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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Counterlife

President-elect Vladimir Putin accepted the resignation of his sitting government, and announced the formation of his new government under the leadership of Mikhail Yefimovich Fradkov. Oh wait a minute, Putin hasn't been re-elected yet.

An arrogant Russian president, confident of re-election, decided to show his citizens the future he has planned for them, without bothering to wait for their electoral input. And we're supposed to be grateful that he chose a 'colorless bureaucrat' with tenuous ties to the power ministries rather than a full-on silovik?

Putin dismissed the Kasianov government at a Kremlin State Council meeting, much to the surprise of at least several ministers. (1) The unexpected dismissals led a few to leap to the Yel'tsin analogy as if there were something in the water at the Kremlin that makes leaders act erratically/ (hmmm) But Yel'tsin was, despite everything else, a political creature with a remarkable sense of the populace; Putin has built, deliberately, an image of the cool, calculating, even cold-blooded leader. His decision to catch his ministers, citizens and all observers off-guard wasn't punitive or a reflection of the need to jolt people from their complacency. It was arrogance.

The government's dismissal in itself was a shock, but there is no indication that the new government will be anything more than a true personnel reshuffle: same cards, same players, just a rearrangement of the order and the portfolios dealt. A relief, of sorts, for the business community, but nevertheless, the odd political whim of a supremely confident president.

"The smaller the staff, the more effective the civil servants" (2)

Mikhail Yefimovich Fradkov is a veteran in Russian government circles, serving as a deputy to Pyotr Aven in the first Foreign Economic Relations Ministry (yes, Pyotr Aven of Alpha fame and wealth), and eventually coming into control of the ministry himself under Chernomyrdin, for whom he tried to subdue the arms giant, Rosvooruzhenie, and bumbled away a multi-million dollar contract instead. (3) He served in Yel'tsin's administration on and off, eventually becoming Trade Minister in Sergei Stepashin's government in 1999. Stepashin, who made clear at the time that his choice for First Deputy Prime Minister was the same Aleksandr Zhukov that Fradkov has now tapped, put together a government line-up with figures whose names are remarkably familiar today (e.g., Khristenko, Matvienko, Pochinok, Kasianov, etc.). (4)

In 1998, when President Yel'tsin upbraided two or three ministers from the Chernomyrdin-led government, the then Prime Minister let loose his assessment of Fradkov's shortcomings (making clear that Fradkov had earned Yel'tsin's wrath): "You lack initiative. You don't bother. This is absolutely inadmissible for such a ministry." (5)

When Putin became Prime Minister in 1999 however, Fradkov's star began a slow ascent again as he was named Sergei Ivanov's deputy in the Security Council. (There is some indication that Fradkov's "ties" to the siloviki were solidified at this time.) From there, Putin put Fradkov in charge of the Tax Ministry until its dissolution. At the time of his appointment as President Putin's Prime Minister nominee (The Duma has since confirmed his appointment), Fradkov was Russia's representative to the European Union.

As Prime Minister, Fradkov is promising a streamlined government, reducing ministries from 24 to about 15. There also will be strong parliamentary representation, especially since last December's elections produced such a

formidable pro-Putin party majority. (6) Current evaluations of the qualities Putin sought in a Prime Minister, and apparently found in Fradkov, are typified, interestingly enough, in comments by Anatoli Chubais. "Russia has few experts of such excellence and experience as Mr. Fradkov. (...) Mr. Fradkov has vast experience that can upgrade Russian politics to a European class, and send them – literally and figuratively speaking – along European channels." (7)

As for Aleksandr Zhukov, Fradkov's choice for First Deputy, he is a western-educated (Harvard) economist, who has worked in the State Duma's Budget Office and is a strong supporter of tax reform. (8) Further government appointments are expected shortly.

Source Notes:

(1) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 26 Feb 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis. The manner of this dismissal seems to call out for an examination of who knew what and when. Apparently, several Kremlin apparachiki were taken by surprise by the President's decision as well.

(2) Prime Minister nominee Mikhail Fradkov on his plans to streamline government, ITAR-TASS, 2 Mar 04 via Johnson's Russia List (JRL), #8097, 3 mar 04.

(3) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 19 Jun 03; What the Papers Say (WPS) via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) Kommersant, 26 May 99; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.

(5) The Moscow Times, 2 Mar 04 via JRL, #8095, 2 Mar 04.

(6) Agence France Presse, 2 Mar 04 via JRL, #8097, 3 Mar 04.

(7) RIA-Novosti, 1 Mar 04 via JRL, #8095, 2 Mar 04.

(8) The Moscow Times (moscowtimes.ru), 4 Mar 04.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Yandarbiyev killing: assassination or internecine murder?

A week after the Moscow Metro bombing, on February 13, former Chechen President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was killed in Doha, Qatar. According to news reports, Yandarbiyev was traveling home from a mosque, when his Toyota Land Cruiser blew up. Yandarbiyev died of his wounds in hospital, while his 13 year old son and two bodyguards were also killed in the blast. (1)

Yandarbiyev served as interim President of Chechnya between April 1996 and January 1997, when he resigned his post, having lost an election to Aslan Maskhadov. Subsequently, Yandarbiyev served as Maskhadov's personal envoy to "the Muslim states," and as "Ichkerian representative to Afghanistan." (2) He had long been suspected of fund-raising activities for Chechen separatists by Russian Security Services, and he was, at the time of his death, high on Russia's most wanted, as well as international fugitive lists, charged with membership in an "illegal armed formation," and the attempted murder of law-enforcement officials. (3)

In the two weeks since his death, several theories as to who killed Yandarbiyev and why have been aired. Not surprisingly, the prime suspects in the 'who killed Yandarbiyev?' debate are the Russian Security Services.

Aleksandr Litvinenko, a former FSB Colonel living in London, has said that he has "no doubt" that Yandarbiyev was killed by Russian Special Services. (4) But as always, Litvinenko's utterances must be viewed with some suspicion. A more realistic picture of whether Yandarbiyev was indeed killed in a "wet" operation can best be ascertained by analyzing events in Qatar and Moscow since 13 February.

First, in Moscow, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, called the allegations of an assassination "rumors spread by the authorities of Qatar." (5) The FSB's PR Center released a statement saying that the FSB had no involvement in the incident, and therefore had "nothing to say on the matter." (6) Similarly, the SVR, through its spokesman, Boris Labusov, stated that "I'm not going to say anything new. Ivanov offered an exhaustive commentary." (7) Labusov added that the SVR "has not taken part in such actions since 1959." (8) Several Secret Service veterans, including Leonid Shebarshin (head of SVR between 1989-1991), Oleg Nechinporenko, and Mikhail Lyubimov, have also spoken out, stating in an interview with Novye Izvestia, that "it doesn't look like a secret service operation." (9) Whether these statements constitute standard denials or the truth, the fact remains that three Russian "intelligence officers" were arrested at Dubai airport in the United Arab Emirates, while trying to board a flight to Russia. According to Kommersant, the three men boarded a ship departing for the Emirates shortly after the blast. The officers were brought back to Qatar on 18 February, where one of the men was released because he held a diplomatic passport. (10) More importantly, the two still being held were carrying service, not diplomatic passports, and Foreign Minister Ivanov has admitted that the men were in Qatar on a mission to "collect and analyze information relating to fighting international terrorism," and that Yandarbiyev was being investigated at the time of his death. (11)

At this point in time, the Yemeni government has stated that the two officers will receive an "open trial," (12) but has thus far refused Russian diplomats access to the two men. According to ITAR-TASS, the Russian ambassador's requests to meet with the men have been met with constant "refusals." Ivanov has also spoken out on this matter, maintaining that the Yemenis ignored "all the elementary norms of international relations" in arresting men who had been carrying out their duties "without violating local law." (13) Ivanov filed a formal protest with Yemen's ambassador to Moscow on 26 February, and there has been no change in the detainees' status since then.

The second theory that has been aired with regard to Yandarbiyev's death is that he was killed as part of an internecine quarrel between rival Chechen gangs. Rudnik Dudayev, Secretary of the Security Council of Chechnya, has stated that it is his belief that Yandarbiyev was killed in connection with "financial disputes:" apparently, several years ago, Yandarbiyev pocketed resources that were earmarked for Basayev's and Doku Umarov's rebel groups in Chechnya. (14) There is a considerable Chechen exile community in Qatar, and it is entirely possible, according to Nikolai Kovalev, former FSB Director and current Chairman of the Duma's Veteran's Affairs Committee, that Yandarbiyev was targeted by one of them for the aforementioned reasons. (15)

A third theory, which at this point has been given little credence or discussion is that the Security Services did not kill Yandarbiyev themselves, but rather facilitated the killing. It is interesting to note that the two remaining detainees have not been charged with murder by Yemeni authorities. Instead, the men are charged with complicity in the act, and with using their "operative and diplomatic" capabilities to help the killers across the border, and provide them with the "necessary documents, transport and accommodation." (16)

But which is the most likely theory? As usual, the question must be asked: who benefits? In this case, it is difficult to see how the Chechen cause would benefit from Yandarbiyev's death. On the other hand, there might be a great deal to gain politically from Yandarbiyev's death, in the approach to this month's Presidential elections. As mentioned previously, Yandarbiyev ranked high on Russia's most wanted list, and he was hiding in many senses, in plain sight. It is possible that the arrest in Qatar of Russian Security Service officers constitutes a major failed 'extraction' operation. Rossiiskie Vesti remarked on 24 February that Yandarbiyev's death would "facilitate a reduction in the ability of Chechnya's irreconcilable separatists to receive funding from abroad." (17) It would seem to be no coincidence that someone viewed as playing "nearly as important a role in

the Chechen resistance as Maskhadov or Basayev" (18) was killed so close to the date of the elections in Russia.

Source Notes:

- (1) WPS, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (2) WPS, 24 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) BBC Monitoring, 26 Feb 04, Ekho Moskvyy Radio via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (5) WPS, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Agence-France-Presse, 13 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (9) WPS, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (10) Kommersant, 27 Feb 04; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (11) Izvestia Press Digest, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (12) RIA Oreanda-Economic and Polit Press Review, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (13) Izvestia Press Digest, 27 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (14)) Rossiiskie Vesti, "The Strange Death of a former President of Chechnya', 18 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (15) WPS, 24 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (16) Izvestia Press Digest, 28 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (17) Rossiiskie Vesti, "The Strange Death of a former President of Chechnya', 18 Feb 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (18) Kommersant, 27 Feb 04; Izvestia Press Digest via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Scott Dullea

Russian-E.U. relations get chilly over extension of agreement to new members

A debate over the European Union's (E.U.) enlargement is cooling its relations with Russia. As the 1 May 04 deadline approaches for Russia to ratify the extension of the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA), thus extending all the terms of its agreements on Russian-E.U. relations to the ten new members, Moscow appears committed to set certain conditions on the future of those relations. So far however, the E.U. is resisting any changes.

In early February, ITAR-TASS reported that the Russian Foreign Ministry (MFA) had submitted a list of 14 "unresolved issues" to the E.U., which Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov described as being connected to a compromise over Russia's signing the PCA. (1) A February 4 RFE/RL report described the list as "at best, tenuously linked to enlargement." It includes issues concerning: anti-dumping measures, cuts in farm exports subsidies, exemption of new member states from certain E.U. regulated limitations (e.g., on aircraft noise and energy import ceilings), concessions from Lithuania on Kaliningrad, lifting of visa regimes on Russian citizens in the new member countries and concerns over the welfare of ethnic Russians in the some of new member countries. (2) Russia has also identified among its concerns: compensation for the €300million loss it expects to incur as a result of E.U. enlargement, E.U. acceptance of fighting in Chechnya as related to the global war on terrorism and the creation of a joint body within the E.U. similar to its presence at NATO that would give it more say in E.U. discussions.

The E.U., however, does not see the extension of the PCA as negotiable. The E.U. Council stated that Russia's ratifying the extension of the PCA before the 1 May deadline would "avoid serious consequences." The Russian side

immediately interpreted this as a threat of sanctions against Russia. Further countering the Russian list of issues, which E.U. officials and the Western press refer to as "the 14 Russian demands," the Irish ambassador, Justin Harman, (Ireland currently holds the presidency of the E.U.) forwarded a note to Moscow reminding the Kremlin of the four common areas of cooperation between the E.U. and Russia as agreed to at the Russia-E.U. summit in St. Petersburg in May 2003: The economy; freedom, justice and security; external security; and education, culture and research. The note then addressed the E.U.'s disappointment in Russia's lack of progress in some of these areas, specifically identifying some of the E.U.'s questions over the lack of a ratified border agreement with the Baltic states, the E.U.'s desire for Russian approval to send humanitarian aid to the northern Caucasus, Russian ratification of the Kyoto protocol, Russian closure of old nuclear reactors, and others issues.

Russian officials rejected what they call the E.U. "ultimatum." European Integration expert, as Interfax described Sergei Markov, suggested that Moscow stop dealing with the E.U. "bureaucrats" and negotiate directly with the European countries' leaders themselves. (3)

Ambassador Harman, in a 24 February Ekho Moskvy radio interview, denied that the E.U. is threatening Russia with sanctions and announced that Igor Ivanov will be meeting with E.U. officials in Ireland soon to discuss the legality behind the extension of the PCA as well as "what answers the E.U. can provide Russia over the issues that concern it." (4) Harman's statements, however, indicated that the E.U. was not considering any changes in the agreement's terms in order to get Moscow to sign it.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov may have attempted to break the ice when he declared on 26 February that he had no doubt Russia would extend the PCA to the new members...after Russian problems were resolved or their resolutions mapped out. Additionally, he contradicted earlier Russian

indignation over E.U. actions by saying that he was unaware of any "official" E.U. statements threatening sanctions. (5)

Neither the E.U. nor Russia appears willing to accept a deadlock over the agreement, considering their mutual economic, political and security importance. This means that some imaginative diplomacy will be required over the next two months. A first step in this direction may be evident in Russian President Vladimir Putin's nomination of his former envoy to the E.U., Mikhail Fradkov, as his new Prime Minister.

Moscow-Washington: The suspicious alliance?

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov submitted an editorial to the Washington Post on 6 February regarding the state of U.S.-Russian relations; the Post, however, did not publish the article, citing "a conflict with 'editorial policy.'" (6) In the article, Ivanov claims that the joint orders from President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the September 2003 Camp David Summit to "promote cooperation in a broad range of areas" have been carried out. (7) Indeed, evidence to back this claim up is not difficult to find. Examples of U.S.-Russian cooperation abound – in space, in non-proliferation efforts, in trade, through cooperation within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Russia relationship, and in the global war against terrorism.

At the same time however, there is an adversarial dialogue between the two states more reminiscent of the Cold War. On 12 February, speaking at a conference in Munich, Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov voiced Moscow's objection to the Baltic states' joining NATO without first signing the CFE Treaty. He likewise expressed disapproval of the possibility of the U.S. establishing military bases in Poland or in the Baltic republics. As useful corroborating evidence for Defense Minister Ivanov, the Associated Press just reported that U.S. "military experts" were visiting Poland, Romania and Bulgaria to evaluate sites as potential future military bases. (8)

Sergei Ivanov hinted that if the Baltic states were in NATO but did not sign the CFE Treaty, then Russia would consider abandoning the treaty as it would mean the treaty was "cut off from reality." (9) He also stated that NATO troops in the Baltic states might be countered by the deployment of Russian forces to the Kaliningrad enclave. To prevent such a possibility, Ivanov proposed Russia be allowed to send observers to the region to confirm that NATO was not establishing such bases.

More suspicion from Moscow was voiced by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov who told Duma deputies that he was not sure that the U.S. program to build a global missile defense shield was not targeted against Russia and pledged, therefore, to "keep a careful eye on the implementation of the plans to create a strategic ABM so that they do not damage our security." (10)

An even more graphic depiction of how Moscow possibly perceives NATO's activity was painted by Mikhail Margelov, the chairman of the Russian Federation Council international affairs committee. Speaking at an international conference in Berlin on 23 February, Margelov said, "Russia is being outflanked from the south east in Central Asia with [NATO's] Partnership for Peace [program], which is being transformed into a military cooperation program. As for the Baltic states' joining NATO, it is a go at Russia's north west, which also strengthens the anti-Russian make up of the alliance along with the mood of the [political] elite in these countries. (...) NATO is actively making advances to Georgia and Azerbaijan on the southern borders of Russia and at the same time it is setting up 'special relations' with Ukraine [to Russia's] south-west." (11) He did, however, conclude with assurances that Moscow had no intention of ending its partnership with NATO or of abandoning the CFE Treaty.

The numerous examples of U.S.-Russian cooperation, particularly in the framework of the acclaimed alliance against terrorism, temper the recent rhetoric

of suspicion from Russian officials which could be seen as an attempt to make the relationship more adversarial. Why does Moscow need to make all this "noise," as independent Russian analyst Pavel Felgenhauer described Sergei Ivanov's CFE-related comments? (12) While there is still time for Russia to maneuver to counter U.S. and NATO presence and activities elsewhere in its near-abroad (i.e., the Caucasus and Central Asia), it is the eleventh hour for complaints about NATO plans in the Baltic republics. Moreover, the Kremlin's depiction of these actions of NATO and the U.S. as suspicious and disquieting, gives it the opportunity to further claim that such "threats" warrant and even justify its own military presence in Georgia and Moldova.

Moscow chooses Japan over China in pipeline project options

It appears Moscow may have finally made a decision about which oil pipeline project it prefers for exporting its Far East crude oil. After nearly a year of debating which option was more beneficial, the Russian Minister of Energy, Igor Yusufov, made statements indicating that Moscow has selected the Angarsk-Nakhodka pipeline plan over the Angarsk-Daging version. The latter would provide China with approximately 30 million tons of Russian crude oil annually, while the former is expected to provide 50 million tons per year primarily to Japan. It would also provide crude oil exports to other Pacific customers such as the U.S., South Korea and Singapore.

Despite statements by the Kremlin officials that the Angarsk-Daging and Angarsk-Nakhodka projects were not mutually exclusive, the Chinese and Japanese sides were, nonetheless, competing for the selection of their respective preferences. As early as October 2003, press reports began indicating that Moscow was leaning more towards the Japanese option. As Moscow maintained that such a decision would be based on its own interests, it is likely that Japan's proposals to invest \$7 billion into the project tipped the scales. Indeed, Yusufov stated that the decision that had been based purely on economic terms.

Whether China accepts that or sees it rather as a political decision remains to be seen. Beijing has no doubt taken notice of the improved state of relations between Moscow and Tokyo of late. This month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov talked up those relations stating that they were in a "process of rapprochement" and that "'the future of the Asia-Pacific community and the direction of its further development' largely depend on [Russia and Japan]." (13) Moreover, the pipeline is likely to strengthen ties in general with the countries the pipeline services, further alienating China. Just to be safe, on the same day as Yufusov's "announcement," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Saltanov met with the Chinese ambassador to Moscow, Liu Guchang, and assured him that Moscow's "one-China" policy towards Taiwan remains unchanged.

China and Russia share many ties, including military cooperation, participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), arms sales and technology transfer agreements, as well as the common interests of stability on the Korean peninsula and countering U.S. influence in Asia. Thus, Russia's choosing Japan over China in the pipeline project is unlikely to create any unbridgeable rifts. In any event, Beijing has not given up hope yet; an official with the China National Petroleum Corp (the Chinese company backing the Chinese pipeline option) was quoted as saying this decision was not the Kremlin's final one and that there was still room for Beijing to lobby Moscow for the Angarsk-Daging version of the pipeline. (14)

Source Notes:

- (1) 4 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0204 via World News Connection.
- (2) RFE/RL, 4 Feb 04 via Johnson's Russia List (JRL) #8047, 4 Feb 04.
- (3) 24 Feb 04 via JRL #8083, 24 Feb 04.
- (4) 24 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

- (5) RIA, 26 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (6) KOMMERSANT, 13 Feb 04; What the Papers Say (WPS) via JRL #8065, 13 Feb 04.
- (7) KOMMERSANT, 13 Feb 04; WPS via JRL #8065, 13 Feb 04.
- (8) 9 Feb 04 via JRL #8057, 10 Feb 04.
- (9) RFE/RL, 9 Feb 04; JRL #8057, 10 Feb 04.
- (10) ITAR-TASS, 12 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (11) RIA, 23 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (12) (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2004/02/10/014.html>).
- (13) ITAR-TASS, 11 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (14) SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 25 Feb 04 via JRL #8084, 25 Feb 04.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

ELECTIONS

When 1 + 1 equals a lot more than 2

Despite the recently reported demographic drop, Russia has enjoyed a surge of new voters. According to data from the Central Election Commission (CEC), the number of voters has increased by about 400,000 in the past few months; this was on top of a huge gain of almost two million new voters who appeared inexplicably on the rolls in the first half of 2003. While the chief of the State Statistics Committee's census and demography department, Irina Zbarskaya, suggested that the increase might be attributable to the coming of age of the generation born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, some reporters are skeptical, given that estimates of those individuals generally approach 300,000 – nowhere

near the millions listed. The same reporters note that the number of individuals who obtained Russian citizenship in the past year ran into the thousands. (1)

While the data reportedly come from the federation components, at least one election commission chair could not clear up the confusing and remarkable increase. The chairman of the Kaliningrad Oblast' Electoral Commission said that the number of voters in his region had fallen by 3,000 between December and January. (2) He did not comment as to whether there was any rise before then, say in time for the parliamentary elections.

Candidates may begin running from race

Aleksandr Veshnyakov, Chairman of the CEC, seems to be confused as to where he stands on the handling of the presidential elections. On the one hand, he said he was alarmed at the possibility of biased media coverage during the campaign as had been seen during the Duma campaign. (3) Yet, the CEC refuses to act on complaints of similar blatant support of President Putin by state-run media. Veshnyakov said coverage only can be regarded as canvassing when deliberate intent can be proved. The CEC ruled that complaints launched by candidates Irina Khakamada and Nikolai Kharitonov claiming slanted coverage cannot be proved, despite the state-run media's undeniable focus on the president (broadcasting Putin's address to his campaign staff in its entirety, for example, while ignoring the existence of other candidates). (4)

The absence of even an official reprimand has resulted in the coverage remaining unchecked, if not unnoticed. One Moscow newspaper's monitoring during the first two weeks of the campaign showed that "state-controlled television channels have given President Vladimir Putin – the undisputed pre-election favorite – widespread, favorable coverage at the top of primetime newscasts. Meanwhile, his six opponents have received paltry, often unfavorable coverage." Indeed, Oleg Panfilov, director of the Center for Journalism in

Extreme Situations, said he had gained the impression that Putin was the only candidate in the race. (5)

Not surprisingly, the candidates challenging Putin have begun to decry their unequal treatment in the media. What is surprising is that they may be using the obvious media bias, which most expected even before the official campaign began, as an excuse to pull out of the contest now.

On 24 February, Khakamada said she might drop out of the race which, she said, "is increasingly developing features of lawlessness and falsehood. In this situation, the competition of ideas and alternatives is becoming impossible." She called on other candidates to follow her example. She later explained that she would leave the race if other candidates agreed to do so as well. (6)

At least one of the other candidates has given the notion serious consideration, prodded, perhaps, by campaign workers. Yana Dubeykovskaya, Sergei Glazyev's campaign manager, recommended that he drop out of the race, on the belief that "it is impossible to run a campaign in conditions of a total news blackout." (7) "Our activists are being summoned by various authorities, by plenipotentiaries, and are being asked not to carry on with their duties. Attempts are being made here to strike a sort of political bargain locally. That's the first thing," she said. "Second, the CEC decided to consider the coverage of Putin's speech and conference with his activists to be within the law, that he was within his right. These were the last straws, so to speak." (8)

Even Ivan Rybkin reported that he may take Khakamada's advice, (9) despite having assured the media, during his dramatic press conference in London on 12 February, that he "will not withdraw" from the presidential race. (10)

And yet, despite the cries of "foul," no one actually has withdrawn from the race which, one must note, they entered fully expecting such treatment. So in a way, it

is difficult to take their outrage seriously, simply because they should have expected it. And perhaps, that's the most outrageous aspect of all.

REGIONS

When 1 + 1 equals a lot less than 2

Somebody in Kalmykia sorely needs a session of remedial math. While everyone seems to agree that there was a demonstration in the capital, Elista, to protest the results of the December 2003 Duma election and the continued presence of Kalmyk President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, there is some debate about how many persons were involved. According to spokesman Vladimir Bambayev, more than 200 representatives of the Party of Peace and Unity, YABLOKO and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation gathered to demand Ilyumzhinov's resignation and an investigation into the Duma election results. "Our protest is the logical continuation of the rally of many days that was held outside the government house in December," Bambayev said. "We have been waiting for the answer to the questions that were then raised during the meeting with the Russian president's envoy for the Southern Federal district Viktor Kazantsev, but no answer was forthcoming," he added. (11)

According to the deputy presidential envoy, Sergey Yepifantsev, protestors numbered no more than a couple of dozen. Those protesters, he said, constituted "the radical minority wing of the opposition." (12)

Whatever the number of protesters in February, it represents a substantial decrease from the reported 1,000 persons who hit the streets for a three-day demonstration in December. At that time, protesters were assured by Kazantsev that two commissions would be established to investigate reported falsifications during the election and to investigate alleged unconstitutional activity by Ilyumzhinov, and that results would be announced by 10 February. (13)

JUSTICE

Criminal (in)justice viewed

Despite much talk of reform last year, the U.S. Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2003 has noted that Russian prison conditions "continued to be extremely harsh and frequently life-threatening." (14) The danger is not limited to those convicted of crimes, either. Last month in Stavropol Territory, a detective of Yessentuki city interior department was sentenced to two years imprisonment for using torture as an interrogation tool. A week earlier four Stavropol traffic officers were sentenced to four years in prison for using torture during interrogations. (15) Apparently, this behavior is neither rare nor regional. The State Department cited "credible reports that law enforcement personnel frequently engaged in torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment and often did so with impunity. (...) Prisoners' rights groups, as well as other human rights groups, documented numerous cases in which law enforcement and correctional officials tortured and beat detainees and suspects. Human rights groups described the practice of such abuse as widespread. Numerous press reports indicated that the police frequently beat persons with little or no provocation or used excessive force to subdue detainees." (16)

POLITICAL PARTIES

Motherland's not-so-happy family

The split in the Russian Regions Party now is official: Last month, Sergei Glazyev stepped down as co-chairman of the party, leaving Dmitri Rogozin as sole leader. That may not have been enough of a break for some individuals: During the party congress in mid-February to resolve the dispute between the co-chairmen that erupted over which candidate the party would support, Glazyev or Putin, a proposal was made to release Glazyev from his duties and to kick him out of the party. (17) One could say that is resolution of a sort. However, both political leaders have spent time declaring alternately that their association is finished and that this shouldn't affect how the faction they originally had cobbled together will work in the Duma – often in the same breath. One wonders how the

rank-and-file are reacting to this amazing display of petty infighting among their leadership.

At the congress, Rogozin said he plans to turn the party into a political force backing the president. He also said his party would win the majority of seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections, an amazingly optimistic forecast given that the Motherland (Rodina) bloc, which the Russian Regions Party had created, comprised nearly 30 parties and managed to obtain only 9.02 percent in last December's polling. (18)

Rogozin and his backers have sought to change the name of the party to the Motherland political party, while Glazyev had declared his intention to set up a Motherland party on the basis of the election bloc. That difference alone was enough to spur on the public conflict between the two leaders. Glazyev and his supporters called upon the Ministry of Justice not to register the Rogozin-led Motherland party. Rogozin said he is against "continuing all these feuds," but then proceeded to announce that he would not "pronounce the name 'Glazyev' from now on." (19)

Rogozin won this round; the Justice Ministry reportedly changed the name of the Russian Regions Party to the Motherland party in registration documents. (20) Glazyev termed the name change "a treacherous stab in the back" by one of the parties comprising the Motherland bloc; he subsequently said he hoped this would not affect the faction's unity. (21)

SOURCE NOTES:

(1) Rossiyskaya gazeta, 11 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0211 via World News Connection.

(2) Ibid.

- (3) ITAR-TASS, 1043 GMT, 13 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0213 via World News Connection.
- (4) ITAR-TASS, 0934 GMT, 20 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.
- (5) The Moscow Times, 27 Feb 04 via
(www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2004/02/27/011.html).
- (6) gazeta.ru, 24 Feb 04 via JRL (JRL) #8082, 24 Feb 04; and Ekho Moskvyy, 1106 GMT, 24 Feb 04 via BBC Monitoring, JRL #8084, 25 Feb 04.
- (7) ITAR-TASS, 1029 GMT, 24 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0224 via World News Connection.
- (8) Ekho Moskvyy, 1400 GMT, 23 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via JRL #8081, 24 Feb 04.
- (9) gazeta.ru, 24 Feb 04; via JRL #8082, 24 Feb 04.
- (10) ITAR-TASS, 1452 GMT, 12 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0212 via World News Connection.
- (11) ITAR-TASS, 1603 GMT, 24 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0224 via World News Connection.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 1603 GMT, 24 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0224 via World News Connection.
- (13) Noviye izvestia, 11 Dec 03; Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 7 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (14) (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27861.htm>).
- (15) ITAR-TASS, 0903 GMT, 14 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0214 via World News Connection.
- (16) (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27861.htm>).
- (17) ITAR-TASS, 1317 GMT, 15 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0215 via World News Connection.
- (18) ITAR-TASS, 1122 GMT, 19 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1219 via World News Connection.
- (19) ITAR-TASS, 1413 GMT, 17 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0217 via World News Connection.

(20) ITAR-TASS, 1606 GMT, 19 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0219 via World News Connection.

(21) ITAR-TASS, 1906 GMT, 19 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0219 via World News Connection.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Kris Beasley and Paul Lyons

"In"-Security 2004

Russia's largest military exercise in twenty years ended with a bang last week. Make that several bangs, some good, some bad. The exercise, previously referred to by the Russian media as "Global Shield" (1) but now officially designated "Security 2004" by the Russian General Staff (2), included two successful launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), the successful orbiting of a military satellite, about 20 long-range bomber sorties and, in the conventional forces, the redeployment of several "permanent readiness" Army units from one end of Russia to the other for training with Air Force aircraft. But the good news was overshadowed by the dramatic launch failures by two Northern Fleet missile submarines. (3) President Vladimir Putin, observed both the fleet exercises and ICBM and satellite launches in person and said at a news conference at Plesetsk, "There are pluses and minuses in the current exercises. The minuses will be identified and we will draw conclusions [about what needs to be done to fix the problems]." (4)

So what went well and what went poorly? In a post-exercise briefing on 20 Feb 04, First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, Colonel-General Yuri Baluyevskiy, handed out the scorecard. First, just to make sure they weren't completely forgotten, he reminded journalists that two of the newly labeled "permanent readiness" Army units conducted rail-borne deployment and field firing exercises. One unit from the Siberian Military District (MD) deployed to a

live-fire training area in the Moscow MD and conducted joint training with Air Force fighters and fighter-bombers, while a similar unit from the Volga-Urals MD took a much shorter train trip to the North Caucasus region and back, but didn't conduct live fire training, probably due to lack of funds or a suitable training ground. (5)

However, there was never any doubt that the main goal of the exercise was to display the strategic nuclear forces of the Russian Federation. In fact, the exercise was labeled as a "strategic command and staff drill" and the vast majority of the exercise revolved around strategic forces. During the exercise, Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers conducted about 20 sorties simulating their nuclear delivery flight plans, capped by the launching of several unarmed, but nuclear-capable, air-launched cruise missiles in Arctic test areas. (6)

On 17 Feb 04, the Russian Navy stepped up to bat. With President Putin on a day cruise aboard the sub "Arkhangelsk" to observe the action, the newest fleet ballistic missile submarine in the Navy, the Project 667BDRM (Delta IV) class boat "Novomoskovsk" conducted launch drills to fire off two of its 16 RSM-54 "Sineva" (SS-N-23) sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). But neither missile ever left the launch tube. The Russian media immediately labeled the event a failure and it was many hours later that Navy Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov announced that the "Novomoskovsk" launches were "simulated" or "notional." He said, "A notional launch is when the entire chain of preparations for launch takes place and there is a notional electronic launch of the missile without its emerging from the tube." (7) However, the military press releases prior to the exercise had stated these were to be live launches, so most Russian analysts believe these were intended to be actual launches. In fact, both Izvestiya and Kommersant, quoting their own sources at Northern Fleet headquarters, reported that Captain First Rank Rachuk, the sub's skipper, discovered a failure of the weapon control system during pre-launch preparations. These sources pointed out that this was the first attempt to conduct

a launch in many years without a technical expert from the missile design bureau on board. (8) President Putin, leaving the Navy high and dry, said nothing and simply departed his submarine ride after exchanging a picture of the Kremlin for a model of the "Arkhangelsk." Like a man trying to see all the spectacular rides at the county fair, he made his way to the Plesetsk ICBM and space launch base a couple of hundred kilometers south for the next day's activities. (9)

The Russian military planned a spectacular end to the strategic portion of the exercise on 18 Feb 04, involving four launches in less than three and a half hours. First up, at 10:05 Moscow Time, was the launch of a Molniya-M space launch vehicle from Plesetsk, which put a Molniya-1T military communications satellite into its normal elongated polar orbit, which enables it to spend about 20 of every 24 hours in view of the northern latitudes. In such an orbit, its primary use is to communicate between the national leadership and the strategic forces, especially bombers and submarines. Less than two hours later, at noon Moscow Time, a liquid-fueled RS-18 (SS-19 "Stiletto") ICBM with six independently targetable re-entry vehicles was launched from a test silo at Baikonur, Kazakhstan to the Kura test range in Kamchatka. This 69th launch of the RS-18 was successful, and combined with other engineering tests, enabled the Strategic Missile Force (RVSN) to extend its service life date to 2015. Shortly after that, the Northern Fleet was given a second go, using the same type of equipment used on 17 Feb. At 12:30, the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) "Karelia" punched a RSM-54 (SS-N-23) missile towards Kamchatka, leaving no doubt it was to be a live, not "notional" firing. Unfortunately, the missile suffered a catastrophic failure 98 seconds after lift-off, at the moment the first and second stages separate. Since this was a test and training launch, the missile was unarmed and had a self-destruct package aboard, which properly activated when the SLBM went off-course, spectacularly destroying the missile. But the show must go on, and the last of the day's loud and flashy events occurred at 13:28 Moscow Time when the pride of the RSVN,

a new solid-fueled Topol-M ICBM lifted off from its road-mobile launcher near Plesetsk and accurately made its way to Kura range. (10)

The reverberations of the blast from the SLBM-sized Roman candle had only begun to fade when the political reverberations began. Immediately, commissions were set up to examine both failures (the notional launch on 17 Feb and the self-destruction on 18 Feb), the FSB moved in "to secure the files" at Northern Fleet and both the design bureau and the manufacturing plant began to point fingers at each other and the "poorly-trained" sailors. (11) President Putin, having watched the two Plesetsk launches, once again chose to say little about the Navy failure. Obviously pleased by his two day pre-election jaunt, when he got to appear on state-run TV in two different military uniforms (Navy and camouflaged), he chose to announce that one of the ICBM launches was in fact a test of a new, maneuvering re-entry vehicle, which he said no other country in the world had. (12) But, in a fairly disingenuous statement, Putin said, "The development of new arms is not directed against the United States. We will do everything to ensure that our former adversaries become [note his verb-tense] partners and our partners become allies." (13)

Clearly, the real audiences for this exercise were the Russian voting population and the leadership of the numerous states that border Russia. The views of Russia's chief neo-imperialist, President Vladimir Putin, accurately reflect the wistful longing of both his people and his military for the days when the military weight, and especially the nuclear clout, of the Soviet Union gave it status as a world superpower. Led by Putin, Russia hoped this display of nuclear potential in 2004 would enable Russia to regain, in the eyes of the world, her former status. Naturally, Putin hopes to reap the benefit domestically in election winning votes next month, and externally, by leveraging an aging, rusting nuclear cudgel into real economic and political authority around the world. But exercise "Security 2004" only revealed the continuing, albeit lessening, insecurity of the Russian Federation.

Source Notes:

(1) See the last two editions of "NIS Observed" (18 Feb 04 and 4 Feb 04, Armed Forces section) for the author's previous discussions on the design and probable execution of this exercise.

(2) ITAR-TASS, 1351 GMT 18 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0218 via World News Connection.

(3) IZVESTIYA, 20 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection; ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.

(4) IZVESTIYA, 20 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.

(5) ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection; NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 20 Feb 04 via JRL #8076, 20 Feb 04.

(6) ITAR-TASS, 19 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0219 via World News Connection.

(7) IZVESTIYA, 20 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.

(8) Ibid; KOMMERSANT, 19 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via JRL #8079, 23 Feb 04.

(9) MOSCOW AGENTSTVO VOYENNYKH NOVOSTEY, 17 Feb 04; FBIS-LAT-2004-0218 via World News Connection.

(10) ITAR-TASS, 1351 GMT, 18 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0218 via World News Connection; ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.

(11) KOMMERSANT, 19 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via JRL #8079, 23 Feb 04.

(12) ITAR-TASS, 1456 GMT, 18 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0218 via World News Connection.

(13) IZVESTIYA, 20 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.

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NAVY

Golden eye

While developments in Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Haiti and Libya have understandably dominated center stage recently, events such as Russia's large-scale strategic exercise and its attempts to increase its influence within both the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States is creating friction in the U.S.-Russian partnership. Additionally, recent flights of NATO AWACS reconnaissance planes in the vicinity of Russia's military and strategic command-staff exercise has met with strong disapproval – and is fueling the budding impasse among Russia, the United States and NATO over issues concerning the CIS and the Baltic.

It is no wonder that "Russian ties with the CIS – viewed by Russia as a region of 'special interest' and within Russia's traditional sphere of influence – have long been a prime concern in Russia's foreign policy [and that] Russia hopes a CIS with strong links to Russia will curb U.S. and NATO influences in the region." (1) Judging from the pervasive diplomatic efforts undertaken by President Putin, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov across the CIS and the Baltic States since 1999, it is clear that Russia's resurgent imperialism is anchored first and foremost in its neighborhood and former strongholds. Recently, Vice Admiral Lowell Jacoby, during testimony to the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, opined that "by increasing its defense spending, Moscow is aiming to regain the status of a world power." (2) CIA Director George Tenet reiterated the growing U.S. concern over President Putin's centralization of power and the fact that "Moscow has become more coercive with regards to its neighbors" (3) during similar testimony. Regardless of the debate concerning the specific mission(s) of the AWACS flights during 23 and 24 February, prudence prevails. The AWACS presence may offer a prescription to a growing malady in the region – specifically to Russian flexing of its military muscle in advance of the Baltic states' entry into NATO in April.

The AWACS flights themselves were not conducted in Russian airspace, and therefore a Russian representative was not allowed to observe the flights. The Foreign Ministry's official statement conveys Russian anger however, claiming that the AWACS episode "annoys Russia because it contravenes the agreement on mutual relations and cooperation between Russia and NATO." (4) It is pertinent to note that Russia has petitioned NATO for access to NATO's facilities and bases within the CIS (and in the future, the Baltic) but that request has not been granted and is unlikely to gain any traction. That said, NATO Early Warning and Control Force Commander, Major General Harry Winterberger, stipulated to ITAR-TASS that Russia was told "about the flight details and route in advance [adding] that the flight aimed to show Latvian partners what machinery NATO had." (5)

This explanation mimics the Lithuanian position that the show flight of the E-3 AWACS was vital to integrating Lithuania into the fabric of the NATO air defense system and attaining a technical understanding of NATO's air capabilities. Reaction from the Russian military was commensurate with that of the Foreign Ministry. "Russian air force command is troubled by the flights. The flights of an AWACS aircraft in the airspace of Latvia and Lithuania will permit deep air reconnaissance in the northwestern part of Russia and Belarus, which can not help arousing concern." (6)

The expansion of the NATO alliance may strain diplomatic efforts between the U.S. and Russia as interests and status clash over the former Eastern bloc and Soviet countries. Finally however, these disagreements are viewed more candidly, and with an eye on respect for sovereignty, as well as simply concern for Russia's wounded sense of empire.

The nuclear triad

The recent failures of three RSM-54 missiles from the nuclear submarines K-406 Novomoskovsk and the Karelia during the Security 2004 strategic command-staff

exercises have broad implications. More so than determining the technical cause of the misfires, the failures themselves question the viability of the Navy's role in Russia's nuclear triad – and its ability to uphold its charter as curator to one third of the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The recent debacle in the Navy's Northern Fleet follows less than a year on the heels of the K-159 incident and recalls the recent Kursk tragedy. Against that backdrop, the Northern Fleet lacks the requisite leadership to transcend its mistakes and chart a new course consistent with its obligations and expectations. The dismissal of successive Northern Fleet Commanders Admiral Popov and Admiral Suchkov, following the Kursk and K-159 tragedies, fails to inspire confidence or to instill a sense of preparedness in the fleet. Yet, this recent failure falls on the watch of acting Northern Fleet Commander, Admiral Simonenko, who, it is safe to say, will not get the nod from President Putin to fill the position permanently.

Fleet Admiral Kuroyedov might not want to rest comfortably either. The missile firing debacles are the latest in a string of miscues during his tenure. Defaulting to the historic accountability norms within the Russian military, Admiral Kuroyedov actually posited that the "actual launches had never been planned." (7) Well, the Federal Security Service (FSB), which has been actively engaged in determining fault, will surely decipher the root cause of the failure during the course of its ongoing investigation.

Perhaps General Anatoli Kornukov, former Air Force Commander, has succinctly surmised the root cause before the FSB concludes its efforts. He states, "Russia's ballistic missile defense systems are in a pitiful state...we owe this state of affairs to under-funding, a lack of modernization of the systems, and optimization and reduction...in other words, the inability to launch missiles is not the worst problem of all. The inability to defend ourselves is." (8)

The concern expressed by Kornukov is conventional. Government, academics and former military elites echo similar concerns – the Navy’s combat readiness is incongruent with its obligations and responsibilities to the nuclear triad. The answer on how to remedy this situation rests not in the defense industry but within Moscow itself.

Source Notes:

- (1) XINHUA, 12 Feb 04; FBIS-CHI-2004-0212 via World News Connection.
- (2) KOMMERSANT, 26 Feb 04 via WPS – Defense and Security.
- (3) KOMMERSANT, 26 Feb 04 via WPS – Defense and Security.
- (4) AGENCY WPS, 27 Feb 04 via WPS – Defense and Security.
- (5) RIGA, 24 Feb 04 via BBC Worldwide Monitoring.
- (6) INTERFAX-AVN Military News Agency Web Site, 24 Feb 04; Baltic News Service.
- (7) KOMMERSANT, 27 Feb 04; WPS.
- (8) NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 19 Feb 04; What the Paper’s Say – Defense and Security.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

UKRAINE

Mental or criminal case?

On February 18, Valeri Kravchenko, a Ukrainian foreign intelligence service general and an adviser to the Ukrainian embassy in Berlin, walked into the Berlin studio of the Russian service of the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle and accused the Ukrainian authorities of authorizing spying on opposition leaders and high government officials.

In particular, Kravchenko stated that he was ordered by SBU (Ukrainian Security Service), in turn supported by the authorities, to spy on government members, "starting from ministers and higher up" and opposition leaders abroad, which he had refused to do. (1) He was ordered to look out for the individuals criticizing Ukraine and its present leadership and supporting the opposition. Borys Tarasyuk, a former foreign minister and now an opposition member, was one of the people to be watched. (2) In support of his claims, Kravchenko said he had the documentary evidence, which he was ready to pass to the Prosecutor-General's Office of Ukraine and the Human Rights Committee of the Ukrainian Supreme Council. Kravchenko said he had received personal threats after he had made his intentions clear.

There are, of course, those (especially within SBU) who dismiss Kravchenko's allegations and accuse him of everything from mental disorders to pursuing personal interests. According to Volodymyr Radchenko, a former SBU officer, Kravchenko has financial reasons for his actions, namely his desire to stay in Germany for one more year and earn additional income. (3) Kuchma completely dismissed Kravchenko's accusations, calling them "absolutely absurd." (4)

When analyzing the situation, two most likely scenarios come to mind. The first stems from the internal developments in SBU. Once the new leadership, Ihor Smeshko - SBU chief and Oleh Synyansky - the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate, was in place, approximately 40 percent of the leading staff was suspended. The staff had been in an uncertain position for four or five months, which had a demoralizing effect on people and provoked many protests from within the special service's staff. (5) With the arrival of Smeshko and Synyansky, new rules and a new atmosphere have developed, forcing the employees to spend less time on their direct professional duties and dragging them more into domestic political games. Thus, Kravchenko's accusations could simply be a revenge on the new leadership.

The second possibility lacks any intrigues, accusation of mental insanity or pursuit of personal gains. It is quite possible that Kravchenko is simply an honest man, who refused to break the law and step over the moral boundaries and decided to expose the Ukrainian authorities of illegal activities. In 2001, Kuchma signed a law on intelligence agencies, according to which an intelligence officer has no right to interfere into the politics of Ukraine and especially in the activities of the opposition parties. (6) Kravchenko's accusations do not sound that wild in light of Kuchma's alleged involvement in the murder of a journalist Georgy Gondadze. Another former security officer, fugitive presidential guard Mykola Melnychenko, released wiretapped recordings in 2001, which revealed Kuchma's connection to Georgy Gandadze murder, provoking one of the biggest scandals in the history of independent Ukraine. Maybe Kravchenko is not deranged after all, but a person who has courage to stand up to corruption and lawlessness in the government, even if he stands alone.

BELARUS

Is the "Big Brother" instinct still alive?

After a period of arguments and threats, Russian gas giant Gazprom finally halted its supply of gas to Belarus on February 18. It promptly restored it on February 20, after Lukashenko's hysteria on Belarussian television and his concession to sign the deal on Russian terms. Currently, Belarus owes \$114 million in gas bills to Gazprom and \$40 million to alternative Russian gas suppliers Itera and Trans-nafta. (7) Gazprom has been supplying Belarus with natural gas at Russian domestic prices (\$29 per thousand cubic meters), which is almost twice as low as what Russia charges other former Soviet Union republics (approximately \$50) and almost four times less than the market price (\$110). Supplying gas at such low prices has been agreed in exchange for selling a controlling stake in Beltransgaz, which operates the Belrussian gas transport and distribution network. Russia never received a chance to participate in the tender.

Lukashenko called Russian actions "blackmail" and accused Moscow of freezing the Belarussians, when the outside temperature was below -20 degrees Celsius. Lukashenko passionately stated: "If Putin wants us to pay that money, let us take it from funding set aside to provide medication to Chernobyl survivors and war veterans. How could we fail to collect \$200 million? Let's collect it and solve this problem, so others will stop manipulating and blackmailing us."(8) This statement deserves at least two comments. First, in Lukashenko's view, "blackmail" is the Russian desire to buy a stake in Beltransgaz for less than its worth. Moscow offered \$600 million for a controlling stake in Beltransgaz, when Lukashenko wants \$5 billion for it – an estimate a little too high for a company which requires a modernization investment of approximately \$1 billion, has pitiful \$60 million in profits a year and is equipped with old pipelines valued at \$600 million. (9) When Gazprom proposed to hire independent consultants to evaluate the company, Beltransgaz refused.

As for taking money away from the social needs of the veterans and Chernobyl survivors, the president should be delighted to discover that he need not deprive these two groups of money, all he should do is simply stop stealing. Even though Belarus is paying \$29 per thousand cubic meters for Russian gas, it sells it to Belarussian consumers for \$48. (10) It is a mystery where the profit goes. This money has certainly not been added to the Belarussian social budget.

Despite the presidential hyperbole that accompanied this concession to Russia, Belarus and Moscow still manage to agree on terms that favor Belarus on many other issues, e.g., Russia offered Belarus a very low interest loan for gas payments, which is not likely to be repaid. So why, time and again, does Russia acquiesce to Lukashenko? Why does it still try to strike deals with him after he lied numerous times about the introduction of the Russian rubl', about paying for gas, about selling a stake at Beltransgaz? There are several possible explanations.

First, Russia is so eager to expand its "liberal empire" and acquire its neighbors' assets that it is willing to operate at a loss for years and jeopardizes relations with Europe: In the dispute with Belarus, when Russia turned off the gas supply, it also cut off Europe (which accounts for 17% of Russian gas) as Belarus is the conduit for the pipeline. The result of the action was harsh European criticism for Russia and tremendous financial losses for Gazprom).

More convincing however, is the argument that Belarus, as a reliable ally and buffer state between Europe and Russia is of immense security value. For sentimental reasons as well, Russia remains so attached to some of its former satellites that it is willing to sacrifice profits, which could in turn, be used to help its own populace. Sometimes it seems that not much has changed since the days of communism....

Source Notes:

(1) INTERFAX-UKRAINE NEWS AGENCY, 19 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(2) (www.korrespondent.net/main/89121), in Russian, 18 Feb 04.

(3) INTERFAX-UKRAINE NEWS AGENCY, 24 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) INTERFAX-UKRAINE NEWS AGENCY, 20 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(5) ZERKALO NEDELI, 21 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(6) Ibid.

(7) MOSKOVSKII KOMSOMOLETS, 20 Feb 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.

(8) BELARUSSIAN TELEVISION, 19 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(9) MOSKOVSKII KOMSOMOLETS, 20 Feb 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.

(10) Ibid.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

GEORGIA

Can Saakashvili Succeed Where Shevardnadze Failed?

While Mikheil Saakashvili's visit to Washington from 23-28 February was a success that secured the reinstating of IMF assistance in April and President Bush's praise for the Rose Revolution, (1) recent events indicate a warming of relations between Georgia and Russia as well.

Prior to his Washington visit, Saakashvili's previously harsh rhetoric regarding the Russian military presence in Georgia ameliorated to such a degree that, according to Saakashvili, the "Russian military bases in Georgia had no military importance for either country" (2) while "internal security" threats were the main concern of the Georgian defense apparatus. (3) Saakashvili's reference to domestic threats may have pertained to the apparent infiltration of Chechen rebels into Georgia's Pankisi Gorge as on 17 February, the Russian Federal Border Protection Service and the Georgian State Border Protection Service signed an agreement in Moscow jointly to patrol Georgia's border with Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. (4) Designs for further bilateral integration of the Georgian and Russia military institutions are definite as indicated by an announcement by Russian Embassy Press Spokesman Yevgeni Ivanov that both countries had discussed a range of possible venues of military cooperation, including the training of Georgian officers in Russian military academies. (5) Meanwhile, the Georgian Defense Minister Gela Bezhuashvili stated that the Georgian General Staff had started selecting candidates to be sent to Russia for training.

Saakashvili is attempting to mesh a solid commitment to and support of the US, [as demonstrated by his continuous support for Georgian integration into NATO (6)] with the various internal and external pressures facing Georgia. The

geopolitical realities of the US-Russian rivalry, the Georgian clan divisions, the country's rebellious republics as well as Georgia's crushing road to economic viability were too much for Shevardnadze. Only time will tell how Saakashvili fares where the older and far more experienced, statesman failed.

ADJARIA

The recent violence and tension between Aslan Abashidze's government and the Adjarian political opposition movement may threaten the potential for better relations between Tbilisi and Batumi. In an interview with the Russian newspaper Gazeta, Abashidze, following his recent contacts with Saakashvili, stated his support for stable, respectful relations between the two governments. (7) However, on 20 February, violence broke out in Batumi between the Adjarian opposition movement and supporters of Abashidze, (8) followed by attacks on the Christian Democratic Party on 21 February and Our Adjaria headquarters on 23 February. (9) Additionally, there are various reports of opposition leaders, such as the chief of the Batumi branch of the Christian Democratic Party Avtandil Darchia being kidnapped, beaten and threatened. (10) The tensions between the Adjarian opposition and the Batumi government spilled over into Tbilisi on 24 February when the arrest of two Adjarian students in Tbilisi for illegal weapons possession became the apparent cause of conflict between Georgian parliamentarians. (11) These events prompted an about-face in Adjarian rhetoric and on 23 February Adjaria Interior Minister Djemal Gogitidze accused "outside forces," (11) a clear reference to Saakashvili's government, of instigating the violence while on 25 February, Abashidze stated that Tbilisi was planning military action against Batumi. (12) Meanwhile, the special representative for PACE, Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer, who witnessed the violence between 20-23 February, is currently in Batumi to "clarify relations" between Adjarian and Georgian authorities, while also potentially mediating between Abashidze's government and the Adjarian opposition movement. (13)

AZERBAIJAN

You can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?

Ilham Aliev's recent overtures towards Moscow and Tehran have called into question the degree to which Ilham will remain loyal to the late father's foreign policy of balancing the competing interests of Russia and the United States in way that best serves Azerbaijan's interests.

Indeed, Ilham's interest in an expanded relationship with Russia, a dynamic shift from the steady Azeri policy for integration into NATO, was demonstrated in the immediate aftermath of the Azeri president's 6-8 February Moscow visit. At the conclusion of the talks, Putin and Aliev signed a declaration reaffirming a 1997 Friendship and Cooperation Treaty which stipulates that the two countries support "each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity." (14) During his Moscow visit, Aliev further assured Putin that no foreign troops would be permanently stationed in Azerbaijan, (15) a clear retreat from Aliev's position during his December meeting in Baku with U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, where the possible deployment of U.S. or NATO troops to provide security for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan was suggested. Indeed, in an interview given to the Russian daily Izvestiya, Aliev played down the possibility of Azerbaijan joining Western institutions and referred to NATO membership as "a matter of the future...on which discussion is premature." (16) Foreign troop deployment does not restrict bilateral military cooperation, though, and on 19 February, Azerbaijan and Moscow signed an agreement by which Russia will supply Azerbaijan with military parts and host Azerbaijani officers in Russian military academies. (17) In addition to closer military ties with Russia, Azerbaijan has reportedly been considering, although made no official decision as of yet, an Iranian proposal for both bilateral military cooperation and the construction of a gas-pipeline between Iran and the Nakhichevan Republic. (18)

Aliev's desire to create security between Azerbaijan and Russia extends beyond the military zone and into the economic realm as evidenced in the aforementioned Izvestiya interview in which Aliev downplayed the singular

importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as compared with the currently operational Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline. (19) During the Moscow-Baku meeting, the two sides discussed Russia's attempt to transport more Azeri oil across Russian territory in competition with the BTC pipeline. Putin may have also pressed Aliev to double the flow on the Baku-Novo pipeline from the current 2.5 million metric tons a year to the line's total capacity of 5 million tons. Aliev skirted the exact logistics of the pipelines, though, by stating it was not a "question for today" and called for further talks. At the same time, Aliev expressed his confidence that the Baku-Novo pipeline would work at full capacity in the near future, (20) while mentioning the potential of using the BTC pipeline to transport Russian oil. (21)

At present, Ilham Aliev is trying to navigate a path between Western and Russian competition while extracting the maximum gain for Azerbaijan from both power players. The Azeri president's recent warm advances to Moscow may also be due to a desire to guarantee Russian support in a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, of which negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia are perpetually in flux. However, the success of such a balancing act requires a charismatic leader with the support of civil society, and Azerbaijan possesses neither. Additionally, Aliev lacks experience, does not enjoy an unrivaled hold on power, and has yet to demonstrate the sheer tenacity to manage such a high-stakes juggling act. These constraints, if combined with the onset of Western pressure, could fully realign Azerbaijan's policy back into the Western camp.

Source notes:

- (1) Washington Post, 25 Feb 04 via Lexis-Nexis
- (2) Agence France Presse, 12 Feb 04 via Lexis-Nexis
- (3) Rustavi-2 TV, Tbilisi, 14 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (4) Rustavi-2 TV, 12 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (5) Kommersant, 25 Feb 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis

- (6) Xinhua News Agency, 14 Feb 04, via Lexis-Nexis
- (7)Gazeta, 10 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (8) Rustavi-2 TV Tbilisi, 20 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets
- (9) Imedi TV Tbilisi, 23 Feb 04, Financial Times via Lexis-Nexis
- (10) Rustavi-2 TV Tbisili, 23 Feb 04, BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (11) Rustavi-2 TV Tbilisi, 25 Feb 04, BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis; RFERL, 25 Feb 04, Daily Caucasus Briefing
- (12) Kavkasia-Press Tbilisi, 28 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (13) Financial Times, 25 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (14) Kavkasia-Press Tbilisi, 8 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (15) RFEFL Newslite Vol. 8, No. 35, 24 Feb 04
- (16) (www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav021004a_pr.shtml).
- (17) RFERL, 20 Feb 04; Daily Caucasus Briefing.
- (18) Financial Times, 10 Feb 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
- (19) Izvestiya, 4 Feb 04; Financial Times via Lexis-Nexis
- (20) Energy Intelligence Group, Nefte Compass, 11 Feb 04 via Lexis-Nexis
- (21) Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 10 Feb 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

Negotiating extremism and rethinking relations

Fighting terrorism has been one area where the countries of Central Asia have been successful in cooperation. In the political reshuffling that the threat of terrorism has brought to the region, China, Russia and the U.S. have become more involved, but they are at the point of needing to consider what their long-term military role in the region will become. Even while countries have forged closer anti-terror relations, the recent difficulty in negotiating a solution to the flood threat of the Syr-Darya River exemplifies the challenge of cooperating on

social issues and has led some to consider alternative ways to circumvent inter-state reliance.

Cooperating against extremism

A wave of arrests and requests for extraditions has spotlighted the cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russian police recently arrested Mukhamad Ismatov, a Tajik citizen wanted for organizing an international criminal group and an assassination attempt of a public figure; (1) Yoqub Salimov, a former Tajik Interior Minister accused of treason; (2) and Yusup Kasimakhunov, an Uzbek and purported leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). (3) The extradition of all of them has been requested.

Extradition is not uncommon, of course, but the level of cooperation is more public than it has been. Russia, which has the death penalty, but has not applied it since joining the Council of Europe, extradited Salimov on the grounds that he might face capital punishment in Tajikistan. (4) Uzbekistan, which as recently as 16 February sentenced Aziz Karimov to death, will likely be forced to forgo the option of capital punishment in exchange for the extradition of Kasimakhunov. (5)

The arrest of Kasimakhunov represents the regional unease with HT and an international willingness to cede to (political) requests in the name of national security. HT is banned throughout Central Asia and much of the Middle East, (6) where its re-traditionalist agenda is viewed as threatening, and Uzbekistan is known for being exceptionally draconian in dealing with members of HT. In Uzbekistan, where upwards of 5000 political prisoners are detained for affiliation with HT, possession of HT literature carries a ten-year prison term. (7) According to Komiljon Kodirov of the Uzbek National Security Service, Kasimakhunov is wanted for his "active part in the publishing and delivering to Central Asia of large consignments of literature of a religious and extremist nature calling to overthrow the legal government of Uzbekistan." (8)

There are regular reports of HT members being detained and arrested for distributing HT literature and in the six years that HT has been in Tajikistan, over 200 members have been imprisoned. (9) In the past two months alone, however, more than 30 members of HT have been arrested and one Tajik law-enforcement official was quoted as having said, "recently, the extremists virtually began coming out from underground and openly propagating their ultimate and genuine goals – setting up a single theocratic state on the territories of Central Asia...." (10)

On 30 January, six individuals were detained in Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, for distributing HT literature. They were allegedly tortured and threatened with extradition to Uzbekistan before cooperating with authorities and subsequently being released. (11) Freedom House, a U.S.-based NGO devoted to peace and democracy, was criticized by the Kyrgyz government for being outspoken about the case. (12)

Rethinking relations

The threat of terrorism has brought international attention to Central Asia, a significant amount of military investment, and anti-terror cooperation agreements. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Askar Aytmatov referred to China, Russia, and the U.S. as the "guarantees [sic] of [Kyrgyzstan's] national security." (13) After the 200 South Korean troops, part of the international antiterrorist coalition, leave the Ganci airbase at Manas airport in Kyrgyzstan, the multinational component of the coalition will cease; only American troops will remain at the base. (14) And with the Russian airbase in Kant functioning as part of a regional antiterrorist coalition, U.S. officials have made it clear that there will not be Russian-U.S. competition over Central Asian military bases. (15)

The recent visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was concerned with reaffirming the Bush administration's support for the Central Asian governments in the "war on terrorism." But he ignored international

criticism of repressive behavior, particularly that of Uzbek President Islam Karimov. (16) A report by the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis suggests that the U.S. policy of ignoring the shortcomings of economic and political reform in countries like Uzbekistan could incite anti-Americanism and undermine long term security interests. (17) And as the campaign in Afghanistan wears on, political objectives at home will force the U.S. to reevaluate its role in Central Asia.

Intra-regional relations are also being reconsidered. While the countries of Central Asia are able to cooperate in the anti-terrorism efforts and have advanced a number of trade agreements, the recent flood threat of the Syr-Darya River (18) demonstrated their inability to cooperate on issues where competing interests are at stake. Though the flood threat has subsided, (19) Kazakhstan has taken steps to circumvent any future need for international cooperation on the matter and is preparing to build a reservoir to control flooding. According to Anatoli Ryabtsev, chairman of the Agriculture Ministry's Committee for Water Resources, this "will end our dependence. We tried to conduct legal dialogue with neighbors in order to solve the problem. Unfortunately, we have not managed to do so as yet.... Every state is defending its own interests, and Kazakhstan suffers as it is in the lower reaches of the Syr-Darya River. Therefore there is no choice but for us to start building a counter regulator." (20) It is this sense of resignation and resultant approach of self-reliance that could have broader implications on social issues which do not require the states to cooperate for their best interests.

Source Notes:

(1) Ismatov has been on Tajikistan's "Wanted" list since March 2002 and is suspected of having numerous connections with international terrorist organizations. Reportedly, he has confessed to having been trained in an Afghan terrorist camp and prior to extradition he is being questioned for participation in

terrorist activity in the Moscow region. ITAR-TASS, 1436 GMT, 26 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0229 via World News Connection.

(2) Salimov has been accused of crimes against the state, including the attempted coup of the summer of 1997. In the spring of that year, Salimov had saved Tajik President Emomali Rahmonov's life by using his own body to protect the president during an assassination attempt. A few months later, however, he joined opposition forces. ITAR-TASS, 1522 GMT, 24 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0224 via World News Connection.

(3) There has been a warrant for Kasimakhunov's arrest since February 2000. RFE/RL, 25 Feb 04, via www.rferl.org

(4) ITAR-TASS, 2106 GMT, 24 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0224 via World News Connection.

(5) Karimov, an Uzbek citizen tried in Tashkent, was sentenced to death on 16 February 2004, for the 2002 Bishkek grenade incident that resulted in the death of seven. ITAR-TASS, 1759 GMT, 16 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0216 via World News Connection.

(6) HT is also banned in Russia, the US, and the UK.

(7) Forum 18, 16 Feb 04, via www.forum18.org

(8) ITAR-TASS, 1535 GMT, 17 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0217 via World News Connection.

(9) ITAR-TASS, 1231 GMT, 16 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0216 via World News Connection.

(10) Estimates put the number of HT members in Tajikistan at around 3000. HT propaganda targets the low-income population. ITAR-TASS, 0553 GMT, 25 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0225; 0643 GMT, 20 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection. Estimates put the number of HT members in Tajikistan at around 3000. HT propaganda targets the low-income population.

(11) Freedom House, 18 Feb 2004 via www.freedomhouse.org

(12) Kabar News (Bishkek), 0802 GMT, 23 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0223 via World News Connection.

(13) ITAR-TASS, 0322 GMT, 26 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0226 via World News Connection.

(14) Currently, Ganci only has military cargo planes that provide logistical support for troops in Afghanistan. ITAR-TASS, 0846 GMT, 25 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0225 via World News Connection.

(15) Richard Hoagland, US Ambassador to Tajikistan, recently said that the US would neither "have permanent military bases" nor "compete with Russian military bases" in Central Asia. ITAR-TASS, 0840 GMT, 26 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0226 via World News Connection.

(16) Eurasia Insight, 26 Feb 04 via www.eurasianet.org

(17) The report, entitled "Central Asia in U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?" is available at www.ifpa.org; for a brief summary of the 100-page report, see RFE/RL, 22 Feb 04, www.rferl.org

(18) For more on this, see NIS Observed, 19 Feb 04 via www.bu.edu/iscip

(19) ITAR-TASS, 0758 GMT, 22 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0222 via World News Connection

(20) Ekspress-K (Almaty), 19 Feb 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0219 via World News Connection

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