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The ISCIP Analyst

1997-05-21

The ISCIP Analyst, Volume II, Issue 9

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/11903>

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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Apparat case closed (for now)

The State Duma has withdrawn its appeal for a ruling from the Constitutional Court on the status of the Presidential Administration. The basis of the Duma's petition was a presidential edict dated 2 October 1996, which outlined the Administration's activities and structure. (Sobraniye Zakonodatelstva Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 7 Oct 96) Among the enumerated functions of the administration most vexing to the Duma are its roles in providing "control and verification of the execution of federal laws and edicts" and maintaining "the interaction of federal organs of state power."

The Duma's decision to withdraw its petition was based in part on the release of a presidential edict dated 15 April 1997, which revised some of the language of the earlier decree. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 26 Apr 97) While most of the revisions in the April edict reflect recent structural changes (such as the addition of a second First Deputy Chief of Staff), at least one of the Duma's specific complaints was addressed. The new language on the administration's role in relation to other state organs reads: "assistance to the Russian Federation president, in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the head of state, in ensuring coordinated collaboration between organs of state power, including in the sphere of protecting human rights and the freedom of the mass media."

It can be assumed, however, that the removal of Anatoli Chubais as Chief of Staff may also have played a significant role in the Duma's decision not to pursue the Constitutional Court's ruling. The President's Representative to the

Constitutional Court, Sergei Shakhrai, has asked the court for a ruling on the powers and status of the administration despite the Duma's withdrawal.

New decrees address corruption, land ownership

President Yel'tsin has finally issued a much-discussed decree aimed at curbing corruption among federal officials. The decree calls for the disclosure of income and property assets by members of the government, parliamentary deputies, and other federal and regional officials. While it does not force financial disclosure by family members of the officials, it does recommend their compliance. In an address to announce the decree, Yel'tsin promised to release his own financial records. (RFE/RL Newslines, 16 May 97)

In the absence of a land code, which has yet to be agreed upon by both houses of parliament, President Yel'tsin has issued a decree on the private ownership of land. The decree, dated 16 May, is targeted at urban areas and does not address issues of rural or agricultural property. A land code did pass the State Duma last year, but was voted down by the Federation Council. As Yel'tsin moves to articulate a land ownership policy by presidential edict, it seems likely that both houses of parliament will seek to revisit this issue. (RFE/RL Newslines, 19 May 97)

RF SECURITY COUNCIL

Rybkin wins Chechnya skirmish

The bombings and hostage-taking incidents that marred the lead up to the formal signing of an agreement between Chechen President Maskhadov and RF President Yel'tsin provoked a public display of disagreement between Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin and Interior Minister Anatoli Kulikov. While decidedly more low-key than last year's confrontation between Kulikov and then SC Secretary Aleksandr Lebed, the differences in policy towards Chechnya which resurfaced seemed likely to stall treaty negotiations again.

This time, however, Yel'tsin met with both Rybkin and Kulikov, and in at a session of the Security Council confirmed the SC's role in coordinating policy on Chechnya. Following the SC session, Rybkin set up a meeting with Kulikov to work out their disputes. Speaking of those who might disagree on the SC secretary's approach to the Chechen negotiations, Rybkin said "They are military people and are familiar with subordination." (NTV, 5 May 97)

Kulikov has since turned his attention to the Far East. After a recent tour of the area, he noted rising separatist sentiments and a trend toward stronger economic relations with Pacific Rim countries than with Moscow or the rest of the Russian Federation. Blaming the high cost of rail transport to the Far East for these developments, Kulikov suggested increases in state rail subsidies to encourage the region to "buy Russian."

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger

"Founding Act" on NATO-Russian cooperation agreed in Moscow

NATO and Russia agreed on a 16-page "Founding Act on Mutual Relations" in Moscow on 14 May. President Boris Yel'tsin and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana are expected to sign the act at the NATO meeting in Paris on 27 May.

According to a copy leaked to Reuters, the act establishes a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council to serve as a "framework for political consultations." The council is to be chaired "jointly by the Secretary General of NATO, a representative of one of the NATO member states on a rotation basis, and a representative of Russia." It shall be the obligation of both Russia and NATO to consult within the council "in case one of the Council members perceives a threat to its territorial integrity, political independence or security." NATO and Russia shall also be required to "inform each other regarding the respective security-

related challenges they face and the measures that each intends to take to address them."

The act also allows for the extension to Russia of membership in Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs) deployed in pursuit of NATO missions. CJTFs had been proposed as a means to allow Western European nations to use sections of NATO forces in "out-of-area" actions such as support of the Bosnian peace plan. Participation in CJTFs has earlier been a privilege solely of NATO member states (Reuters, 15 May 97).

Third leg of Russia-China-Iran triangle extended

On a May 4th visit to Tehran, Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing praised Iran's swift progress in economics, technology and trade and promised more Chinese cooperation in the country's development. "No power can prevent the expansion of bilateral cooperation between Tehran and Beijing," Lanqing said.

Iranian president Hashemi-Rafsanjani described Chinese-Iranian bilateral ties as a critical facet of the blossoming Russian-Chinese-Iranian friendship. "Trilateral cooperation between the three countries will not only satisfy the needs of these three countries," Rafsanjani said, "but will also help the development of regional cooperation considerably." (IRIB Television First Program Network, 4 May 97)

Moscow complains of 'anti-Russian' elements undermining peace in Georgia

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Valeriy Nesterushkin complained on 8 May that anti-Russian forces in Tbilisi are "trying to damage friendly Russian-Georgian relations, using the unsettled Abkhazian problem for this purpose."

"Accusations against the Russian peace keepers in Abkhazia have again been voiced in Tbilisi," Nesterushkin said. (Interfax, 8 May 97) The "anti-Russian

forces" were worried, the spokesman said, that nothing had been done "to expand the area of the peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia."

The Foreign Ministry's concern is unsettling, given that Georgia will depend on access to Abkhaz territory to pursue its planned oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea. Russia opposes the construction of the pipeline.

Latvians fear that Russians will have veto over Baltic NATO membership

Unassuaged by Washington's statements to the contrary, Latvian Foreign Minister Valdis Birkavs has said that a "link exists" between Baltic applications for NATO membership and Russia's new "voice" in the alliance's affairs. (Le Soir, 6 May 97)

The Baltic states had been reassured by a system of interlocking alliances with Nordic countries who are also NATO members, Birkavs said, but insisted that "all these proposals are of course no substitute for normal and full NATO membership."

"We are not afraid of Russia," Birkavs said. "We are afraid of Russian uncertainties, of the unknown. That is not the same thing. There are certain forces in Russia which quite simply refuse to recognize our independence and which would like to see us shackled to Russia again."

Comment

With a 'voice' this loud, who needs a 'veto'?

The "Founding Act on Mutual Relations" to be signed by Russia and NATO at the end of the month is the nadir of sound-bite foreign policy. The mantra of U.S. President Bill Clinton has been that Russia be given a "voice but not a veto" in NATO affairs. Hypnotized by their own simple formulation, the White House has slept-walked through negotiations of the final document. It has thus allowed

Russia to emerge with a voice so amplified by permanent staff and entangling engagements that a veto seems hardly necessary.

All but the worst moral equivocators will be forewarned by the document's introductory statement, in which the removal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe is equated to the U.S. build-down in the West. We are off to a bad start if Russia is to be congratulated for withdrawing its forces "on an unprecedented scale" from Eastern Europe. What next—praise that Russia has stopped sending political prisoners to Siberia? Awards to husbands who stop beating their wives?

The substance of the agreement has been forged in the spirit of its introduction. The "historic transformation" of NATO—that is, the "Europeanization" of its command structure—is here made even worse by an invitation to Russia to join NATO outings.

In 1994 Clinton proposed the founding of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs) as off-the-shelf NATO forces that European countries could put under their own command. The CJTFs were meant to allow NATO to go "out-of-area" without dragging U.S. troops into an ethnic quagmire. In what was then considered a radical suggestion, Clinton called for the involvement of prospective NATO members from Eastern Europe to join CJTFs.

The new NATO-Russian agreement goes even further; it suggests that Russia might join CJTFs too, as a participant in "joint operations" serving the U.N. or O.S.C.E. This is well beyond the mere "Europeanization" of the NATO command; this is a step towards turning NATO into a permanent handmaiden of international organizations.

Worst of all, the NATO-Russian agreement establishes a Byzantine bazaar of joint councils at which NATO and Russia shall be equal partners. The councils will be obliged to meet and discuss any circumstance which either member feels is a

threat to its national security. Wouldn't it be ironic if Russia, having earned such membership in exchange for agreeing to NATO expansion, were to bring up NATO expansion itself at the first such meeting?

Russian Federation: Political Parties and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Duma passes statement denouncing Yeltsin's plan to bury Lenin

The statement says that it is "customary in civilized society to protect the relics of history, not to disturb the places where outstanding personalities rest in peace, and to honor national shrines." The statement was backed by 241 deputies. In an ironic twist, Lenin's present resting place on Red Square was defended with reference to the Bible. Duma members quoted: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you." It is not entirely clear how this passage applies to the debate but Lenin would certainly not have been amused. Presently there are calls for a national referendum on the future of Lenin's embalmed corpse. (Interfax, 2 Apr 97)

Duma discusses national symbols

More than half the Duma deputies voted for draft laws on restoring Soviet-era state emblems: seal, flag and anthem. However under Article 70 of the Constitution, changing state symbols requires a two-thirds vote. Interestingly, this move coincides with the move toward union with Belarus. Members of the CPRF faction deny any connection between the discussion of the "Red" symbols in the Duma and the signing of the Russia-Belarus documents. It would seem that the Duma has a lull in its legislative docket. (Moskovskiy komsomolets, 3 Apr 97)

POLITICAL PARTIES

Communists win in Volgograd Council

According to preliminary results, Communists gained the greatest number of votes in 12 out of 16 one-seat constituencies. The other four seats were occupied by managers of major joint-stock companies. Despite a low turnout (24.58 percent of the electorate or 484,958 registered voters went to the polls), the elections were pronounced valid. Local election law sets no minimum voter turnout to validate the elections, a candidate who collects a simple majority wins. (ITAR-TASS, 31 Mar 97)

Illegal CPRF cells set up at business enterprises

The Federal Security Service and the Russian General Prosecutor's Office are completing work to verify information on the formation of primary organizations by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and other political parties at business enterprises, other institutions, and in military units. Preliminary results suggest that party cells have indeed been established. This would contradict current federal legislation.

It is not clear, nor would it be surprising, if CPRF cells were established in those organizations headed or controlled by supporters of the party. It is also unclear how membership in the cells is recruited. Until strong federal labor legislation is passed—and enforced—eliminating party cells will not necessarily prevent employer pressure on employees to support certain political groups. Party cells in military units, while appropriate in a society constituted around a single political party, are deeply problematic in a multi-party system. (Rossiyskiye vesti, 10 Apr 97)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Cathy Dreher and CDR John G. Steele

Public disagreements accompany provisions of accord

After last-minute maneuver and much cloudy rhetoric NATO and Russia have signed a "NATO-Russia Founding Act." The agreement provides for Russian acquiescence in NATO expansion (at least the initial round of three countries) in exchange for NATO assurances that no nuclear weapons and no "significant" ground forces will be placed on the soil of new NATO members. (RFE/RL Newsline, 14 May 97; Monitor, 15 May 97)

Comment

There are already public disagreements over the provisions of the accord. Russia, not surprisingly, has described the agreement as binding and legal—the West is saying it is no such thing. This document may pave the way for the incorporation of the first three states (usually identified as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland), but any further expansion will likely precipitate more aggressive Russian rhetoric. The West will have to decide if negative Russian behavior and/or intent justifies a second round of expansion, or if positive Russian behavior makes such expansion unnecessary. The worst possible outcome will involve a bellicose Russia seeming to intimidate an irresolute West. Such an outcome will reinforce the very worst elements in the current Russian political landscape.

More cuts planned for airborne troops

The airborne troops are slated to be cut again to 34,000, about half their Soviet strength. (RFE/RL Newsline, 7 May 97)

Comment

This cut will irritate the ex-airborne in the political hierarchy (like Aleksandr Lebed) but these "light" forces, inherently dependent on expensive and scarce Air Force transport for their mobility, seem recently vulnerable to formal

reductions. It's conceivable that their political reliability is questioned by some in the government.

Defense Minister Igor Rodionov has denied reports that Russian nuclear missiles were inadvertently "armed" or otherwise readied for firing. (UPI, 13 May 97) The good news is he supports START II ratification. (RFE/RL Newsline, 14 May 97)

Comment

The fact that the command and control arrangements for nuclear weapons have even been questioned in a credible way is itself an extremely serious development. This introduces into the calculus of national security essentially new and unknown variables (perhaps not unintentionally). An inadvertent (or seemingly inadvertent) firing is simply an unacceptable risk for the Russians (one would think) and for anyone else downrange. One can hope that something more than the public, verbal reassurances that all is well has been privately forthcoming.

Proposed CFE changes cause concern among former republics

A number of former Soviet Republics are getting cold feet over the proposed new CFE flank arrangements which allow for increased Russian troop levels. (Monitor, 14 May 97)

Comment

What this accord does is ratify extant Russian troop deployments—they were already "cheating," and some of the former Soviet republics are skittish about it.

Details of May Day celebrations

For the first time since 1945, no military equipment was displayed in the annual May Day celebration and parade. Parades comprising troops and bands marched in Moscow with similar parades in other cities. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1 May 97)

Comment

Numerous news articles made mention of this fact which itself calls attention to how unusual this was. The only reason noted was financial. Oddly enough, the Russians spend dollars where they want. It is obvious that there must have also been some apprehension about public unrest if they spent money for a parade when they cannot feed the troops, pay them or even provide them with homes. This seems a rather prudent move on the part of the Russians.

Significant budget cuts proposed

A budget submitted to the Duma proposes to cut the budget by some 30-55 percent (108 trillion rubles) "The government moves to cut down some of the unprotected articles of the budget by 30 percent including purchases of...military technique, scientific research....The other unprotected areas of the budget including agriculture, investment programme, culture, public health, social programme and several regional programmes,"(ITAR-TASS, 5 May 97)

Comment

The areas being focused upon for spending cuts easily match those the US looks to in similar budget-cutting drills. The Russians can certainly afford to reduce spending for scientific research and military technique. But it is strange that they look to social programmes, public health and agriculture too. They are people accustomed to socialized medicine and numerous social programs. During this time of transition to a market economy, it seems they are picking potentially volatile areas to cut.

First use justifications declared

Deputy Security Council Secretary Boris Berezovskiy said in a live interview to Ekho Moskvyy Radio that Russia reserves the right to first use of nuclear weapons. He says not to "have the advantage" but "if we are pushed into a

corner and this is the only option open, we will use nuclear weapons."
(Informatsionnoye Agentstvo Ekho Moskvyy, 9 May 97)

Comment

The is not the first time discussion on first use of nuclear weapons has surfaced this year. But it is the only time such a cavalier reason has been mentioned.

On 5 May, an agreement was signed between Russia, France, Canada and the U.S. for the Russians to sell highly-enriched uranium to the U.S. Russia plans to have a store for uranium in the U.S. owned by Russia. An American company, Nukem and Cogema, would also be authorized to sell the natural component of HEU to be shipped to the U.S. (Interfax, 6 May 97)

Comment

This information seems to contradict earlier news items which indicate that Russia fell short of shipping HEU to the U.S. as agreed and was instead shipping low-enriched uranium.

Russian Federation: Chechnya

By Miriam Lansky

Text of agreement on peace and the principles regulating bilateral relations

President Yel'tsin and president Maskhadov signed a peace treaty in Moscow on May 12. Both sides hailed the agreement as having terminating 400 years of conflict. Since the text says nothing of Chechnya's status, there is plenty of room for each side to interpret the document in its favor.

"The high negotiating parties, guided by the wish to put an end to centuriesold confrontation and to establish stable, equitable and mutually advantageous relations, hereby agree: To give up the use of force and the threat of using force

in tackling all disputed issues; To maintain relations in accordance with the generally-recognized principles and norms of international law, and deal with one another on the basis of specific agreements.

The agreement shall be considered a basis for concluding further agreements on the entire spectrum of relations." (Interfax, 12 May 1997)

Maskhadov vows to fight terrorism

The Chechen government has repeatedly denied responsibility for the recent fatal bombings in Pyatigorsk and Armavir suggested that they were engineered by Interior Minister Anatoliy Kulikov to derail the peace process. After some initial confusion between conflicting statements from Salman Raduyev's representatives some claiming and others denying responsibility for the attack, Raduyev returned from "abroad," where he was recovering from an 8 April assassination attempt, and claimed responsibility on behalf of the group he leads, Gen Dudayev's Army. Maskhadov characterized Raduyev's threats to carry out new bombings of Russian military installations as those of a "sick provocateur," whose ravings play into Kulikov's hands. Before the peace treaty was signed Maskhadov summarized his predicament as follows:

"Here is my problem: The armed formations must be disbanded; the war has ended. But how can I do this when trenches are being dug around the republic, posts set up, and provocations organized? The war has not ended after all, but has only been frozen. To put a final stop to it, a meeting of the Russian and the Chechen presidents is needed; a peace treaty needs to be signed. The day after this is done, I shall smear Raduyev on the wall." (Moskovskiye Novosti, 4-11 May, 1997)

On May 8, the Chechen Security Council condemned Raduyev's threats as well as terrorism, blockades, and other actions aimed at civilians. It remains to be seen whether the Chechen government will follow through on this by

apprehending and trying Raduyev. The promise to work together with Russian law-enforcement --headed by Kulikov, whom Maskhadov described "enemy number 1" -- to put an end to terrorist attacks also awaits implementation.

To eradicate the practice of kidnapping journalists and other foreigners for ransom the government has posted a \$100,000 for information about the any of the kidnapped persons. Maskhadov has urged the families and employers of the kidnapped to refrain from paying the ransoms and rely on the government to obtain their release. On May 6, Chechen law enforcement freed two journalists held hostage while seven others remain in captivity. (TASS 6 May, 1997)

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

CIS Commission Discusses Dniester Peace Settlement

A commission of the Interparliamentary Assembly held a meeting chaired by Russian Federation Council Deputy Speaker Vasiliy Likhachev in Moldova last week. The commission was tasked to "work out the question on measures for peace[ful] settlement of the conflict in the Dniester region." ITAR-TASS reported on 5 May that parliamentary representatives from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia participated in the discussions. By May 8th, the presidents of Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine signed a memorandum calling for the preservation of Moldova as a state while granting "a certain autonomous status" to the Transdniester region. Russia and Ukraine will act as guarantors of the agreement. (Interfax)

Belarusian CIS Official Relieved

President Lukashenka released Ivan Mikhaylavich Bambiza from his duties as the Belarusian minister of CIS affairs. No replacement was announced, and no

details were given for his dismissal other than to say that he was being transferred to "other duties." (Radio Minsk, 2 May 1997)

Armenian Parliament Ratifies Treaty on Russian Military Base

The Armenian parliament ratified a military agreement which provides for the stationing of Russian soldiers on Armenian territory for a period of 25 years. The Russian deputy foreign minister said the treaty would help his country "carry out the task of keeping our military presence and preserving peace in the region," and went on to reaffirm that the Caucasus is a zone in Russia's strategic interest. (Interfax, 29 April 1997)

Georgian Officials Criticize CIS Peacekeepers

Several high ranking Georgian officials have been openly criticizing the Russian CIS peacekeepers in Abkhazia. On 30 April, a Georgian presidential spokesman claimed that the peacekeepers were not providing adequate security for several strategic facilities, such as a hydroelectric power station in Abkhazia's Galsky district. (ITAR-TSSS). The spokesman also indicated that the troop's commander had not made any attempts to implement the Heads of State decision to expand the peacekeeper's patrol area.

On 6 May, Interfax reported that President Shevardnadze told the General Secretary of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly that Georgia will insist on the withdrawal of the peacekeepers if Russia does not "fulfill its commitments" outlined in the Heads of State resolution.

Rodionov Sets Up CIS Military Working Group

Russian Defense Minister Rodionov has been able to implement a decision made at the March CIS Heads of State meeting. He has established a working group which will work on "the settlement of military issues" in areas of conflict within the CIS. The group operates within the framework of the Joint Staff for Coordinating Military Cooperation among CIS states and, as planned, is headed

by the Chief of the Russian General Staff and LTG Victor Samsonov, Chief of the Joint Staff.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

UZBEKISTAN

President Karimov Hails Economic Success; World Bank Postpones Loan

In early February President Karimov lauded Uzbekistan's 1996 economic success and noted that the country had reached its main economic goals for 1996: the fall in production was halted and the economy registered signs of economic growth. As evidence of this, President Karimov cited the 1.6% rise in GDP and a 1.4% increase in foreign trade turnover. Foreign investment in Uzbekistan more than doubled in 1996, reaching \$825 million (OMRI Daily Digest, No. 28, Part I, 10 February 1997). Uzbekistan was also able to pay its back in entirety its first loan from the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), which totaled \$60 million, and was granted a new EBRD credit line of \$120 million in order to develop its banking sector (OMRI Daily Digest, No. 32, Part I, 14 February 1997).

Despite these economic achievements, on 20 February the World Bank indefinitely postponed the release of a \$180 million loan for the reform of Uzbekistan's business sector, due to the country's failure to carry out the World Bank's recommendations on the establishment of price growth limits. In December 1996 Uzbekistan's inflation rose to 15%. Uzbekistan became a member of the World Bank in September 1992, and has thus far received a total of \$240 million in loans from this institution (FBIS-SOV-97-035, 20 February 1997).

Uzbekistan Protests Tajik Attacks On Uzbek Border Posts

On 15 February 1997 3 Uzbek customs officials were wounded in an attack on an Uzbek customs post in Besharik (on the Uzbek-Tajik border, near the Tajik district of Kanibodom). The attack was well-organized and is believed to have come from Tajik territory. The Uzbek Foreign Ministry sent a message to the Tajik government protesting the attack, and issued a statement declaring the attack to be a deliberate attempt to create hostilities between the Uzbek border areas and the northern Tajik district of Leninobod. This is not the first such incident; on 23 January 1997, a similar raid occurred at another Uzbek border post, during which 3 Tajik policemen were killed (FBIS-SOV-97-033, 19 February 1997).

Comment

A fair amount of friction has developed between Tajikistan's Leninobod Province and President Rahmonov's government, since he came to power in November 1992. Until May 1992, the dominant faction in Tajikistan's government came from Leninobod Province, which has a large Uzbek minority. The Leninobodi-ruled government enjoyed a very cordial relationship with Uzbekistan and it is surmised that Uzbekistan exercised a fair amount of influence over the Tajik government. President Rahmonov and his entourage come from the former province of Kulab (which was combined with the province of Qurghanteppa in 1993 and renamed Khatlon Province). The Kulabis were traditionally clients of the Leninobod faction and they have had the full support of the Russian government since November 1993. Neither the Uzbek government nor the Leninobodi faction has given up the fight to regain control of the Tajik government and this has resulted in occasional clashes (political and otherwise) with President Rahmonov's administration.

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