after the first round on 20 April, but the next week the Norilsk court cancelled his registration at the request of the prosecutor's office, which accused him of
financial abuses and failing to observe the rules of canvassing on TV. Shmakov, who had placed second in the first round, subsequently decided to withdraw, saying he did not want to participate in the runoff alone. Then Fraiman, who had placed third, announced his withdrawal from the race. While the election committee was willing to give the voters a choice between Gliskov and no one, Gliskov was not. He withdrew his candidacy as well, saying he did not want to take part in voting without any other candidates. (Interfax, 1146 GMT, 29 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0429, via World News Connection) Perhaps, having obtained a tiny percent of the vote in the first round, he feared a repeat of Nizhny Novgorod’s city elections last autumn, in which roughly one-third of voters opted for "none of the above." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0920, via World News Connection) The candidates are eligible to run in the October elections.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Steve Kwast and Dan Rozelle

Despite large investments, Russian aerospace is far behind the West

Russia is falling behind Western military powers in every major measurement of aerospace power, despite massive investments in research and development efforts. What is Russia getting for its investment dollar and can it recover in time to protect its national security in the future?

The latest news on this front comes from the Russian defense ministry. "Russia's search for new forms and methods of fighting in air and space is being hampered by economic and technological problems. The fact that Russia is significantly lagging behind industrially developed countries economically has led to a progressing gap in equipping the national armed forces. This is especially clear in matters of high-tech and costly arms. The provision of the Russian Air Force with modern aviation and radar equipment does not exceed 50 percent. This is
unfortunate. We cannot achieve significant dominance in any strategic direction," a source in the ministry said. While war priorities have shifted towards air and space, Russia remains at World War II levels. (INTERFAX, 0942 GMT, 17 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0417, via World News Connection)

Military members also have voiced concern. "The decline of Russia’s Air Force cannot be made up for [with] supplies of new aircraft in 2003. The pace of adoption of new hardware is not very high, and the share of aircraft that have been operating for more than 15 years constantly grows," officers from the Air Force Main Staff said. They point to the sharp reduction of budget appropriations for the modernization of the Air Force as the main reason and warn that, by 2010, over one-third of the current aircraft will have reached the end of useful service life. (ITAR-TASS, 1553 GMT, 14 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0414, via World News Connection)

The problem goes far beyond just hardware. The flight hours and training that are required to employ the aerospace equipment properly are suffering too. A spokesman for the chief of staff of the Russian Air Force said, "the Russian military has not met the training flight’s targets this year because of a shortage of fuel and spare parts. Solving these problems will require a radical revision of the combat training of the Air Force, which directly depends on the state of our economy." According to the Air Force command, the average pilot of a combat squadron is getting only 68 percent of the total required hours. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 17 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

So what is happening to all the research and development money that Russia is pouring into aerospace? It is no secret that Moscow invests a great deal in that sector. Even though R&D programs can take decades to bear fruit, it is usual to see some trickle of technology change the way the military trains and fights. This has not been the case in Russia. The only significant military benefit that has emerged in the last few years from the R&D sector is the very capable air-to-air
guided missile designated the AA-12. (AVIATSKIYA KOSMONAVTIKA, 16 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Russian military training also has not changed in decades, as was evident at the latest demonstration of military capability to foreign military attaches in Lipetsk. Commander of the fourth training center of the Russian Air Force, Alexander Kharchevsky, noted many aerospace training tactics that have not altered since the 1960s. (IZVESTIA, 16 Apr 03; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Such sparse product and training results over such a long period of time means that either there are much greater technological breakthroughs to come, or that the R&D money has not been efficiently utilized to maximize effective combat capability output.

No answer may be possible without analyzing classified documents; the truth may be a little of both. The only major visible future capability in the aerospace industry is the creation of Russia’s fifth-generation combat plane, scheduled for completion in 2014. (ITAR-TASS, 0859 GMT, 16 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It could be that Russia has fallen into one of the most common mistakes of military thinkers (i.e., when generals and politicians trust the predictions of scientists and engineers and invest in futuristic military ideas that turn out to be less than promised and years behind schedule).

Regardless of what root causes might be found in any secret documents, the fact remains that Russia has failed to keep its military armed and ready to meet the current challenges of national security in the aerospace arena. Such failure falls directly on the shoulders of the military officers whose charge it is to ensure the development of such capability. Only the future will show how much military capability the Russian people will get out of their research and development rubles. Russian generals need to reflect on the historical wreckage of nations that failed to keep pace with the enemy. Today’s real enemy is terrorism and Russia is ill equipped to cope.
**Russia renews efforts to hinder NATO expansion**

The war in Iraq has exposed a number of rifts within Europe and NATO on which Russia surely plans to capitalize as a means to obstruct NATO expansion. Regardless of the public reassurances to the contrary, there should be no doubt that Russia would like to halt the impending presence of NATO on its borders. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 18 Nov 02; via Lexis-Nexis)

Since its creation, NATO's primary military focus has been Russia and the now defunct Soviet Union. Today those concerns have been tempered. NATO and Russia now cooperate on issues of mutual interest in the newly established Russia-NATO Council. This forum has provided a venue for Russia to voice its concerns and to be included in the consideration of NATO security issues. The inclusion also has provided Russia some of the recognition and status it has sought within Europe. However, the most recent statements from its leadership make clear that Russia remains deeply suspicious of NATO and is strongly opposed to any expansion of the alliance. While this opposition will not prevent the seven invited countries from joining NATO, it appears that Moscow intends to have a say in the process.

Over the course of the debate on NATO enlargement, Russia's opposition has coalesced around four issues: the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), the Kaliningrad enclave, the status of ethnic Russians in the Baltic states and the lack of access to the changing security structures within Europe.

The most vocal protests so far have come from the Russian military. According to Colonel General Leonid Ivashov, former director of the defense ministry's main department of international cooperation, "NATO is an anachronism which has become obsolete. For Russia, however, NATO is a strong element of military threat. Russia's national security conceptual plan, the foreign policy conceptual plan and military doctrine all had that fact established. Unfortunately, Russia's
current political leaders have merely neglected this threat." (KOMMERSANT, 21 Nov 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Securities Database) More recently, in a speech at the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, General Mahmut Garaeev stated, "Today we are much more reserved in our attitude toward the NATO. But we need to tell the world once and for all that the enlargement of this bloc is unjustified in terms of its very existence since the end of the Warsaw Pact." (LAUKU AVIZE, 22 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Driven perhaps by concern over their country’s flagging military strength, Russia's leaders have demanded NATO compliance with the CFE treaty. Negotiated to impose ceilings on the deployment of conventional arms, including tanks, armored vehicles, warplanes and artillery, the CFE was originally signed by the Soviet Union. In 1999 the treaty was revised to reflect the current geopolitical face of Europe after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Today the Russians want the Baltic states to accede to the treaty before officially joining NATO. Linking the CFE to NATO expansion would delay any enlargement, since no country can accede to the treaty until all signatories have ratified the revised agreement. (REUTERS, 20 Sep 02; via www.expandNATO.org) Moreover, Russia's continued military presence in the South Caucasus itself constitutes a violation of the CFE amended clauses. Dr. F. Stephen Larrabee of RAND has told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Russia also may try to use CFE to constrain the ability of NATO -- and especially the US -- to carry out an Article 5 commitment to the Baltic states by limiting the alliance’s ability to station forces temporarily on the territory of the Baltic states. (FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, 3 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Kaliningrad, home to Russia’s Baltic Fleet, also provides Moscow a means to challenge NATO enlargement. Claiming that NATO expansion would allow NATO weapons and aircraft to reach Russia in a matter of minutes, Russia has been threatening the deployment of nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad. There are also calls to upgrade the combat units stationed at Kaliningrad in response to NATO’s
growth. The insinuation, of course, is that none of this will occur if NATO expansion is halted or NATO agrees not to place forces in the territory of the new members. (Kaliningradskaya Pravda, 20 Mar 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Not content to confine its opposition to expansion to military issues, Russia has resurrected its old accusation that the Baltic states discriminate against their Russian-speaking minorities. The implication here is that the Baltic states purportedly violate human rights and that NATO should avoid admitting them before more progress is made on ensuring minority rights. Russia’s Deputy Duma Speaker Lyubov Sliska even made note of the issue at a meeting between NATO representatives and the Duma. NATO, she believes, should be responsible for stopping the alleged human rights violations in Latvia and Estonia toward the Russian-speaking minority. (ROSBUSINESSCONSULTING DATABASE, 10 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis) Russia’s argument in this case is weak since the laws of those countries have been certified as conforming to European norms after exhaustive examinations by several international organizations.

Sliska also expressed concerned about the "optimal structure of European security" during discussions on the war in Iraq. While Iraq may be the current sore point, her remarks were aimed toward the larger issue of Russia's participation in all of Europe's security affairs. (IZVESTIA, 11 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) Russia's leadership seeks to prevent the central security role in Europe being played by a structure (NATO) to which Russia does not and will not have direct access. A Duma statement warned that "[enlargement] will considerably change the situation in the provision of security in Europe. [It] will not solve many problems European countries are facing, among them the threat of international terrorism, and will not contribute to the security of the alliance, and countries, which have expressed their wish to become members of the alliance." (ITAR-TASS, 24 Dec 02; via Lexis-Nexis)
Obviously Russia’s leadership knows that it cannot compete with NATO as a guarantor of security within Europe. However, the conflict within Europe over Iraq has given Russia a new role that it clearly hopes to parlay into a stronger position of influence over affairs than it previously had enjoyed. Or, as Russian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin simply puts it, "The goal for Moscow is to tear Europe away from the control of the United States (NATO)." (LAUKU AVIZE, 22 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Nadezda Kinsky

UKRAINE

New laws, new freedoms?
On 28 April, President Leonid Kuchma signed a new law on "Society, Mass Media, Authorities: Freedom of Expression and Censorship in Ukraine."

(INTERFAX, 27 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0427, via World News Connection) The bill had been passed by the Verkhovna Rada early in April. It defines media censorship, makes it illegal for officials to intervene in journalistic work and establishes limits for defamation cases. As if to underline the new law, Kuchma announced that he wanted to stop the defamation cases launched on his behalf against regional media. He claimed that he did not have anything to do with opening the cases and did not even know the media organs involved.

Ukraine’s media landscape has not enjoyed a good reputation, and has been under particularly harsh international scrutiny since the Gongadze case. Once again, the situation is being described as deteriorating. The Rada’s Human Rights ombudsperson, Nina Karpacheva, recently noted in her annual report that media freedom continues to be in danger. The Helsinki Commission drew special attention to this report and agreed with its disconcerting contents. With 36 journalists killed in the last 10 years and many others suffering from acts of
intimidation, journalism continues to be ranked one of the most dangerous professions in Ukraine. The Human Rights Watch Report 2003 also noted subtle forms of media censorship that occur in Ukraine, through close ties between media moguls and government officials as well as presidential directives sent to the media -- particularly television outlets — containing instructions on which subjects are to be covered and how much air time is to be devoted to them. Although these “temniki” theoretically are mere memoranda, media that have not complied with these guidelines tend to find themselves facing tax audits, libel suits and/or license revocations.

Similar criticisms emerged from the report issued at the beginning of April by the International Federation of Journalists in cooperation with the National Union of Journalists in Great Britain and Ireland after a research visit in Ukraine. (www.ifj.org) Three Human Rights and Media Watch reports published in the first quarter of the year noted serious deterioration in the standards in Ukraine. The Annual Freedom House Reports rate countries worldwide along a scale of 0-10 indicating whether media can be considered free, partly free or not free. In the 2003 Report, Ukraine dropped from "partly free" to "not free," due to "state censorship of television broadcasts, continued harassment and disruption of independent media, and the failure of authorities to adequately investigate attacks against journalists." (WWW.FREEDOMHOUSE.ORG)

The new law has reaped some praise; perhaps it will increase respect for and freedom of the media. Article 19 has evaluated the law in a largely positive light, noting that it could constitute a first positive step toward providing the press freedoms that are theoretically assured in Ukraine by the Constitution and 1992 Law on Information. Welcoming an increased transparency in information on state activities and institutions as well as the reduction of censorship, the organization nevertheless suggested amendments to ensure the success of such measures. Certainly there are holes as to the definition of censorship, the precise degree of freedom from state interference awarded to journalists and the
boundaries of potential defamation claims. However, probably the biggest issue at this point is the question of how successfully this law will be implemented.

**BELARUS**

**Unpopular president**

Human rights reports about Belarus also are continuing to criticize the administration on topics ranging from media freedom to the disappearance of Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s political opponents. While criticism and concern remain at a high level, recent polls also have highlighted once more the undemocratic standards of the political system. International attention is focusing on the poor standard of political freedom, with repeated warnings to the leadership in Minsk that accusations of state-sponsored threats and disappearances of opposition leaders and journalists in the country should be investigated. The recent damaging Human Rights report published at the end of March by the US State Department (WWW.STATE.GOV) centered on this issue, as did the Freedom House report: "The authoritarian regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka is openly hostile to a free press." (WWW.FREEDOMHOUSE.ORG/)

Added to these long-standing concerns over media restriction and lack of democratic standards, non-governmental organizations in Belarus have denounced the justice ministry's policy towards NGOs, several of which recently have been threatened with closure. In a 29 April statement, the Assembly of Democratic non-governmental organizations called these policies "political cleansing" ahead of the parliamentary elections. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 30 Apr 03)

The Independent Institute for Socioeconomic and Political Studies in Belarus conducted a survey in March and April on President Lukashenka's standing, which revealed the extent of the president's unpopularity among the population. Only just over a quarter of the persons surveyed (26.2%) said that they would vote for the president and an even smaller portion (23.2%) said they would
reelect him based on the quality of his leadership. Far more than half the respondents would like to see someone else lead the country; most also would oppose legislation that would allow the president to run for a third term. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 22 Apr 03) The presidential elections in 2001, which extended Lukashenka's time in office to a second term, were deemed neither free nor fair by international election observers and have caused repeated ruptures with the West. A potential referendum is being planned in Belarus ahead of the next presidential election run-up to decide whether the constitution should be amended in order to allow President Lukashenka to extend his rule into a third term.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA

Case closed on September bombings

May is to Moscow what August is to Washington -- the slowest time of the year. The month begins with May Day, the celebration of socialist labor, which is followed by the commemoration of Russia's victory in World War II on 9 May. In effect, the whole city goes on holiday from Thursday, 1 May, until Monday, 12 May.

On the eve of the holidays, the general prosecutor's office announced that it was closing the file on the September 1999 bombings in Moscow and Volgadonsk that set off the current war in Chechnya. According to the procuracy, there were nine terrorists: Emir Al-Khattab (killed in Chechnya); Abu Umar (by official accounts, killed in Chechnya, but some sources say he may never have existed at all); Achmez Gochiyaev (still at large); Khakim Abaev (still at large); Denis Saitakov (killed in Georgia); Zaur Batchaev (killed in Chechnya); Timur Batchaev (killed in Georgia); Yusuf Krymshamkhalov (in prison); and Adam Dekkushev (in
prison). Khattab and Abu Umar were Arabs; the other seven are members of North Caucasian nationalities. None of the terrorists was Chechen. (www.regions.ru, 30 Apr 03, and ROSBUSINESS CONSULTING, 30 Apr 03; via top.rbc.ru)

Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev were extradited from Georgia in December 2002 and presently are being held in Moscow. They have not been indicted formally and it is not clear when a trial might begin. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1 May 03) Interestingly, the four-month detention has not led authorities to new directions of inquiry, much less arrests.

**Yushenkov threatened by KGB**

On 22 April, news.ru reported that Sergei Yushenkov, the Duma deputy who was murdered on 17 April, had been threatened by retired KGB Major General Aleksandr Mikhailov. According to Yushenkov's assistant, Grigory Pasko, during a televised appearance Mikhailov had said "Yushenkov, we'll deal with you later." (WWW.NEWSRU.COM, 22 Apr 03)

Yushenkov was the co-director with Sergei Kovalev of the public commission investigating the bombings in Moscow and Volgadonsk and the "training" in Ryazan. The commission's efforts were focused on obtaining official documents pertaining to that "training."

On 23 September 1999, Ryazan residents discovered a bomb in their basement and alerted the police. After the MVD arrested two suspects, who were FSB agents, the Moscow headquarters announced that the event in Ryazan was an exercise for local officers. Kovalev's and Yushenkov's commission was suing the government to procure the official documents (orders, plans, other paperwork) pertaining to this training. Yushenkov's murder dealt a serious setback to these efforts.
Boris Berezovsky, the oligarch-in-exile, produced a letter that Yushenkov wrote to British authorities on behalf of former Education Minister Nikita Chekulin on 25 April 2002. Chekulin had publicized documents proving that a research institute under his ministry was shipping the explosive hexogen around Russia. In his letter Yushenkov said, "I studied the evidence produced by Mr. Chekulin and came to the conclusion that he is a highly reliable witness to an illegal operation, that is, the massive shipments of military explosives from military bases … throughout Russia. It is obvious to me that the perpetrators of this sort of crime must be connected to the federal security services." Yushenkov's letter went on to assert that those who are involved in this case take a grave risk, including the possibility of being murdered by "persons connected to Russian security services." (The text of the letter was published on www.newsru.com on 22 April 2003)

**Politkovskaya's exclusive**

If the murder of a Duma deputy and the end of the road for the investigation into the bombings were not enough scandal for one month, the final touch came on 28 April with the publication of a sensational report in Novaya gazeta. According to the paper, the GRU had an agent in Movsar Baraev's gang when it took hostages in Moscow last October.

Anna Politkovskaya published an interview with Khanpash Nurdevich Terkibaev, who carries press credentials for a government newspaper for cover but does not claim to be a journalist. Terkibaev has had an outstanding career: He participated in the raid on Budennovsk, then served as press spokesman for Aslan Maskhadov and even had a television show "The President's Heart" (later renamed "The President's Path").

A participant in the Nord-Ost hostage-taking, Terkibaev claims to have become a peace mediator since then. "It was I who organized talks between Chechen parliamentarians and the administration, with [Sergei] Yastrzembsky." "I see
Yastrzembsky when I need to, I work for him," Terkibaev said, and he produced a photograph of the two men together that was authenticated by Novaya gazeta experts. (Terkibaev also produced a forgery of himself posing with Maskhadov and Margaret Thatcher.)

This is only the beginning. "Since Nord-Ost I visited Surkov twice," he asserted. Vladislav Surkov is the deputy head of the presidential administration and is considered immensely influential. Terkibaev claimed to have had lunch recently in Dubai with Maskhadov's wife Kusama and son, Anzor. "Akhmed Zakaev and I are friends, we worked together in the theater," he said later in the interview, referring to Maskhadov's representative in Europe. Under Dmitri Rogozin's direction, Terkibaev took a group of Chechen deputies to Strasbourg. In short, in the space of one interview Terkibaev managed to mention every influential politician connected in one way or another to Chechnya.

The portion pertaining directly to Nord Ost follows:
"Your name was published among the list of terrorists in Nord-Ost. Did you sue that publication?" asks Politkovskaya.
"I asked Yastrzembsky 'how could that happen?'," says Terkibaev.
"How did he respond?," asks Politkovskaya.
"He told me not to worry about it," says Terkibaev.
"Did you know the younger Baraev for a long time?" asks Politkovskaya.
"Yes. I know everyone in Chechnya," responds Terkibaev.

He admitted to entering Dubrovka with the terrorists and leaving shortly before the security services stormed the theater. Then the interview ended, and Politkovskaya included a series of sensational assertions that are not bolstered by direct quotes from her source. Politkovskaya stated that Terkibaev had persuaded Baraev and the others to stage the raid on Nord Ost by telling them that negotiations had been assured. The Russians had been bribed, she said, and if the Chechens "made some noise," negotiations would begin.
Politkovskaya also said that it was Terkibaev who provided safe passage for the Chechen unit in Moscow. Then she concluded that Terkibaev must have been working for military intelligence, GRU.

Clearly there are many oddities in this article, not the least of which is the fact that a person listed officially as a terrorist was posing for photos with Yastrzembsky. Terkibaev's willingness to volunteer so much information to Novaya gazeta is also rather odd. Terkibaev's vanity and arrogance are very much on display, as is his limited intelligence. Perhaps he does not sense the danger that this interview poses, or perhaps he is being used — this time to deflect attention from the more serious stories discussed above.

**Shermatova's exclusive**

Sanobar Shermatova and Aleksandr Teit published a detailed portrait of the female suicide bombers in Movsar Baraev's unit in the 30 April issue of Moskovskie novosti. The portraits of six terrorists are based on extensive interviews with their families and represent the first serious effort to describe their motivations. Interestingly, three of the women were recently married and expecting children. Their husbands also took part in the raid. The three others seem to have been motivated by grief over the loss of many family members. All six had some degree of involvement with Wahhabis.

Another important insight contained in the article is that Abubakar, a masked gunman accompanying Movsar Baraev, may have been the one in charge. In televised footage Abubakar is seen speaking to Baraev in Chechen while Baraev was speaking to the press. The import of these Chechen phrases is to suggest to Baraev, "don't say too much" or "say Maskhadov" (when Baraev was saying that Basaev had sent him on the operation). According to the authors, the interaction suggests strongly that Abubakar was the leader and Movsar provided a famous last name.
Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By David Montgomery

Economic and security concerns
Rather than giving legitimacy to the Uzbek government, the recent European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) meetings in Tashkent highlighted the region’s economic challenges. With the exception of the energy sector, Central Asia is an economically difficult sell to Western investors. At the level of security and as members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the signatories of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) are developing a rapid reaction force to address security concerns.

Economic Concerns — EBRD meetings in Tashkent
On 4-5 May, the EBRD held its annual meetings in Tashkent, despite frustrations with Uzbek President Islam Karimov’s failure to implement promised financial reforms. The EBRD, which aims to stimulate the private sector of formerly communist countries, has been forced to distance itself from any message that would suggest that the meeting location is an endorsement of Uzbek economic policies. On the contrary, a Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal ranking of the economic freedoms of 156 countries placed Uzbekistan 149th (below Burma), while Freedom House gave Uzbekistan a rating slightly better than Iraq and Turkmenistan with regard to political freedoms and civil rights. The EBRD has been criticized on a number of fronts for its selection of Uzbekistan as the site of its first large meeting in Central Asia. Optimists, however, hope that the meeting will serve as an opportunity to push for reform of international economic practices throughout the region. (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 29 Apr 03; via www.crisisweb.org, and Eurasianet, 2 May 03; via www.eurasianet.org)

Such reforms, however, are unlikely to come out of the EBRD meetings. In Kazakhstan, for example, where corruption and rights violations are common,
Moody’s Investor Services gave the country a higher investment rating than it gave some American cities. (EURASIANET, 28 Apr 03; via www.eurasianet.org)
With regards to the energy sector, the message sent is that democratic principles (which the EBRD tries to foster) are not requisite factors for economic investment. And while countries attempt to improve their image through promises to international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — e.g., Uzbekistan’s planned meetings with IMF representatives at the EBRD meeting (INTERFAX, 1356 GMT, 24 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0424, via World News Connection) — they often are slow to follow through on promised reforms.

**Developing the rapid reaction forces**
The CIS rapid reaction forces serve as a statement of CST self-reliance. As a small group of around 160 Kyrgyz protested in Bishkek to demand the withdrawal of the US Air Force from its base at Manas airport, (INTERFAX, 0711 GMT, 1 May 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0501, via World News Connection) Kazakhstan’s General Staff and Deputy Defense Minister Malik Saparov lauded the development of the (mainly Russian) rapid reaction force’s air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, roughly equidistant between Bishkek and the Kazakh border. The Kant air base is scheduled to have around 20 Russian and Kyrgyz aircraft, (ITAR-TASS, 0233 GMT, 30 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0430, via World News Connection) and the base — which under the CST is intended to bolster Central Asia’s regional security — will be maintained by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. According to Saparov, "The deployment of a Russian air group will shield our collective security and the security of our state from possible external threats and complies with Kazakhstan’s defense policy and military doctrine." (INTERFAX, 1449 GMT, 29 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0429, via World News Connection)

At a recent meeting of the Collective Security Council (CSC) in Tajikistan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, as the outgoing council chairman, transferred his chairmanship to Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov. Rakhmonov will head
the CSC for a year, until the council’s 2004 meeting. (INTERFAX, 0746 GMT, 28 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0428, via World News Connection) The CSC functions under the CST and the meeting in Tajikistan was seen as a foundational step towards increasing the roles and responsibilities of the CST into a more broad-based international regional organization. (ITAR-TASS, 2053 GMT, 27 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0428, via World News Connection) While certain aspects of the economy look to the West and seek the resources of the IMF, EBRD, and foreign investors, the countries of the CST are moving forward to secure regional stability through Russian military hegemonic influence over the CIS.