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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Apparat delight

Following his reelection as President, Vladimir Putin authorized a decree "streamlining" his Kremlin administration. Of the 2,000 personnel who could be cut from the apparat rolls according to this decree, approximately 10-12% or 200 to 250 persons will be cut, although Kremlin Chief of Staff, Dmitri Medvedev, cautions, "There will be no arithmetical approach to staff numbers." (1)

Whatever the numbers, the structure of the administration has undergone some resculpting. The Staff side of the administration, still led by Medvedev, will become rather shallow with only two co-equal deputy chiefs rather than the previous first deputy chief and the multiple deputy positions. Most of the former deputies have been moved into the consultation and advisory sectors as "presidential aides." The majority of the presidential advisers have retained their posts.

The changes to the Directorates however, reveal that structurally, this reform is more than mere cosmetic surgery. The reamalgamating of similarly themed tasks suggests a President who no longer needs to ride herd over competing interests within his team — equivalent jobs whose functions nominally duplicate each other, but in reality were just equally ineffective organs, was a hallmark of the Yel'tsin-era approach to nomenklatura disputes. Putin, on the other hand, has merged sectors like the Press Service and Information Directorate into one agency (with Press Spokesman Aleksei Gromov gaining control of both, and former Information Directorate Head Sergei Yastrzhembsky out in the cold — well, off to Europe in any event). (2)

It does seem premature, despite the reconfiguring of the Directorates, to declare an end to Kremlin factional infighting. The two co-equal deputies, Igor Sechin and Vladislav Surkov, are long-identified representatives of the two most visible and contentious of the Kremlin clans, the Siloviki and the heirs of the Yel'tsin Family. The question inevitably follows: What's up for grabs? That issue will be resolved as soon as it is determined just what sectors the Kremlin Administration Staff will oversee, and therefore have the power to control. (The facile division of responsibilities of the Kremlin Apparatus and Government between politics and economics does not manage to convey the economic boon represented by the "supervision" of the political.)

This brings us to the most notable of Putin's adjustments to the Government and Kremlin Apparatus: the creation of a vacuum, an absence of struggle between the Ministers and the Kremlin Staff. As Putin himself noted when he announced his decree on restructuring the Kremlin Staff, times have changed. "That administration [Yel'tsin's] was born as the headquarters of a revolution." (3)

The Young Turks of the early Yel'tsin reforms occupied both government and Kremlin posts. When the Supreme Soviet threatened to halt the "Shock therapy" reforms through out-moded constitutional mechanisms, Yel'tsin protected his reformers by shuffling them in and out of Kremlin positions — untouchable by Khasbulatov or other legislative dissenters. When Yel'tsin was finally forced into compromise on the composition of his Council of Ministers, he (and/or his staff) created structures within the Kremlin which duplicated the functions of the Government's Staff and insisted that all decisions be vetted by both administrations.

What appeared to be gross bureaucratic replication was, in fact, one of the only forms of oversight available to the reformers, the only channel to achieve implementation of their reforms without pesky parliamentary interference.

Unfortunately, as Yel'tsin grew less enamoured of the reforms themselves, and more reliant on Kremlin staffers, the feared war of bureaucracies devolved into a grasping snatch of national assets. The differences dividing a gung-ho economic reformer, from an enterprising entrepreneur turned oligarch, from a wealthy former Communist Party official morphed into a question of individual appeal or personal peccadilloes. With that, the Kompromat wars swung into gear — Russian politics today still suffer from the effects of the competition between icons and images, instead of ideas.

When Putin jokes about finishing the 'revolutionary' mentality of the Kremlin, he refers primarily to ending the need to personalize the pursuit of reforms. He has set lofty economic goals (and I'm sure the Commission for Doubling the GDP is on top of that), but he does not identify either himself or his Presidency by economic accomplishments or liberalization. There is no longer a bastion of economic reform attacked from all sides by the red belt communists, "brown-shirt" fascists, or colorless zealots. Putin has declared a "time out" for Russian politics, which, while admittedly depriving society of the vibrancy of a robust exchange of ideas, has at least encouraged the Presidential Administration to release its double grip on the Council of Ministers. Nothing more to fear from parliamentary oversight of government personnel and policy as enshrined in the Constitution — the President has the Parliament under control.

Dmitri Kozak, the alleged author of these reforms, obviously wanted to make the point that there was to be a clear-cut boundary between the Kremlin and the Government, between political planning/implementation and economic planning/implementation. Hence, the Economic Department of the President's Staff, the lead-lined room of the economic reformers' bunker of yore, has been excised from the Kremlin. The Economic Department melds into the Experts Department (and oh, how many experts there are!), and the Government will have to sink or swim on its own economic accomplishments.

More on government renewal

Lest the demarcation between government and Kremlin spheres be overdrawn, it is important to bear in mind that the ideological architect of these reform plans is the former First Deputy Head of the Kremlin Staff, Dmitri Kozak. After tackling Judicial reform and Regional restructuring, Kozak is taking aim at the corruption rampant in the bureaucratic organizations, or perhaps his goal is simply to make them more responsive to the top-down order Putin favors.

New numbers on the magnitude of the government reform suggest a 20 percent cut in civil servants from within the federal bureaucracy. (4) The number of ministries and deputy prime ministers has already been slashed, now Kozak is making clear that the cuts will continue deep into each ministry. The nine ministries under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister will be restricted to only 2 deputy ministers apiece (or 18 in total), down from a previous 250 deputy ministers. The 250 departments headed by each of the former deputy ministers will be slashed by more than half, to 100. Each department however, will have a staff of between 80 to 100 persons. Government commissions will likewise be trimmed from the current 220 commissions to "no more than 10," according to Kozak. (5) The plan, of course, contains a provision to increase the salaries of those remaining civil servants, in order to make corruption less appealing.

Kozak and his own staff (size unknown) are also taking on another serious auditing project: not only are they revising the structure and staffing of the government and Kremlin administrations, but they also intend to carry out a thorough inventory of the government's physical property. The Kozak plan calls for the savings from personnel cuts, utility bills (on excess office space), and similar cost saving devices to be used to increase salaries for those apparatchiks left in place (also in the hope of curtailing bribery within government structures), and severance pay for those let go. (6)

A final interesting element of the Kozak reforms: They do not apply to the "power" organs. The Big Five ministries (Defense, Interior, Justice, Foreign and Emergency Situations), which report directly to the President, were not included in Kozak's reform plan. Granted, the power ministries have had special status at varying times: Yel'tsin's own reform plans periodically pulled some of the security agencies or guards within presidential purview, usually in order to protect its leadership from prying legislative eyes, or in an attempt to ensure loyalty to the President in divisive times. This recreation of Yel'tsin's model however, is an intriguing note at a time when Putin is roundly criticized for his reliance on and advancement of siloviki.

Source Notes:

(1) Argumenty i fakty, No. 13, 31 Mar 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis. Interfax, (1513 GMT, 30 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis) notes that Yastrzhembsky has been appointed an "aide" to the Russian President as special representative of the R.F. President for the development of relations with the E.U.

(2) Nezavisimaya gazeta, No. 62, 29 Mar 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.

(3) Moscow Times, 2 Apr 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Is the MVD the new target?

In November 2003, there was suspicion that the departure of Boris Gryzlov from his post at the Interior Ministry would lead to an FSB takeover. Some reports

indicated that Gryzlov's Deputy, Rashid Nurgaliyev, would be nominated for the position. (1) Those suspicions now appear to have been confirmed.

On 9 March, several weeks after President Putin's election victory, Nurgaliyev indeed was appointed as "interim" Interior Minister. (2) In the weeks since then Putin has been scathingly critical of the MVD's performance in all areas. Speaking to a gathering of senior officers on 26 March, the President "chastised" the MVD generals for failing to control Russia's rising crime levels, which have grown by 9.1% in the last year alone. The total number of registered crimes in 2003 was 2.756 million. Putin also indicated that he had little faith in the Ministry's statistics because he believed that officers were "directly falsifying" them. (3) Putin attempted to point the MVD towards areas which need improvement. They should, he stated, focus on "priority directions," such as corruption, human trafficking and terrorism. He added that the MVD was "one of the key agencies," but that in order to become more efficient, it should trim those spheres of its activity which overlap with other Federal Agencies. (4) Putin's meaning was clear: Become more efficient, or be forced into reform from above. By all accounts, criticism of the agency has been building for some time. According to Vremya novostei, the Interior Ministry has done little except "annoy the Kremlin" over the last few years. The same piece alleged that Boris Gryzlov had been ordered to propose reforms, but he had failed to do so. (4)

That President Putin should mention the removal of overlapping functions is interesting, since the MVD has already lost its anti-drug directorate, which is now a separate agency run by Viktor Cherkosov, a former KGB officer loyal to Putin. Cherkosov has himself spoken about the MVD, stating that the ministry still has "an overflow of different functions and goals." (5)

How much time does the Interior Ministry realistically have? Some kind of an answer might be found in the person of Boris Gryzlov's successor. According to the MVD website, Nurgaliyev joined the KGB in 1981, serving first as an

investigative officer in his home region of Karelia in Northern Russia. Subsequently, he served as Head of the Medvezhyegorsk Regional Department, and Chief of the Anti-Terrorist Department for Karelia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he moved into counter-espionage and personal security, before heading the FSB's Office of Drug Trafficking Control in the Department of Economic Security. Between 1999 and 2002, he served as Deputy Director of the FSB before being appointed First Deputy Minister of the Interior in the latter year. (6) Nurgaliyev is reportedly a close personal friend to FSB Director Patrushev, and as such, he has access to Putin's inner circle. (7) What meaning can be drawn from Nurgaliyev's appointment and Putin's harsh warning to the MVD's senior officers? It may be an ultimatum: Either reform and remain under FSB control with some small semblance of independence, or be subsumed totally.

Evidence of discontent in Spetsnaz?

Two weeks ago, Novaya gazeta received and chose to publish a letter which is bound to have caused consternation at the very highest levels. According to the newspaper, journalists have received three such letters in the past, signed anonymously by "Alpha Group Servicemen." (8) The report outlined the initial letters, which apparently allege that these elite commando troops are forced to act as menservants to senior officers, to organize shows for generals and guests, and to "ship caviar and sturgeons from Dagestan via Chkalovsky by planes," as "gifts for Generals of the Federal Security Service from Dagestani top brass," as well as performing menial landscaping tasks around their secret base. (9) The fourth letter, which has been published in segments outlines the state of desperation even among these supposed crack troops: "Unwilling to serve under palace generals, combat officers whose contracts expire, resign...Professionals are leaving, and all sorts of men are accepted in their place. Soldiers sign contracts and are promoted to warrant officers and given Moscow registrations. They are very convenient as subordinates: they never question even idiotic orders." (10)

Several days later, TV Station Channel One received unprecedented access to a Special Forces training base near Moscow. The reporters were permitted to speak to one former and one serving senior officer, Oleg Malyshev. Malyshev is apparently the unit's "senior officer for state training and information." The reporters were also allowed to describe (although briefly) the type of mission these men might be carrying out in Chechnya, and to describe the type of training they receive. (11) This event looked like a cynical ploy by the Kremlin to counter the allegations aired in Novaya gazeta's piece, and to provide the impression that Spetsnaz units do not suffer the same problems as the regular army. Was it a mere coincidence that the date chosen for Channel One's visit was the 60th anniversary of the Special Forces' founding?

Source Notes:

(1) CCPR-Russian Federal Politics, 16 Nov 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(2) RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly, "Cadres: Reshuffling the Siloviki?" Jonas Bernstein, 5 Feb 04, Volume 4, Number 4 via <http://www.rferl.org/reports/rpw/2004/02/4-050204.asp>.

(3) The St. Petersburg Times, 26 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(4) Vremya novostei, 11 Mar 04; via WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(5) The Moscow Times, 26 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(6) Biography of Rashid Gumarovich Nurgaliyev via <http://eng.mvdrf.ru/index.php?docid=2>.

(7) CCPR-Russian Federal Politics, 16 Nov 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(8) Novaya gazeta, 26 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Ibid.

(11) BBC Monitoring, 27 Mar 04, Russian Channel TV One via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Scott Dullea

Moscow prepares for NATO

On the same day the induction of the seven newest North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members was celebrated at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels, there was also a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov represented Moscow at the 2 April gathering, for which the Kremlin has been setting the background through a series of its own meetings and public statements. Depicted on a map, the following enumeration of Russia's diplomatic engagement and rhetoric over the past few weeks gives the impression that the Kremlin has been figuratively inspecting its defenses prior to the NATO advance.

In March, the Kremlin directly engaged these newest Southeastern European NATO members. On 15 March, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Chizhov met with a visiting foreign ministry official from Slovenia, which is one of the four countries that Moscow is demanding sign the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) as it joins NATO. Then, beginning on 23 March, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Council Mikhail Margelov led a Russian Duma delegation to Romania and Bulgaria. Despite Margelov's cheerful description of the bilateral relationships, the Russian Ambassador to Bucharest, Aleksandr Tolkach, in an interview with the Romanian news agency Rusia la Zi, accused Romania of discriminating against Russian investors. (1)

Moscow also gave one last reminder of its stance regarding the Baltic region. It completed the tit-for-tat diplomatic row by expelling a total of five Estonian and Lithuanian diplomats from Moscow on 22 and 30 March, respectively.

Additionally, the Russian Minister of Defense, Sergei Ivanov, repeated Moscow's suspicions about NATO's military intentions in the Baltic states, stressing that "Russia closely follows NATO's activities close to its borders and retains the right to respond appropriately if need be." (2)

The recently reignited situation in Kosovo was an opportune moment for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to place more demands on NATO. As Russian President Vladimir Putin dispatched Russian Minister for Emergencies, Sergei Shoigu, to Serbia to coordinate the delivery of assistance to the Kosovar-Serb refugees, Lavrov announced that the Kosovo crisis, too, would make for "non-easy talk" at the NATO meeting in Brussels. (3) The Russian MFA issued a statement that Moscow was ready to work with the contact group on Kosovo and with the United Nations Security Council but suggested that NATO's efforts there had proven unsuccessful. It also said that given the current situation, talks about Kosovo's future political status were out of the question for now. (4)

Moscow's misgivings about NATO intentions go beyond the Baltics and Kosovo. Following a *Nezavisimaya gazeta* report of "a massive U.S. military-diplomatic assault on Baku," (5) the Russian Duma announced that it was planning a "joint closed-door session of the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Security Committees on 25 March, to discuss the ramifications of NATO expansion including the possibility of a U.S. troop presence in Azerbaijan." (6) The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Russian Duma, Konstantin Kosachev, raised questions about U.S. plans for military bases in Bulgaria, the need for them, and their threat to the CFE Treaty. He said that this too would be raised at the 2 April NATO meeting. (7) Moreover, the Russian MFA criticized Ukraine for ratifying an agreement with NATO that it describes as signifying nearly automatic Ukrainian support for future NATO operations. The agreement potentially grants NATO virtually unrestricted access to Ukrainian territory. (8)

In addition to the diplomatic finger-pointing described above, the Kremlin also reaffirmed the status of some of its counter-NATO relationships. Huddling one last time before NATO arrived on their doorstep, the Commonwealth of Independent States foreign ministers held talks in Minsk on 26 March to discuss the future of the CIS. On the bilateral level, Vice-Speaker of the Russian Duma, Sergei Baburin, visited Tehran on 19 March to reiterate the MFA's plans to take steps toward strengthening ties between Russia and Iran. He assured his Iranian hosts that Foreign Minister Lavrov had taken into account any possible U.S. reaction to such steps.

Russia's First Deputy Foreign Minister Valeri Loshchinin arrived in Beijing on 24 March for talks with Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. In addition to discussing plans for the upcoming visit of President Putin to Beijing in October 2004, the meetings focused on mutual concerns in Central Asia, in the CIS region and in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Although there are no indications of an attempt to breath life into the theoretically appealing Russia-Iran-China alliance, Moscow clearly remains attracted to the benefits of working together with Tehran and Beijing as a counterforce to the U.S. and NATO presence in their common backyard. Moreover, this diplomatic activity and rhetoric over the past month betrays Moscow's frustration with having to acknowledge the new European geo-political reality following NATO's and the European Union's respective enlargements. Indeed, at the 2 April NATO-Russia Council meeting, Lavrov reminded the alliance, "We have never been in favor of NATO's expansion. (...) [W]e accepted the expansion of the alliance as a fact, even though we do not welcome either the first, or the second or the third wave of this process." (9)

Primakov in Tblisi

Not to be outdone by his one-time political ally, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, Yevgeni M. Primakov has also gone to Georgia. Whereas Luzhkov arrived in

Batumi in the heat of the most recent crisis between Adzharia and Tbilisi, and reportedly played a key role in its resolution, Primakov's 23 March visit was initially billed as being private in nature. Primakov, as the Russian Centre TV reported, arrived with friends and family, including the Georgian, Moscow-based film director Georgiy Daneliya. In the same report, however, the commentator acknowledged, "The real reason for [Primakov's] visit is unknown." (10)

In January 2004, speaking in his capacity as the President of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Primakov laid out his position on Georgian-Russian relations at a conference in Moscow. Calling for a normalization of those relations, he stated, "We also need to contribute to [the process of creating neighborly relations] and work out a clear strategy that will really promote the normalization of Tbilisi relations with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adzharia recognizing Georgia's territorial integrity. (...) [I]t is difficult. However, Russia has vast experience in peacekeeping activities" (11) — a fact Georgians know all too well.

Primakov likely delivered his message personally to Georgian President Saakashvili with whom the Centre TV report showed him and Daneliya dining in Tbilisi. While acknowledging that a diversified Georgian foreign policy is only to be expected, Primakov asserted that "if Georgia's natural movement towards Europe and the United States includes an anti-Russian component, the result will certainly be negative." (12) Additionally, in what may or may not have been perceived by the Georgian President as a compliment, Primakov compared Saakashvili to Putin, saying they both "speak openly and say what they think, ... do not use cunning tricks and do not conceal their thoughts." (13)

Contrary to Centre TV's report, the Georgian website, Civil Georgia, described Primakov's visit as a business trip during which he would also be meeting with the Georgian prime and foreign ministers as well as with his counterpart, President of the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Erosi

Kitsmarishvili. (14) In either case, the Kremlin's attitude toward the future of their relations was underscored by the chosen messenger — Primakov's lengthy record is well-known. Adding to the message's effectiveness was the timing of his meeting with Saakashvili, on the heels of the latest crisis with Batumi, and just prior to the 28 March Georgian parliamentary elections and the 31 March meeting between the Georgian and Russian defense ministers in Moscow.

Lavrov: Russia has no right to exert pressure on its neighbors

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergei Lavrov, wrote an article in the Wall Street Journal on 31 March 2004. (15) In it, he refuted the idea that Russia had any imperial ambitions and tried to sell Russia's planned reintegration of the CIS as "facilitat[ing] the level of stability there." Although he did acknowledge that the territory of the former Soviet Union is a "sphere of her vital interests dictated by her very history," he expressed hope that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) would not turn into a "zone of rivalry for 'spheres of influence'."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has also recently addressed the direction of his second-term foreign policy. In a 23 March ceremony for new ambassadors to Russia, Putin stated, "From now on, Russia will play an active and responsible part in the world processes." While it would be tempting to ask what kind of role Russia has been playing up to this point, Putin went on, "We will continue to pursue an honest and open policy towards our neighbors and the whole of the world community. Our priorities in the international affairs remain unchanged."

(16)

Those priorities evidently are led by the continuing plan to reintegrate the CIS. It is clear that a new foreign minister does not necessarily result in a new foreign policy. Lavrov, however, admits in his article that Moscow's historical ties to the CIS do not give it the right to "exert pressure on her neighbors." Now that would be something new.

Source Notes:

- (1) Evenimentol Zilei, 24 Mar 04; FBIS Report, 24 Mar 04 via World News Connection .
- (2) ITAR-TASS, 25 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0325 via World News Connection.
- (3) ITAR-TASS, 29 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0329 via World News Connection.
- (4) ITAR-TASS, 23 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0324 via World News Connection.
- (5) 23 Mar 04; FBIS Media Analysis, 26 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (6) Parlamentskaya gazeta, 25 Mar 04; FBIS Media Analysis, 26 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (7) BTA, 30 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0330 via World News Connection.
- (8) Vremya novosti, 22 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0322 via World News Connection.
- (9) ITAR-TASS, 2 Apr 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (10) 23 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (11) Website of the Russian Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 30 Jan 04 < <http://eng.tpprf.ru/ru/main/news>>.
- (12) CENTRE TV, 23 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (13) 23 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (14) Civil Georgia, 24 Mar 04 (<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=6509>).
- (15) Wall Street Journal, 31 Mar 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8146, 31 Mar 04.
- (16) ITAR-TASS, 23 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0324 via World News Connection.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

LEGISLATURE

Not in my back yard

There had been concern that, given the results of the December 2003 parliamentary election and the March 2004 presidential election, the administration would ride roughshod over the people, and exhibit a tendency toward authoritarianism. Not so, assured the rosy-eyed optimists — surely such support will only allow the president and "his" political party, United Russia, to pass much-needed reforms.

Well, in its first four months in session, the State Duma has exhibited, as some feared, a tendency to remove rights for the people its deputies purportedly represent. And, in the latest move, it is working aggressively toward even removing the people's right to protest against its activities. In this, the Duma is not acting alone; the proposal to restrict assemblies comes from the government.

Last week the Duma began debate on a draft law that would restrict where rallies, meetings or marches could take place, banning public assemblies adjacent to the president's residence and government buildings... such as the Duma. Gatherings also would be prohibited near highways, bridges, schools, religious centers, concert halls, and stadiums, among other locales. Deputy Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin explained that the restrictions are not meant to limit citizens' rights to have their voices heard; rather, he said, it is designed for the "more effective safety of citizens." (1) While the proposal has the support of United Russia, which guarantees its passage provided the president continues to pursue the measure, opposition could be heard elsewhere in the Duma, from the Communists, Rodina, and the Liberal Democratic Party. In the first reading, the bill was approved by a vote of 294 to 137.

While the passage of such a restriction would, clearly, limit the voices of dissent anywhere they might cause a distraction, it is questionable how loud those voices could be anyway. A protest against the proposed bill gathered only a small number of individuals. Since the protest was held without the approval of

authorities, the organizer, YABLOKO's Sergei Mitrokhin, and at least two of his supporters were detained briefly. (2) Despite the small numbers of protesters at the rally, opposition was heard in the halls of the Duma, and the lower house decided to amend the proposal for the second reading, which is scheduled for 28 April. Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov announced the planned amendments would remove the restriction on assemblies outside seats of state power, although he said the ban on rallies outside the presidential residence would remain in the draft bill. (3)

However, restriction of assemblies was not the only item on the Duma agenda that would erode the few faltering steps Russia is making toward a civil society. The head of the newly—created Federal Agency for the Press and Mass Communication, Mikhail Seslavinsky, (4) reported that the first document he will sign will be a letter opposing United Russia's new legislative initiative that would restrict media coverage of terrorist attacks to official statements. "It is impossible to imagine journalists reporting on tragic events only after an operative center is set up and official comments are released," Seslavinsky said. (5) Perhaps "impossible to imagine" for him, but obviously quite easy to imagine for the party of power.

The Russian human rights commissioner, Vladimir Lukin, also is commenting on a draft law — this one allows for the arrest of persons for up to 30 days without any charges brought against them if they're suspected of terrorist activities. The bill has been approved after the second reading, Lukin noted, and his staff is going to suggest the postponement of corresponding amendments to the Penal Code. "There should be a clear dividing line between the war on terrorism and all that is connected with the observance of human rights," he said. (6)

Still, the citizens of Russia can try to find solace in the priority bills as enumerated by deputy speaker Vladimir Pekhtin. The United Russia faction,

otherwise known as the Duma, reportedly will focus on improving the country's economy and bringing eventual prosperity to every segment of the population. (7)

It's all our backyard

The residents of the Komi-Perm autonomous district and the Perm region soon will be sharing government structures and budgets, as the Duma passed the presidential bill on the formation of the new Perm Territory in three readings on 19 March, with 423 deputies for the bill, and one abstention noted. The residents of the two areas had approved a referendum on the merger in December 2003. (8) The purpose of the merger, according to Duma Deputy Andrei Klimov, is to speed up the region's socio-economic development. (9) Of course, "speed up" is a relative term: The Perm territory will not come into existence officially until December 2005, and the union of budgets —one of Russia's donor regions, and one of its aid recipients — will not occur for an additional year.

The Federation Council approved the merger a week after the Duma did. Oleg Chirkunav, the former deputy chairman of the Council's Budget Committee who currently serves as acting head of the Perm Oblast, reportedly will be appointed temporary acting head of the new region by presidential edict. Chirkunov told the media that his team will coordinate the merger of the executive organs by 2005, and merge the legislatures and budgets by 2006. (10)

This may not be the first of many mergers. Another proposed union, of the republic of Altai and the neighboring Altai territory, will not take place, if the republic's state assembly has anything to say about it. El Kurultai, the Altai republic's assembly, announced that it would not call a referendum on combining the two entities. The assembly and the republican government have repeatedly refused to consider the proposal, despite the support of the Altai territory's leadership. (11)

Too many chiefs? There's one less, now

The change in Russia's government has been a boon to Duma Speaker Boris Gрызлов. He has settled into his leadership position quite comfortably, and has used the governmental appointment of Aleksandr Zhukov, who had been one of two first deputy Duma speakers, as a means of downgrading part of the Duma hierarchy. Now there is only one person on the first deputy speaker tier—Lyubov Sliska.

On 26 March, Vladimir Katrenko, who had served as first deputy chairman of the United Russia faction, was elected new deputy speaker of the Duma, filling in the vacancy Zhukov's departure created, sort of. (12) He will join fellow United Russia members Georgi Boos, Vyacheslav Volodin, Oleg Morozov, Vladimir Pekhtin and Artur Chilingarov, as well as Valentin Kuptsov (Communist Party), Sergei Baburin (Rodina) and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (Liberal Democratic Party). (13)

Source Notes:

- (1) ITAR-TASS, 1554 GMT, 30 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (2) Los Angeles Times, 1 Apr 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8148, 1 Apr 04.
- (3) Moscow Times, 5 Apr 04 via Johnson's Russia List, #8151.
- (4) See The NIS Observed, 24 Mar 04.
- (5) ITAR-TASS, 0848 GMT, 22 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (6) ITAR-TASS, 1155 GMT, 25 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (7) ITAR-TASS, 1433 GMT, 19 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (8) ITAR-TASS, 0909 GMT, 19 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (9) ITAR-TASS, 1609 GMT, 19 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (10) Izvestiya, 26 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (11) ITAR-TASS, 0857 GMT, 29 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 0804 GMT, 26 Mar 04 via World News Connection.
- (13) Global News Wire, 30 Dec 03, Radio Free Europe via Lexis-Nexis; Prime-Tass News Agency, 5 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Kris Beasly and Paul Lyons

Sergei Ivanov gains control of arms sales procurement

President Vladimir Putin apparently has fulfilled another phase of his agenda to reform the Russian military and its supporting industrial complex, and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov seems to have succeeded in gaining control of the arms export system and the "state defense order" (R&D and procurement) process. (1)

In both his 2000 National Security Concept and his 2003 White Paper, "Urgent Issues Regarding the Development of the Russian Armed Forces," Putin pointed out the need to reduce and rationalize the military-industrial infrastructure without losing any important research and development or production capabilities. At the same time, he wanted to bring it more securely under state control. While the vast network of companies has been encouraged and supported by the state to increase its arms export dramatically in order to provide hard-currency cash and pay for research and development programs for Russia, there has been little planned restructuring to improve efficiency. Much of the vast complex (more than 4 million workers in Soviet times) still exists, but either runs very inefficiently or produces consumer goods as well as military items.

Little has changed, except by chance and attrition, since 1990. Three factors contributed to the industry's stagnation: 1) the managers were powerful and experienced political infighters; 2) the General Staff did not want to close any plants in order to retain as much mobilization potential as possible; and 3) the whole system was managed by various sectors of the government, which often had other priorities and couldn't cohere on a unified plan for military production on the whole.

Putin, however, has made several attempts to keep the best design firms and production plants under state control, giving Russia an independent defense industrial capability, and to convert the rest of the production capabilities to other uses. Last year, the first six of 40 planned "holdings" were created. Each holding was headed by a major state-run company that was permitted to coalesce under one "holding company" all the design, production and testing elements needed to make a specific type of product, such as fighters or artillery systems. (Examples include Sukhoi and Tactical Missile Arms.) (2)

In 2001, Putin reinvigorated the Committee on Military-Technical Cooperation to govern the arms export process and a year ago, on 11 March 2003, Putin created the State Committee on the Defense Order (under the Defense Ministry) to orchestrate the annual State Defense Order. As is customary, these committees were composed of representatives of many competing bureaucracies, all fighting over the dwindling resources. (3)

On 5 March 04, new Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov told the Duma that in order to make headway in implementing President Putin's reform plans, "simply increasing the state defense order will not solve the problem of the defense sector," and that, "...structural changes will have to be carried out in the military-industrial sector in the very near future, including the structure of defense orders." (4) On 9 March 04, President Putin signed another in a series of decrees that reorganized various parts of the federal executive. A large portion of that decree involved the Ministry of Defense. Under that decree, four new Federal Services were set up under the Ministry of Defense: 1) the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation; 2) the Federal Service for the Defense Order; 3) the Federal Service for Technical and Export Control; and 4) the Federal Special Construction Agency.

It now appears that Ivanov will have direct control of the organization managing arms sales. One big benefit is that he will have the ability to control both which

deals are approved and where the profits go. He will also have direct control of the group compiling the State Defense Order. In the sphere of military production, Ivanov and the Defense Ministry will set work priorities and control whatever resources are available to execute those tasks. (5) The actual production of military gear by the state industries will be controlled out of the Ministry of Industry and Energy through its various departments because, as promised by Deputy Prime Minister Boris Aleshin last October, President Putin also dissolved five state agencies with overlapping mandates: the Russian Aerospace Agency (see below), the Russian Shipbuilding Agency, the Russian Control Systems Agency, the Russian Conventional Arms Agency and the Russian Munitions Agency. Incidentally, the MOD also picked up responsibility for the agency in charge of construction of special military projects like missile silos, deeply buried command posts, etc. This used to be the domain of an entirely distinct set of Troops in the Armed Forces, but Putin streamlined them into a civilian agency subordinated to Ivanov. (6)

The New Federal Space Agency

In the same decree discussed above, Putin transformed Rosaviakosmos (the Russian Aviation and Space Agency) into the Federal Space Agency under the Ministry of Industry and Energy. In a sure sign of how close knit all things space are in Russia, the four-star general in charge of the Military Space Force, Anatoli Perminov, was named as the new head of the agency on 12 March. (7) Perminov was replaced by Lieutenant General Vladimir Popovkin as the Commander-in-Chief of the Space Forces on 10 March. Popovkin is no stranger to the command, having served as Chief of Staff under Perminov. He is a long time space officer, having been an engineer at Baikonur and graduated from, among other institutes, Peter the Great military academy of the Strategic Missile Forces. (8)

Source Notes:

- (1) WPS Observer, 12 Mar 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 12 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (2) Izvestiya, 21 Feb 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 1 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (3) WPS Observer, 12 Mar 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 12 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (4) ITAR-TASS, 0841 GMT, 5 March 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0305 via World News Connection.
- (5) WPS Observer, 12 Mar 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 12 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (6) Izvestiya, 21 Feb 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 1 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (7) RUSSIAN FORCES, 15 Mar 04 at www.russianforces.org/eng/.
- (8) Krasnaya zvezda, 17 Mar 04; What the Papers Say (Defense and Security), 19 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Dept. of Defense or the United States government.

NAVY

Sphere of influence?

While Russia's consternation with NATO expansion continues to gain traction with each passing air patrol, the reality remains that Russia's impasse with NATO and its "near abroad" states is firmly rooted in diplomatic vestiges of the past and an uncertain vision of the future. While the principles of democracy cohere within former Warsaw Pact members and satellite states of the former Soviet Union, the opposite holds true within Russia itself. Equally disturbing to Russia is the inclusion of seven new member nations in NATO, each of which brings their "niche" capabilities into the collective fold. Operating independently, they would each face the persistence of the renewed Russian imperialism central to the

Putin mantra. Although Russia has quelled disputes with Ukraine over the Kerch Strait and vowed to remain neutral during the Georgian dispute with Adjara, the Russian Navy is once again flying its colors within sight of the nascent NATO-member states as well as those aspiring to follow suit.

As tensions mounted within Georgia, the Black Sea Fleet put to sea some 20 warships, 42 auxiliary vessels and 7,325 servicemen as a "deterrent for the case of unforeseen contingency." (1) However, an apparent de-escalation of the Adjarian crisis has led the Black Sea Fleet to attend to its scheduled April training regimen. Admiral Masorin, Black Sea Fleet Commander, stated that "this will be a conclusive inspection of the ships' operational readiness following winter training...it is planned to land mariners at the Kerch Peninsula. 'This is our training ground, which we are using in compliance with the agreements'." (2) Black Sea Fleet operations in the Kerch Strait area come hard on the heels of negotiations, which produced draft agreements between Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Kalyuzhny and Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Motsik. This is still, however, an ongoing dialogue between the two sides, which focuses on "the Russian-Ukrainian border in the Sea of Azov, on the border in the Kerch Strait, and on partition of territorial seas, continental shelf and economic zones in the Black Sea." (3) Training aside, the recent deployments in the vicinity of Georgia and Ukraine seem to be part of Russia's renewed attempts to flex its military muscle in a place once considered Russia's sphere of influence, perhaps in the hope of reviving that past.

Ukraine, nonetheless, wasn't dissuaded from holding its own exercise. Ukraine recently completed Sea Border 2004 to "polish cooperation between control bodies of the Defense Ministry, the Interior Troops, the Emergencies Ministry, the State Border Guard Service and the Ukrainian security service during a state of emergency." (4) The focus of the naval forces during the exercises was to conduct mining, anti-aircraft, and search and rescue operations as well as to conduct a landing operation on the Saki airdrome.

Forgone Principles versus Future Potentials

The ability of any military force to conduct deterrence, combat or training operations is dependent on its combat readiness. To Russia's credit, the recent Far East Staff Exercises and the strategic staff exercises earlier this year have brought significant training and command and control dividends. A more visceral derivative of these exercises has resulted from their clear depiction of the clash between Russian "Great Power" rhetoric, and the harsh realities of combat readiness deterioration.

Focusing on the Navy, the spectacle posed by the Northern Fleet missile firing mishaps in February, the K-159 towing incident, the KURSK tragedy, and reports of persistent readiness shortfalls all highlight the gulf between perceived and actual readiness.

Comments made recently by officials of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP) depict the growing concern as to whether forces once fashioned "for the battle of the first salvo" can pass muster for prolonged and more technologically-laden conflicts of the future. Asked whether or not Russia has 10-15 years to modernize its force in light of recent catastrophes in the Northern Fleet, Nikolai Vasilyevich of the CFDP noted, "In the previous years the Defense Ministry tried to convince the leadership of the country to provide at least 3.5 percent of the GDP for modernization of weaponry. The state always agreed with this but never did anything practical. For example, this year it's about 2.68 percent of the GDP. In the previous years the industry was underfunded tremendously. If we try to go back to the arms program that is already obsolete, it has to be revised radically." (5) Given the musings coming from the Defense Ministry regarding NATO expansion, Russia can not afford to wait the 10-15 years required to modernize its force effectively.

Sergei Arbatov of the CFDP discussed the politico-military issues of NATO expansion and the pressing need to modernize Russia's forces. He states, "I think I will not make a mistake if I say that 70 percent of our armed forces and resources, including nuclear weapons, and maybe even more, up to 90 percent, are geared to the preparation for a possible conflict with the West. It's hard for us to allocate sufficient resources to deal with real threats that already kill people, not those that may cause some foreign political complications in the future...this is the paradox that often happens in politics: the real threats to us are in one direction but the overwhelming share of resources is spent on something completely different." (6)

Adding to the conundrum is Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov's pronouncements in his recent article, "Russia Has Two Allies — Its Army and Navy," extracted from Russian in Global Affairs magazine. Ivanov asserts that the "Russian Armed Forces should be able to successfully fulfill tasks in two armed conflicts... simultaneously, as well as conducting peacekeeping operations independently or as part of a multinational force." (7)

Three strikes and you're...

The recent dismal record of performance by naval forces begs the question of when Putin might set his sights on "reforming" the Admiralty. If President Putin's recent meetings with Fleet Admirals subordinate to Commander of the Russian Navy, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, serve as a barometer, it's growing increasingly probable that Admiral Kuroyedov's days are numbered as Russia's top admiral.

Attempting to read the tea leaves for political signs in Russia is a formidable challenge. Nonetheless, the "indicators" seem to be lining up for the departure of Admiral Kuroyedov. Of late, President Putin met with Admiral Vladimir Masorin, Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, in Sochi where he "reported on the upcoming exercises and the current problems of the Black Sea Fleet to the

President." (8) The meeting holds particular significance if, as was reported at the time, President Putin favored Masorin for the post of Black Sea Fleet Commander in 2002. Admiral Kuroyedov flew into Sevastopol later the same day after the Masorin-Putin meeting, any further details were not forthcoming.

In addition, Admiral Kuroyedov's recent pronouncements that the Northern Fleet flagship, Peter the Great, "may blow up at any moment" ignited alarm not only over the impending danger, but the reality that the comments are part and parcel of Kuroyedov's controversial style of defaming and marginalizing any potential successors to the Fleet Admiralship. Admiral Kuroyedov's attack was not meant for the Peter the Great itself, but rather for its commanding officer, Admiral Vladimir Kasatonov. His animus for Kasatonov stems from criticism aimed at Kuroyedov during the investigation into the loss of the submarine K-159 last year. The disdain for Kuroyedov transcends the Admiral ranks. "Officers of the Northern Fleet do not like Kuroyedov. Many officers think that the commander-in-chief's activities are aimed against Admiral Gennadi Suchkov, Commander of the Northern Fleet, who was suspended in September 2003 until the end of the investigation of the K-159 shipwreck. Gennady Suchkov is an experienced officer, and could claim the post of the commander-in-chief of the Navy. Suchkov was suspended on Kuroyedov's initiative.(9)"

Of course, Kuroyedov's actions against Fleet Commanders and potential successors are a well-honed skill. He dismissed the Northern Fleet Commander, Admiral Popov, for the KURSK catastrophe and the Black Sea Fleet Commander, Admiral Komoyedov was fired previously. Add the fact that Admiral Kuroyedov assigned himself to a commission to investigate the missile firing debacles of February 17-18 and one has to wonder, why is the Admiral of the Fleet engaged in such a commission in the first place?

The answer is obvious. Admiral Kuroyedov has his eye on the rear view mirror and not on the road ahead. The irony of the situation is that the Russian Navy

needs just that, a conclusive report that stipulates that the current leadership, maintenance, training and budgets do not support the current or future objectives of the force.

Source Notes:

- (1) Moskovsky komsomolets, 31 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 02 Apr 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (2) Rossiiskaya gazeta, 30 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 02 Apr 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (3) Vremya novostei, 29 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 31 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (4) Krasnaya zvezda, 23 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 26 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (5) RIA NOVOSTI, 30 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis database.
- (6) RIA NOVOSTI, 30 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis database.
- (7) Russia In Global Affairs, 31 Mar 04; CDI Russia Weekly, 02 Apr 04.
- (8) Grani.ru, 29 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 31Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (9) WPS Observer, 26 Mar 04; What the Paper's Say (Defense and Security), 26 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

UKRAINE

Who benefits from economic growth?

The growth of the Ukrainian economy last year was unprecedented. The average salary grew by 23 percent, about 3.5 million Ukrainians had at least some form of pension increase, the government fulfilled and then over-fulfilled the state budget

for the first time. Ukraine was also excluded from the black list of countries, which are not combating money laundering — The Financial Action Task Force lifted its sanctions. (1) The outlook is rather bright, or so it seems...

Despite the economic growth, more than 60% of Ukrainians live in poverty. Even with some increase, the minimum wage is still the bare minimum. Presently, it is only \$44, which means many people live on little more than one dollar a day. The government seems to realize the severity of the situation and even declared overcoming poverty as its main goal. This year's new government program is called - "Consistency, Effectiveness, Responsibility."

Some claim however, that the government was anything but responsible. It could have done much more with the money it had available. It could have increased wages by much more, it could have helped more Ukrainians get out of poverty. Some members of the opposition claim that in light of recent economic growth, the authorities allocated a substantial chunk of budgetary revenue for shadowy purposes. In particular, opposition MP Victor Pynzenyk accused the Ukrainian government of hiding 1.5bn dollars of budget revenues in 2003 and of understating receipts in 2004 by 1.9bn dollars. (2) Mr. Pynzenyk claimed that the government had the resources to raise wages to such occupation groups as doctors and teachers but refused to do so. The opposition member showed some convincing evidence that budgetary understatements had indeed taken place. For example, last year's budget was 75bn hryvnas (about 14bn dollars) and this year's estimated budget is 78.2 bn hryvnas, which is less than last year's, given a 6.7 percent price growth. (3) With such phenomenal economic growth, as quoted by the authorities, a reduction of the state budget is indeed surprising.

Mykola Azarov, First Deputy Prime Minister, refuted Pynzenyk accusations, stating that the budget was being implemented by 100 percent, meaning that all the resources the government has were being spent. He also added that all

budgets were served by the treasury, eliminating the possibility of spending funds contrary to the detailed budget sheets.

The opposition bloc, Our Ukraine, organized the tent protest under the slogan "Stop Robbing People" outside the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers. The protesters were demanding "taking 1.9 bn dollars of budget revenues out of the shadow sector and increasing pensions and wages for teachers, doctors and scientists."

(4) The Ukrainian court found opposition tent protests illegal and banned Our Ukraine from creating a tent encampment near the Cabinet of Ministers. (5)

Ethnic clashes in Crimea

A crowd of Crimean Tatar youth smashed a bar in Simferopol on 23 March after a countryman was stabbed in the bar the same night. The attack was directed against ethnic Slavs (mainly Russians). Police arrested over 30 Tatars, who participated in the clash. Many of the victims were members of the growing community of skinheads in the Crimea. Only about a month ago, ethnic Tatars attacked a Russian television crew, which attempted to film the shabby residences of some Tatars.

Tatars, who have lived in the Crimean peninsular since the 13th century and consider this to be their native land, were exiled by Stalin in 1944. Crimea's most valuable land is now owned predominantly by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. (6)

MOLDOVA

Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin has proposed that the parliament remove article 170 from the Moldovan Penal code, which allows journalists' imprisonment of up to five years for defamation. "Maintaining a criminal punishment for calumny harms both the activity of the mass media... and the interests of citizens, which keep the right to interpret information and to decide whether it is correct," the president said. (7)

It is a noble and an unusual act for the president, but there is, of course, a catch... This measure, in no way, provides journalists with the freedom to write truthfully without fear of punishment. A provision in the Civil Code, which does not limit the size of fines for libel, still exists and is potentially more dangerous to the journalists. "If the president is truly interested in enforcing the international recommendations and promoting press freedom standards, he should propose an amendment to the Civil Code, too," said Angela Sarbu, secretary of the Moldovan Media Working Group. (8)

Journalists often have to spend their time and effort battling libel cases brought against them in court. In August 2003, for example, Boris Birstein (a Canadian journalist of Moldovan origin) filed a lawsuit against a Moldovan media group Flux, asking for over 100,000 dollars in payments for abusing his honor and dignity, and for inflicting financial damage. His actions were triggered by journalists' investigation of an agreement between the businessman and the Moldovan government, under which Birstein's company received a certain share of the money paid for each passport issued by the Department of Information Technologies. (9)

Punitive measures, which are written into the Moldovan Civil and Penal code, have been removed from many transition countries in Eastern Europe, often as a price for entry into the Council of Europe. Moldovan journalists lose 90% of the civil libel suits brought against them. (10) Such a high percentage prevents journalists from investigating many (especially criminal) cases and, as a consequence, the Moldovan population is deprived of an opportunity to obtain truthful information. Freedom House, a U.S.-based NGO, has ranked the Moldovan media as "Partly Free." The group stated that Moldovan journalists often engage in self-censorship and are frequently targeted for corruption and physical assault. (11)

BELARUS

Unipendence celebration.

Last Friday, Belarus festively celebrated the Russia-Belarus Unification Day (the 8th anniversary of the Union's creation). This social event included the leaders of the Russia-Belarus Union state bodies, representatives of legislative and executive branches of power, researchers, intellectuals, youth organizations, etc. On Unification day, President Lukashenko congratulated the Belarussian people on this joyful event. (12)

A different anniversary took place only a week before the Unification Day celebration, the 86th anniversary of the proclamation of the Belarussian People's Republic (a Belarussian state was proclaimed in 1918 but lasted for only three years). (13) Nothing close to festivities was noticed in the capital. On the contrary, those who came out to celebrate the Day of Freedom at Freedom Square were unceremoniously dispersed by the police. Other activists, who protested outside of Lukashenko's residence with posters which said: "Down with Lukashism!" and "Long Live Free Belarus!" were beaten by the police and taken into custody.

One cannot help but wonder what kind of state Belarus is. Is it an independent state, where the people are prohibited to celebrate their independence or is it a unified state (with Russia), where the authorities are unwilling to give up their powers? It seems to be a unipendent state, which is being attacked from all sides by the Western community for actions similar to those used to suppress the rally on Freedom Day. Because of such actions, Belarus came under fire from numerous international organizations in the past several weeks. Recently, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights delivered a report on the current situation in Belarus to the UN Commission on Human Rights during its 60th meeting in Geneva. The report covered restrictions on freedom of expression and association, torture and inhumane treatment, denials of fair public trials, etc. (14) Amnesty International called on Belarussian authorities to

"stop intimidating human rights activists, end the practice of detaining people solely for the peaceful existence of their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association." (15)

Source Notes:

- (1) ICTV TELEVISION, 16 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) INTERFAX-UKRAINE NEWS AGENCY, 29 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) ERA, 30 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, 24 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) BASA-GENERAL NEWS PACKAGE, 31 Mar 04.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) BASAPRESS NEWS AGENCY, 19 Aug 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) RFE/RL, 26 June 03; Infoprod via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) IPR STRATEGIC BUSINESS INFORMATION, 13 May 03 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) ITAR-TASS NEWS AGENCY, 1 Apr 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) CHARTER-97 WEB SITE, 25 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (14) BELAPAN NEWS AGENCY, 30 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) CHARTER-97 WEB SITE, 29 Mar 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

Armenia

Another Rose Revolution?

The Armenian political opposition coalition, led by Justice alliance chair Stephan Demirchian and National Unity Party leader Artashes Geghamian, is gearing up for potentially violent confrontation with President Kocharian's administration. The opposition coalition is planning to launch a "civil disobedience campaign" on 12 April to protest the Kocharian administration's refusal to organize a nationwide no-confidence referendum on the government's performance. (1) The opposition is calling for the implementation of the Armenian Constitutional Court's ruling of 16 April 2003, to hold a no-confidence referendum within a year's time, which the Kocharian government has thus far ignored. (2) Demirchian and Geghamian openly dispute the results of the March 2003 presidential election, and therefore consider Kocharian's government to be illegitimate.

Tension between the political opposition and the Kocharian government began building in late March when Demirchian and Geghamian, the leaders of the country's two main opposition groups, joined forces in a bid to encourage popular mass protests similar to the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia. The unprecedented union of the Armenian opposition movements accelerated the opposition's plans to rally around the presidential palace and the nearby parliament compound in Yerevan on 12 April until Kocharian resigns. (3) In order to gather large crowds from the regions outside Yerevan, Demirchian and Geghamian have been campaigning and rallying, as indicated by the 28 March demonstration in Gyumri, for over a month. (4)

Kocharian's recent political rhetoric and intergovernmental maneuverings indicate that he takes the opposition threat seriously. On 24 March, Kocharian stated his readiness to use force against crowds rallying around his Yerevan residence, (5) while a 26 March statement by the three pro-presidential parties in the Armenian government warned that law enforcement bodies have a legitimate right to counter "attempts to violate the country's constitutional law" with tough action. (6) In addition, on 31 March, Armenia's Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian, a Kocharian loyalist and recent appointment, opened a criminal

investigation into the Justice bloc's recent organized protests, (7) which Demirchian denounced as an attempt at political persecution. (8) Kocharian has also been busy reshuffling Yerevan's security and justice departments, as evidenced by his firing the majority of the district prosecutors in Yerevan and replacing the leadership in the Armenian police, in an attempt to consolidate power. (9) To counter recent opposition maneuvering, Kocharian's administration undertook its own public relations campaign, with ministers dispatched to economically depressed rural areas to "present" the governments policies to potential voters. However, the popular discontent over the lack of economic and intellectual mobility, 55% of the population live in poverty, (10) coupled with the widespread political mobilization of the countryside by the opposition indicate that Kocharian's government will have to fight to stay in power.

Chechnya

Ramzan Kadyrov, Akhmad Kadyrov's son and head of the Chechen security service, made a surprising statement on 18 March in Nezavisimaya gazeta that the Chechen administration might grant amnesty to Aslan Maskhadov if he indicated a desire to join the Kadyrov administration. (11) Either Ramzan's statement could be a flight of fancy or another indication of his father's desire to consolidate power in Chechnya. In light of the recent wave of Chechen fighters surrendering to, or being captured by, Russian forces in hopes of gaining amnesty, such as the military commandant of the Nozhai-Yurt district, Boris Aidamirov, on 12 March, (12) Ickerian Defense Minister Mogamed Khambiev (13) and Chief of Maskhadov's bodyguards Shaa Turlayev on 30 March, (14) Ahmad Kadyrov may have hopes of bringing as many separatist guerrillas into his own administration as possible. By gaining guerrilla support, Kadyrov could further strengthen his independence from Moscow.

On 26 March, Kadyrov renewed his campaign to place all the counter terrorist operations in Chechnya under the control of his Interior Ministry, for the ostensible reason that a peaceful Chechnya can manage its own security

concerns. (15) In reality, Kadyrov hopes to wrest power from the Russian forces garrisoned in Chechnya, in order to consolidate all the military power within Chechnya into his own hands.

However, in yet another sign that the Putin administration is sticking with its commitment to Kadyrov, the federal Auditing Chamber has made it clear that Kadyrov is not currently considered a suspect in the investigation into the misuse of over 5 billion rubles out of the 62 billion allocated to Chechnya since 2000.

(16) The auditing investigation has targeted former Chechen Prime Minister Anatoli Popov as its scapegoat, as indicated by Auditing Chamber official Sergei Ryabukhin's accusation that Popov maintained "zero-effectiveness" for Chechnya's economy. (17) Kadyrov would not be a viable target for the auditing chamber, in any event, as he initiated the auditing investigation, while Sergei Abramov, who replaced Popov as Chechen Prime Minister, carried out the inspection. (18)

Source Notes:

(1) Agence France Presse, 30 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Associated Press, 25 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) Arminfo Yerevan, 30 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(5) Arminfo News Agency, 23 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring, 24 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(6) Public Television of Armenia, Yerevan, 29 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring, 30 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(7) Yerevan Itar-Tass, 1 Apr 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(8) Associated Press, 1 Apr 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(9) Arminfo News Agency, 19 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis;

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/articles/eav040104a.shtml>; Arminfo News Agency, 22 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

- (10) World Bank Database Statistics by Country, Armenia, 4 Mar 04;
<http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?SelectedCountry=ARM&CCODE=ARM&CNAME=Armenia&PTYPE=CP>.
- (11) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 18 Mar 04; via What the Paper's say- Defense and Security, 22 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) Itar-Tass, 12 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Agence France Presse, 9 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (14) Moscow Itar-Tass, 2 Apr 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) Itar-Tass, 26 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (16) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 Mar 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (17) Moscow Times, 22 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (18) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 Mar 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

UZBEKISTAN

Bombings and (Possible) Related Events

Between 28 March and 1 April, Uzbekistan has been subjected to a stream of terrorist attacks that have been met with a generous dose of speculation as to who is responsible for the attacks. No group has accepted responsibility, but the Uzbek government has been quick to blame Islamic militant groups. The region is in a heightened state of alert, and in the aftermath of the bombings the Uzbek government is moving to describe its situation as a victim without culpability.

The context in which the bombings have taken place is complex, as are the possible motives behind the attacks as well as the problems that plague both the country and the region. It is significant to note that civilians do not appear to be the target of the attacks.

In an attempt to make sense of the string of events which have taken place, what follows is a chronological summary of recent events. (1) In brief, there are at least two reasons one can postulate for the bombings: 1) Islamic militants attempting to destabilize the region and undermine the authority of the Uzbek government as well as punishing it for its affiliation with the U.S. campaign against terror; and 2) an internal response directed at the police and security forces, which freely disregard human rights and are seen as oppressors of the population. While the latter of the two explanations is likely to figure heavily in the cause, the Uzbek government is likely to contextualize the bombings as part of the campaign of international terror, thereby encouraging the international community to overlook the stifling of rights and persecution of political opponents. Events leading up to the bombings support both explanations.

19 March

In light of what Kazakh and Tajik security sources perceived as increased activity by Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), marked primarily by an increase in the distribution of HT literature, Kyrgyzstan National Security Service Chairman, Kalyk Imankulov, indicated that Muslim clerics would have to play an essential role in the government's campaign against HT. HT, which advocates the establishment of a caliphate in Central Asia, insists that their vision of the means to this end is a peaceful one. (2)

20 March

Pakistani forces conducting operations in the border area of South Waziristan (northwestern Pakistan) arrested over 100 terrorists, including Uzbeks, believed to be affiliated with al-Qa'ida. (3)

22 March

Russia announces that it will move Su-27 fighters to their newly opened airbase near Kant, Kyrgyzstan. According to Russian Air Force Commander-in-Chief Army General Vladimir Mikhailov, "We will reinforce our aircraft grouping in Kant

this summer... [by moving] four to eight multi-purpose aircraft to the Kant airbase," which currently has 20 aircraft. The reason given for doing this is a concern of a future increase in militant activity in the region. (4)

25 March

U.S. troops twice blocked the roads leading to Kyrgyzstan's Manas Airport (the main airport outside of Bishkek, which is also home of the international coalition at Ganci Airbase), due to "security-related incidents." (5)

27 March

Pakistani Major General Shaukat Sultan informs reporters that Tahir Yuldashev, head of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and a top leader of al-Qa'ida, was "injured along with his local facilitators in the ongoing military operation near Wana [South Waziristan]." (6)

28 March

Police beat to death a 78-year-old male vendor at the Chorsu market. (7) A bomb explodes in Qahramon, in the Bukhara region's Romitantsky district. Terrorists were blown up while preparing a powerful bomb. (8) Ten people were killed, four detained, and according to Uzbek Prosecutor General Rashid Kadyrov, "law enforcement agencies confiscated 920 kilograms of explosives — mixture of saltpeter and aluminum powder." (9) Later, the reported amount of explosives found was increased to 1.5 tons. (10)

29 March

Two police officers were killed on the outskirts of Tashkent and a third was killed in the early morning (late night of the 28th) near the airport. The police officers' weapons were stolen and the attackers escaped. (11) Around 8:20 am, local time, a female suicide bomber set off an explosion at the Chorsu market, near the Detskii Mir ("Children's World") store, in Tashkent. (12) The explosion was near the police station, at the time of the morning police shift change. A second

(possibly female) suicide bomber detonated a bomb approximately 50 minutes later. Some have suggested that the timing of the second bombing emphasizes the police as the target; the second bombing came after the market had been cleared of bystanders. A third attack was described on the web site of "Muslim Uzbekistan," which claimed that a man "plung[ed] into [a group of] policemen and blew himself [up]," was unconfirmed. Some witnesses of the Chorsu market bombings mentioned the 28 March beating death and the police's inhumane treatment of market workers, as just cause for targeting the police. (13) Numerous other bombs went off in Bukhara, with no casualties reported. (14) With as many as 19 dead, including six policemen, 11 suspects were detained by the Uzbek Interior Ministry. (15)

Kazakhstan and Tajikistan tightened security along their borders with Uzbekistan. (16) In response to accusations by the Uzbek government that HT was responsible for the bombings, a press release was issued by HT officials in London that "denies any involvement whatsoever in today's [29 March] explosion." Imran Waheed, a spokesman for HT, went on to add that "the finger of blame for these explosions must point at the tyrannical Uzbek regime which has orchestrated such events in the past in order to suppress legitimate Islamic political opposition." (17) (Here, Waheed is referencing the February 1999 Tashkent bombings, which some accused the Uzbek government of having staged. The IMU was officially blamed for the bombings and what followed was an increase of repressive measures taken against practicing Muslims in Uzbekistan who were labeled as threats to the state.)

Uzbek Foreign Minister Sadyk Safayev tried to connect the Bukhara and Tashkent attacks with international terrorism: "A mean hand that is characteristic for terrorist acts stresses one more time that it is tested abroad. This hand is well known in various countries of the world." (18)

CSTO security chief scheduled meetings of the Collective Security Council (CSC) and the CSC offers Uzbekistan help after the terrorist attacks. (19) Russia encourages the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to increase its anti-terrorist efforts. (20) U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher says, "The attacks are yet another example of the importance of continued cooperation against those who would stop at nothing to achieve their misguided goals." (21)

30 March

In the morning, in the Kibrai district of the Tashkent region, explosive devices were detonated near a police traffic post. After the explosion, gunfire was exchanged between the police and the terrorists. (22) Simultaneously, a minibus exploded in the Bostanlyk district of the Tashkent region, near the Charvaksy water reservoir. Were the Charvaksy dam to break, the capital would be flooded. (23)

Another female suicide attacker detonated a bomb in the Yalangach residential area in the Qibray district of the Tashkent region. (24)

Near the TTZ tractor plant, a prolonged gun battle took place and witnesses claimed that people involved in the battle were wearing hijabs and headbands with Arabic inscriptions. It was later discovered that militants killed in the gun battle were using weapons stolen from police on the early morning of the 29th (late night of the 28th). (25) Ten homemade bombs were confiscated in Toitep, in the Tashkent region. (26) Twenty suicide bombers blew themselves up as police tried to detain them. (27)

Uzbekistan reported that over the two days, 22 were killed, including ten policemen, and 30 were wounded. (28) The suicide bombers appear not to be counted in the official statistics.

31 March

An explosion, the sixth in three days, took place at an apartment building in Andijan. The cause of the blast was unclear, but it was initially believed to be either an accidental gas explosion or terrorist act connected with the acts of the previous two days. (29) The blast was later attributed to a faulty gas line, though there were unconfirmed reports that members of the Uzbek military used the house. (30) Another explosion occurred in the southwestern part of Tashkent. (31)

A hostage situation took place in the old district of Tashkent. An unidentified gunman took hostages in a private house and refused to negotiate with police. Eventually, the hostages were released and the gunman committed suicide. (32)

Uzbek officials detained around 50 suspects, described by the government as "Wahhabis." Uzbek President Islam Karimov declared the attacks part of an international conspiracy of Islamic terrorists. (33)

1 April

Ending a standoff that began on 31 March in the Sabir-Rakhimov district of Tashkent, a suspected militant blew himself up in the early morning hours. (34) In Bukhara, a woman reportedly detonated a bomb in a two-story building, injuring herself and killing another. (35)

Timing and Implications

In the early part of March, Uzbekistan began mounting a propaganda campaign against HT. (36) The bombings come at a time when the CSTO and many in the region, speak of cooperation and the improved integration of security forces. (37) Furthermore, it is just after the publication of reports by the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch criticizing the conditions and abuses of human rights in Uzbekistan. (38) It also comes before the U.S. is to consider renewing assistance programs to Uzbekistan worth over \$50 million. In order to do this, the Bush administration would have to waive the human rights conditions required for

receiving assistance. (39) As Uzbekistan plays an integral role in the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, the decision is certain to come at some cost to the Bush administration.

One market vendor, commenting on the attacks, claimed that "people see no legal way to make an honest living. They are desperate." (40) After the Tashkent bombings in February 1999, the government were overly aggressive in their attack on Islam and, according to Human Rights Watch, over 7000 Muslims were imprisoned over the five year period. (41) It is likely that the recent attacks will encourage Uzbek authorities to increase their repressive handling of religious and political opposition.

At least 47 individuals were killed in the attacks and Uzbek officials are examining religious literature found with the terrorists to determine their group affiliation. Officials claim that the terrorists were trained outside of the country and have tried to link the recent attacks to the militants along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. (42) Any official report, however, is likely to down play the police as the target of the attacks and to ignore the popular dissatisfaction with government policies and police brutality.

It is believed that the terrorist bombings will strengthen U.S.-Uzbek relations as collaborators in the war against terrorism and solidify the importance of groups like the CSC and the SCO. The Uzbek government has focused on the international coalition of countries joined in the fight against terrorism, which draws attention from the internal problems of the country and affords them the opportunity to sidestep needed reform. Without reform, however, such expressions of desperation are unlikely to be completely silenced.

Source Notes:

(1) Based on accounts available at the time of publication.

- (2) It is estimated that Kyrgyzstan has between 2000 and 4000 members of HT. Over the past two years, however, close to 1500 HT activists have been brought before the Kyrgyz court system. Kabar News (Bishkek), 1700 GMT, 22 Mar 04; CEP20040322000147 via World News Connection. Throughout Central Asia, HT membership is banned for it allegedly being a terrorist organization.
- (3) Agence France Press (Hong Kong), 1311 GMT, 20 Mar 04; JPP20040320000054 via World News Connection.
- (4) The Russian airbase in Kant currently has around 20 aircraft, including An-24, An-26, L-39, Su-24, Su25, and Mi-8 helicopters. ITAR-TASS, 1348 GMT, 22 Mar 04; CEP20040322000162 via World News Connection.
- (5) While the Ganci airbase remains the home of the seven country "international" anti-terrorists coalition forces, only U.S. forces remain stationed there. ITAR-TASS, 1430 GMT, 25 Mar 04; CEP20040325000334 via World News Connection.
- (6) Yuldashev was sentenced to death in abstention for his alleged role in the February 1999 Tashkent bombings and is believed to be close to Usama bin Ladin. Agence France Press (Hong Kong), 1753 GMT, 27 Mar 04; JPP20040327000053 via World News Connection. The 1999 Tashkent bombings were an impetus for further government crackdown on Islam in Uzbekistan.
- (7) Eurasianet, 30 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org; RFE/RL, 31 Mar 04 via www.rferl.org.
- (8) ITAR-TASS, 1135 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000146 via World News Connection.
- (9) ITAR-TASS, 1725 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000413 via World News Connection.
- (10) RFE/RL, 31 Mar 04, via www.rferl.org.
- (11) ITAR-TASS, 1440 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000325 via World News Connection.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 0736 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000019 via World News Connection.

- (13) One witness also referenced the inappropriate act of a police officer who violently kicked an elderly woman for not moving out of the way quickly enough. Eurasianet, 30 Mar 04, via www.eurasianet.org.
- (14) ITAR-TASS, 1647 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000337 via World News Connection.
- (15) ITAR-TASS, 1725 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000413 via World News Connection.
- (16) ITAR-TASS, 1445 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000304; 1640 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000327 via World News Connection.
- (17) Agence France Press (Paris), 2123 GMT, 29 Mar 04; EUP20040330000008 via World News Connection.
- (18) ITAR-TASS, 1648 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000335 via World News Connection.
- (19) ITAR-TASS, 2001 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000423 via World News Connection.
- (20) The SCO includes: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. ITAR-TASS, 1640 GMT, 29 Mar 04; CEP20040329000313 via World News Connection.
- (21) Eurasianet, 30 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.
- (22) ITAR-TASS, 1125 GMT, 30 Mar 04; CEP20040330000113 via World News Connection.
- (23) ITAR-TASS, 1125 GMT, 30 Mar 04; CEP20040330000113 via World News Connection.
- (24) ITAR-TASS, 1534 GMT, 30 Mar 04; CEP20040330000321 via World News Connection.
- (25) Eurasianet, 31 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.
- (26) ITAR-TASS, 1524 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000262 via World News Connection.
- (27) ITAR-TASS, 1555 GMT, 30 Mar 04; CEP20040330000327 via World News Connection; Kazakhstan Today, 31 Mar 04 via www.times.kg.

(28) ITAR-TASS, 1524 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000262 via World News Connection.

(29) ITAR-TASS, 1525 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000264 via World News Connection.

(30) Eurasianet, 31 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(31) ITAR-TASS, 1624 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000314 via World News Connection.

(32) ITAR-TASS, 1945 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000415; 2137 GMT, 31 Mar 04; CEP20040331000440 via World News Connection

(33) Eurasianet, 31 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(34) Eurasianet, 1 Apr 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(35) Eurasianet, 1 Apr 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(36) Eurasianet, 30 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(37) The CSTO includes: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. Nikolai Bordyuzha, CSTO Secretary General, recently told reports "we have attained a very high level of integration with the Eurasian Economic Community and currently establish close ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (CSO), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations." ITAR-TASS, 0933 GMT, 26 Mar 04; CEP20040326000068 via World News Connection

One implication of this is that as countries become increasingly integrated in their security relations and in their cooperation against "terrorism", there is less objectivity and criticism of actions by member countries of the very conditions which contribute to the terrorism.

(38) See International Crisis Group, "Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for the International Community," 11 Mar 04, via www.crisisweb.org/home/index.cfm?id=2537&l=1; and Human Rights Watch, "Creating Enemies of the State: Religious Persecution in Uzbekistan", Mar 04 via www.hrw.org/reports/2004/uzbekistan0304/.

(39) RFE/RL, 31 Mar 04 via www.rferl.org.

(40) Eurasianet, 30 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org.

(41) See Human Rights Watch, "Creating Enemies of the State: Religious Persecution in Uzbekistan," Mar 04 via www.hrw.org/reports/2004/uzbekistan0304/.

(42) Moscow Times, 5 Apr 04 via www.times.kg.

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