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Toward a Police State?

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An official Russian government document on reforming the Kremlin administration was leaked to a newspaper in Moscow. The three principal authors recommended that Russia become an even stronger presidential republic and urged that "the most effective methods be applied toward achieving this objective."²

President Putin's chief of staff, Aleksandr S. Voloshin; the Center for Strategic Studies director, German O. Gref; and the Federal Security Service (FSB) chief, Nikolai P. Patrushev, all had come to the same conclusion: Democratic institutions should not be nurtured, and a return to force must be initiated. Preparations for adopting such a course of action seem to be underway.

The presidential administration is only mentioned in the Russian constitution, which provides it with no executive authority. The above-cited document, however, recommends that

"the administration of the president should become an organ capable of deciding important government and political tasks within the country as well as abroad [and] exert its influence upon all state and non-state organs for the purpose of implementing decisions of the president."

Furthermore, "this program suggests a strategic imperative toward strengthening political activity of the presidential administration at the center and in the regions."

The council of ministers would be restricted to deciding economic tasks, without deviating from the line taken by the political administration in the Kremlin. The president, thus, would embody the center of power and assume complete control over all political processes in Russia.

Establishment of the new order is justified as follows: "[Current] Sociopolitical conditions in Russia can be described as self-regulating." If the president wants to maintain order and stability, a new administrative structure is required that "not only will create the necessary political conditions inside the country but also throughout the Near Abroad" (i.e., among the currently independent states that formerly had been part of the USSR).

The document openly states that "this program is supported by the strategic necessity to integrate the FSB and other special services with activities of the president's political administration." It further asserts that "the intellectual, cadres', and professional potential at FSB disposal should be assimilated by the new political administration in order to achieve rapid, articulate, and productive results."

Clandestine methods will be used to influence and/or suppress political parties and movements, their leaders, regional administrators and legislatures, candidates for important political posts, and activities of electoral commissions. Basic objectives include building support for the president and discrediting the opposition.

Furthermore, this document offers itself as a manual for counter-propaganda, with questions and answers provided. Under the category of "preventive political action," for example, the following situation is described: An opposition activist intends to address a press conference about corruption in government. The Kremlin preempts this by releasing materials that discredit the would-be whistleblower.

All of the above is significant, because the number of former KGB officers within Russian central authorities has already passed the point of achieving a "critical mass."

The open merger of special services with the presidential administration reminds one of the unforgettable past. The FSB is being transformed, thus, into a branch of presidential protective services. It now defends the president and his power, not society.

The above-cited document specifically proposes collection of "special information on potential candidates for the office of president at the current time and also in the future."³

Legislative implementation of the plan to concentrate state power in the Kremlin was launched on 1 June 2000, when the Duma passed the first reading of Putin's three proposed laws by a vote of 362 to 34. The other two readings occurred that same week. This legislation had been preceded by the establishment (decree of 17 May 2000) of seven federal administrative districts, each governor having been appointed by and remaining responsible directly to the president. (See Table 1.)

In order to implement the above proposal, it has been recommended⁴ that a merger take place that would encompass five special services, which would become a single Federal Security Department. They are the following:⁵

1. Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR -Sluzhba Vneshnei Razvedki), responsible for espionage outside Russia and reporting directly to President Putin. Cooperative agreements exist with all former Soviet republics except Azerbaijan, Georgia and the three Baltic states.

2. Federal Security Service (FSB - Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti) includes counter-intelligence activities as well as suppression of crime and illegal groups attempting to overthrow the constitutional system.

3. Federal Protective Service (FSO - Federal'naya Sluzhba Okhrany) is the Kremlin's praetorian guard, which protects the president and key government officials.

4. Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information (FAPSI - Federal'noe Agentstvo Pravitelstvennoi Svyazi i Informatsii), the counterpart of the US National Security Agency. Its responsibilities include maintenance and security of encrypted government communications. Domestically, it attempts to control Russia's "information space."

5. Directorate for Combating Organized Crime⁶ in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD - Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del). Its interdepartmental anti-terrorist commission may be absorbed by the FSB Directorate for Analysis and Suppression of Activity by Criminal Organizations or by a successor entity. (See Table 2.)

This recommendation, if implemented, may suggest that Putin has lost confidence in the part of the MVD listed in (5) above, although he retains trust in the FSB.

Such faith in former KGB officers manifests itself in such appointments as that of Sergei B. Ivanov, a 20-year veteran in foreign intelligence (SVR) with the rank of lieutenant general, who became secretary of the Security Council on 15 November 1999.⁷ This man recently resigned his military rank and may become the first head of the new super-conglomerate comprising the five organizations listed above. Ivanov remains, as do all retired intelligence officers, in the "active reserve" of his former service.

These currently separate organizations comprise a total of more than 200,000 individuals. Such a combined "strike force" certainly requires a dynamic individual to make it work.

Ivanov would seem to have impeccable credentials. Born in 1953, one year later than Putin, he also was graduated from Leningrad State University, although in philosophy rather than law. He speaks English and Swedish. After 20 years in the FSB, he became its deputy director in August 1998. Ivanov most probably has daily contact with Putin in his current position as secretary of the Security Council.

By placing former KGB personnel in key positions throughout the central government apparatus in Moscow (e.g., former SVR director Vyacheslav I. Trubnikov, appointed deputy foreign minister, on 28 June 2000) as well as in several of the seven regions, the "eyes and ears" of the president will report on all opposition to his governmental fiat. Putin already has launched a program to stop leaks from the government. This new campaign will also include watching the Duma as well as the military's General Staff.⁸ The reintroduction of political commissars (zampolit) is underway throughout the armed forces.

Nationwide surveillance is being implemented under the Information Security Doctrine approved by Putin last fall. It provides for government supervision over the mass media, including the Internet. The FSB is also charged with monitoring electronic mail as well as establishing controls over TV and websites.⁹

Such an emerging police state will have a negative impact throughout Russia, in that the "attentive public" will begin to draw parallels with the former communist tyranny. Indications of nostalgia for this recent past, however, were expressed by Putin himself when he drank a toast recently on the long-deceased Stalin's birthday. He also glorified his former KGB chief, Yuri V. Andropov (1967-1982), on the "Day of Security Organs," i.e., 20 December 1999, at Lubyanka headquarters. If these two men represent role models for Putin, the long-suffering Russian people may yet become subjected to an old-new form of communism.

The leader of the YABLOKO faction in parliament, Grigori A. Yavlinsky, addressed a congress in defense of human rights on 21 January 2001. He stated that the current pseudo-reforms in Russia reflect the rise of "national bolshevism" and called for making the secret services accountable to the law.¹⁰

When the statue of Feliks E. Dzherzhinsky once again stands on Lubyanka Square, the FSB and other special services will have attained open recognition as the legitimate successors to the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In the meanwhile, secret police commando forces will be proving their reliability by attempting to wind down the 16-month military campaign in Chechnya. The regular occupation army, being cut back from 93,000 to 22,000 men, will provide security for its own garrisons and surrounding areas, whereas FSB troops will organize "special operations" to exterminate the remaining "bandit" gangs and their leaders.¹¹

Will this work? Probably not, although Putin can always proclaim victory and still continue unpublicized attempts at complete genocide of the Chechen people.

Table 1. FEDERAL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS		
Designation	Capital	Presidential Representative
Central	Moscow	Georgi S. Poltavchenko (career KGB; former presidential representative of the Leningrad <i>oblast'</i>)
Northwest	St. Petersburg	Viktor V. Cherkesov (former first deputy director, FSB; lieutenant general)
North Caucasus	Rostov-on-Don	Viktor G. Kazantsev (former commanding officer, North Caucasus military district; colonel general)
Volga	Nizhnyi Novgorod	Sergei V. Kirienko (former prime minister)

Urals	Ekaterinburg	Piotr M. Latyshev (former first deputy interior minister; lieutenant general)
Siberia	Novosibirsk	Leonid L. Drachevsky (former CIS affairs minister)
Far East	Vladivostok	Konstantin B. Pulikovsky (acting commanding officer, mid-1996, in Chechnya war; lieutenant general)

Source: Andrei Korbut and Dmitri Nikolaev, "Siloviki v regionakh," *Novoe voennoe obozrenie*, 19-25 May 2000, p. 1, which cites the 13 May presidential decree (*ukaz*), "O pelnomochnom predstavitele prezidenta RF v federal'nom okruge."

Notes: These seven new administrative districts are identical with the seven current military districts. At the same time, Putin dismissed all presidential representatives to the 89 provinces. Of the seven individuals in the above table, five were either career military/police or KGB/FSB officers.

Table 2. POWER STRUCTURES IN RUSSIA	
Designation	Strength
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) Rushailo, Vladimir B	300,000

Ministry of Civil Defense (MChS) Shoigu, Sergei K.	40,000
Ministry of Defense (MO) Sergeev, Igor D.	1,200,000
Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Lebedev, Sergei N.	15,000
Federal Border Service (FPS) Totsky, Konstantin V.	250,000
*Federal Security Service (FSB) Patrushev, Nikolai P.	80,000
Federal Service of Railroad Troops (FSZhV) Kogatko, Grigori I.	90,000
Federal Service of Tax Police (FSNP) Soltaganov, Vyacheslav F.	43,800

Federal Protective Service (FSO)	40,000
Murov, Evgeny A.	
Federal Agency for Communications and Information (FAPSI)	50,000
Matyukhin, Vladimir G.	
TOTAL	2,108,800
The agencies underlined would be amalgamated under the plan.	
Sources: Galina Kozhevnikova and Pavel Gazukin, <i>Silovye struktury Rossii</i> (Moscow: Panorama, 2000), pp. 8-48 of 2nd rev. edition; Andrei Maksimov, <i>Kto pravit v rossiiskoi federatsii</i> (Moscow: Izdaniya Maksimova, 2000/2001), pp. 34-142	
* The FSB Special Assignment Center includes Directorate A (former Alpha Group) and Directorate V (ex-Vympel Group), with regional departments for special services in eleven cities to combat terrorism and organized crime.	

Notes:

1 A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Richard Staar is a student of Russian affairs. He thanks Molly Molloy, Slavic reference librarian, for her contributions to this article.

2 Nikolai V. Bardul, "Kak Putin budet upravlyat' Rossiei," Kommersant Daily, 3 May 2000, Part 1, p. 1.

3 Nikolai V. Bardul, "Kak Putin budet upravlyat' stranoi," Kommersant Daily, 4 May 2000, Part 2, p. 1.

4 Article by Mark Franchetti, "Putin Resurrects Spectre of KGB," Sunday Times (London), 4 February 2001; cited by Elisabeth Sieca-Kozlowski in Post-Soviet Armies Newsletter, 14 February 2001, <<http://www.psan.org>>. The author reports that this amalgamation will take place during March.

5 Gordon Bennett, "Russia's Intelligence Services," <<http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/circ103-gb.htm>> (Sandhurst, England, 2000).

6 N. Tyukov, "Glavnoe upravlenie po bor'be s organizovannoi prestupnost'yu," Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del Rossii (Moscow: SPIK-Tsentr, 2000), p. 15.

7 See Valeri Aleksin, "Glavnoe ugrozy bezopasnosti Rossii," Novoe voennoe obozrenie, no. 12, 7-13 April 2000, pp. 1 and 3, for interview with Ivanov.

8 Dmitri Sevryukov, "Ne nosi vodu v reshete," Tribuna, no. 6, 16 January 2000, p. 2.

9 "Doktrina Informatsionnoi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii," <http://www.scrf.gov.ru>, 9 September 2000), no. Pr-1895. For involvement of MVD special services with information warfare, see N. Tyukov, op. cit., pp. 58-69.

10 Grigori Yavlinsky, "Neobkhodim grazhdanskii kontrol' za spetssluzhbami," Novaya gazeta, no. 6, 29 January-4 February 2001, pp. 1, 5.

11 Presidential decree no. 61, "O merakh po bor'be s terrorizmom na territorii Severo-Kavkazskogo regiona Rossiiskoi Federatsii," Rossiiskaya gazeta (23 January 2001), p. 4.

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