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KGB & Other Buddies in Putin Apparatus

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With the election on 26 March of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin as president of Russia, it was natural to speculate about whom he would bring into his administration and what policies he may pursue. Fortunately, two recently published articles identify 26 individuals, already in government or soon to be occupying responsible positions, as Putin appointees (see table below). Almost half of them have been identified as former or current KGB/FSB intelligence officers. The percentage may be even higher, because only sparse data are available on the backgrounds of other recent appointees.

This situation seems natural enough, if one expects Putin to bring into his own presidential administration "the best and the brightest" (as he calls his former KGB/FSB colleagues), who will implement his policies. Since organized crime controls some 40 percent of GDP, according to the new president,(2) one would look for him to curtail such activities on a priority basis.

Assignment of current and/or former intelligence officers to key governmental positions suggests that Russia is on its way to becoming an authoritarian state, as it had been from Lenin through Khrushchev. Already, the FSB (domestic intelligence agency) has been ordered to monitor the allegiance of military personnel, *i.e.*, becoming a police force in the armed services. At the same time, military training of schoolboys from age 15 was instituted on 31 December 1999, the day that Putin became acting president.(3)

Early in the subsequent month, Putin approved a law providing security agencies with access to all e-mail in Russia as well as other electronic traffic carried on the Internet. "This means Russia has become a police state," said Yelena Bonner, widow of the late nuclear physicist and Soviet-era dissident Andrei Sakharov.(4) Moreover, Putin himself has never condemned either the role played by the secret police or the mass deportations of the Chechen people by Stalin. On the contrary, as acting president, he explained his actions as follows:

"The people want order to be introduced in Russia. And we are acting in the North Caucasus. I can firmly say we are doing this on the instruction of the Russian people."(5)

According to an eyewitness report from Moscow, soon after assuming the premiership, Putin invited his four immediate predecessors (Yevgeny Primakov, Viktor Chernomyrdin, Sergei Kirienko, and Sergei Stepashin) to provide him with advice regarding Chechnya. They all counseled caution in early September 1999, suggesting occupation only of the flat northern one-third of the territory. From such a vantage point, commando raids could be launched against rebel leaders. This advice was not heeded. Russia attempted to take control of mountainous areas, which Stepashin doubts Russia will be able to secure.(6)

In the meanwhile, the capital city of Grozny has been leveled and its 400,000 inhabitants dispersed. Some 300,000 refugees have fled abroad, at least 10,000 Chechens have been killed, and yet the fighting continues. Some of the atrocities have been filmed and even aired on television in Moscow. Is this what the Russian people really want?

The pro-government Russian Public Television (ORT) recently showed the bombing of a large Chechen village by TOS-1 rockets, filled with flammable liquid, and Tochka-U missiles that cover up to seven hectares of land with cluster shrapnel actions in clear

violation of the 1980 Geneva Convention.(7) Since the order to do so has been approved by Putin, he should be tried as a war criminal.

The Russian "people," we are told, want law and order. There has been little discussion as to how this will be effected under the Putin presidency. He also vows to eliminate corruption. However, allegations and rumors hinting at Putin's involvement in questionable business and governmental activities during the past decade have surfaced time and again. Should these allegations prove to be true, they cast a different light on the man who has attempted to project himself as a crime fighter who will eliminate corruption in high places. Crime and corruption among government officials increased by 35.6 percent during 1999, according to First Deputy Interior Minister Vladimir Kozlov. The total number of cases reached 53,700, although only 21,000 officials were charged.(8)

On the other hand, the new national security concept, signed by acting President Putin on 6 January 2000, holds greater significance for the United States and the international community as a whole. It should be noted that he had been responsible for producing this document as Yel'tsin's national security advisor.

Most significant in this concept is the reversal from an earlier "no first-use" pledge regarding nuclear weapons. Basic external threats to Russia, according to the document, include:

- attempts to weaken the political, economic, and military influence of Russia in the world;
- the strengthening of politico-military blocs, especially through NATO expansion eastward;
- the possibility that foreign military blocs will appear within the immediate proximity of Russian borders;
- proliferation of mass-destruction weapons and delivery systems;

- intensification of centrifugal processes within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS);
- penetration and escalation of conflicts near Russian and CIS borders;
- territorial demands against Russia.(9)

The same section states that the foregoing may also affect Russia's national interests in Europe, the Middle East, Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Asian-Pacific region, *i.e.*, most of the world outside of Africa and the Western Hemisphere.

It should be noted that the new national security concept supersedes the one issued as a decree by then President Boris N. Yel'tsin on 17 December 1997. No public discussion ever took place on the draft versions of either document. Parliament also had been ignored both times. The current concept is described as being a political document based upon government policy regarding "defense of the country from external and internal threats."

These threats include foreign intelligence organizations which allegedly have activated their clandestine special services on Russian territory. Attempts at interference also emanate from other government levels. Direct threats include separatism and local armed conflict. Information warfare is supposedly being intensified by unfriendly regimes through attempts to remove Russia from both external and internal information marketplaces.

Guaranteeing Russia's national security involves the following tasks:

- maintenance of territorial integrity and security of borders;
- support at adequate levels of military potential;
- tightening non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons;
- introduction of effective measures to frustrate subversive activities by foreign intelligence agencies.

Such an atmosphere suggests an attempt to create a "Fortress Russia" mentality, so that the population will support all measures by the new government in Moscow, regardless of their impact on the average citizen.

In its conclusion, the new national security concept envisages the stationing of Russian troops in "certain strategically important regions of the world." Such "limited military contingents" (the 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan during 1979-1989 as well as the combat brigade with nuclear weapons in Cuba during 26 October-25 December 1962 both shared that designation) would be located at overseas military bases, which could guarantee reaction to crisis situations in their initial stages.

By replacing the former designation "partnership" with the word "cooperation" with the West, the tone of this new and more neutral term suggests a revised official attitude in Moscow. The latest security concept, thus, emphasizes Russia's nuclear power. This makes it imperative for the United States to consider the real danger of tactical nuclear weapons being used by Moscow. The possibility of their application during a future local war, or even the one in Chechnya today, becomes greater as Russia's conventional armed forces deteriorate.

Addressing a session of the Security Council in Moscow on 23 November 1999, then Prime Minister Putin stated that additional funds would be provided for deployment in the Mediterranean of Russia's sole aircraft carrier, the *Admiral Kuznetsov*, one destroyer, a frigate, one tanker, and nuclear-powered submarines carrying SLBMs by November 2000. The Tartus base in Syria, first used for Russia's Mediterranean squadron in 1983, will be reactivated. Improvements at the Cam Ranh Bay naval installation for Russia's 15th Operational Squadron are also planned, based on the 1979 agreement with Vietnam which expires in 2004.(10)

Two months later, then acting President Putin announced at a meeting of his cabinet that funds for the government's acquisition of new weapons systems (goszakaz) would be increased by 150 percent compared with calendar year 1999. He also stated that the

military-industrial complex had produced 30 percent more high-technology arms during that timeframe than in 1998, all of world-class quality.(11)

At the same meeting of his cabinet ministers on 27 January 2000, Putin announced that defense spending would be 50 percent higher than during 1999. There also will be a change in priorities from the policy in recent years of allocating 80 percent of all funds to strategic missile forces. This will drop to 30 percent, with the rest to be spent for conventional weapons systems.(12)

The foregoing are obviously future intentions and should not be confused with capabilities. However, the West in general and the United States in particular have been placed on notice that Russia under its new president intends to become a rival in due course and not a partner.

Putin's Cadres in St. Petersburg and Moscow

Name	Position	Connection
Abramov, Aleksandr	Deputy Director, Presidential Administration (relations with regions)	ex-VP, Alfa Bank
Alekseev, Sergei	Director, largest exhibit hall (LenExpo) in St. Petersburg	acquaintance from St. Petersburg
Bobrovsky, Nikolai	Deputy Director, Prime Minister's secretariat	co-student at KGB Institute
Bolloev, Taimuraz	Director General, Baltika Beer Co.	sports connection
Chemezov, Sergei	Head, PromEksport	ex-KGB officer
Cherkesov, Viktor	First Deputy Director, FSB	co-student at law school
Golov, Sergei	Deputy Director, Presidential Administration	ex-KGB officer

Golubev, Valeri	Head, Tourism Commission, St. Petersburg	ex-KGB officer
Gref, German	First Deputy Minister, Government Property Office	head, Center for Strategic Studies
Ivanov, Sergei	Secretary, Security Council	ex-KGB officer and close friend
Ivanov, Viktor	Deputy Director, Presidential Administration	ex-KGB/FSB
Khrameshkin, Nikolai	Director, "Leningrad" Import- Export --Industry Association	acquaintance from St. Petersburg
Kozak, Dmitri	Putin's Deputy Chief of Staff	worked with VVP in St. Petersburg
Kozhin, Vladimir	Head, Foreign Exchange Export Control (FSB)	ex-KGB officer
Kudrin, Aleksei	First Deputy Finance Minister	knew VVP in St. Petersburg
Medvedev, Dmitri	Deputy Director, Presidential Administration	law degree, St. Petersburg
Miller, Aleksei	Director, Baltic Pipeline Co.	former VVP deputy, St. Petersburg
Patrushev, Nikolai	Director, FSB	(succeeded VVP) in Leningrad KGB
Reiman, Leonid	Communications Minister	friend and traveling companion
Sechin, Igor'	Deputy Director, Presidential Administration	headed VVP Secretariat, when PM
Shamakhov, Vladimir	Director, NW Administration, State Customs (FSB)	friend and ex-KGB officer
Shevchenko, Yuri	Health Minister and M.D	old acquaintance
Spassky, Boris	Academician; Director, Defense Research Institute	acquaintance from St. Petersburg
Stepanov, Andrei	Director, Oil Co., St. Petersburg	worked with VVP in St. Petersburg

Yakovlev, Vladimir Chairman, Culture Commission, close friend
St. Petersburg

Zaostrovsky, Yuri Deputy Director, FSB ex-KGB officer

Sources:

Dmitri Ezhov, "Dos'e: Blizhnii krug," *Sobesednik*, no. 1 (806), 1319 January 2000, p. 3;
Igor' Cherniak, "Liudi Putina: kto est' kto," *Komosomsol'skaya pravda*, no. 14 (23238),
26 January 2000, p. 6.

Note:

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Notes:

1. A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Dr. Staar is also a visiting Professor of Political Science at Duquesne University and author of *The New Military in Russia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996).
2. V.V. Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysiacheletiya," <http://government.gov.ru> (posted 1 January 2000), p. 16.
3. *Moscow Times*, 11 February 2000; cited by *RFE/RL Newslines*, 11 February 2000.
4. Quotation cited by Jannie Detmer, "Putin Remolds Russia of Old," *Washington Times*, 17 February 2000, p. 1.
5. Quoted by Fred Weir, "Putin Dodges Foreign Critics of Chechnya War," *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 January 2000, p. 7.
6. Stepashin interview in Moscow with Michael R. Gordon, "A Look at How the Kremlin Slid into the Chechnya War," *The New York Times*, 1 February 2000, p. A-6.
7. Pavel Felgenhauer, "War Criminals Bury Grudge," *Moscow News*, 17 February 2000; reproduced by *Post-Soviet Armies Newsletter*, <http://www.psan.org>.
8. "Corruption Among Officials on the Rise," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 March 2000.
9. "Kontseptsiya natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 26 November-3 December 1999, pp. 1, 4, and 5; at p. 4. This document was approved by the Security Council on 5 October 1999.

10. "Russian Navy to Resume Strategic Deployments," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 1 December 1999, p. 5.
11. Vitali Denisov, "Oboronnyi zakaz uvelichitsiya v poltora raza," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 January 2000, p. 1.
12. Olga Antonova, "Putin Boosts Defense Spending," *Moscow News*, 28 February 2000, p. 2. See also Celestine Bohlen, "Some Skeptics See Iron Hand in Putin's Glove," *The New York Times*, 2 March 2000, p. A-8.

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