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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock and Scott Dullea

How involved is Putin in administration workings?

In attacking putative opponents, President Vladimir Putin has targeted primarily his predecessor's holdovers. This is not ground-breaking news. However, his political housecleaning is more subtle and nuanced than was initially apparent. Take, for instance, the (so far) protracted tenure of Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, directly linked to the Yel'tsin administration. Recently, Kasyanov has questioned the competence of two Putin appointees, Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin and Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Gref. (TVS, 9 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) These criticisms have not been rebutted publicly. However, accusations of corruption have begun to surface regarding Kasyanov's own involvement in fishing quotas. Some Russian newspapers are predicting that Kasyanov is slated to become the election-year scapegoat for Russia's economic difficulties. His own criticisms of Kudrin and Gref, therefore, might constitute a preemptive strike -- Kasyanov is an intelligent man and can sniff which way the wind is blowing. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 7 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Putin appears to be treating this matter as an internal squabble between Kasyanov and his subordinates. Coverage of a meeting between Putin and Kasyanov, shortly after these headlines began appearing, contained no mention of the burgeoning "fish-gate" scandal, nor of the squabble within the cabinet. Having thus remained officially uninvolved, Putin can exploit whatever situation emerges: reaping the rewards, should the economy improve, or, should the economic picture become bleak, having the prime minister's head on the political

chopping block. (KOMMERSANT, 10 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Rushailo's removal rumored

In the currently impotent Security Council, Putin has appointed Valentin Stepanov to serve as deputy to Secretary Vladimir Rushailo. Kremlin watchers speculate that this signals Rushailo's possible removal from the Security Council. Stepanov is an experienced Russian politician and functionary, who served as general prosecutor until 1993, and does not suit the role of mere deputy. If he were promoted, it might imply increased prominence for the Security Council. With a Putin appointee at its head, the Council would constitute yet another extension of the president's political power. (ZAVTRA, 10 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Putin opponent silenced

Following Duma Deputy Sergei Yushenkov's murder on 17 April, talk of a politically motivated assassination is spreading. Yushenkov had been an active opponent of the Kremlin administration. He loudly voiced suspicions of FSB involvement in the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings that led to Putin's War in Chechnya, as well as to his subsequent rise to the presidency. (VEDOMOSTI, 18 Apr 03; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Boris Berezovsky, the self-exiled oligarch who faces an extradition hearing in London, has claimed that he will produce documents soon to prove this connection.

What motivates recent appointments?

In March 2003, Putin rearranged the security services, leading to the appointment of FSB veteran Viktor Vasilievich Cherkesov as the Kremlin's new "drug tsar." Consequently, Putin filled Cherkesov's former post as presidential envoy for the Northwest Federal District with Valentina Matvienko. Speculation about the motivation behind both of those appointments — including efforts to

regenerate a modern KGB and to build a stronger "power vertical" -- circulated immediately. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 26 Mar 03)

On 3 April Putin met with Cherkesov to discuss the progress of the new Russian anti-drug agency, officially titled The Federal Committee for the Suppression of the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs. Cherkesov noted the need to retrain immediately staff members from the Federal Tax Police Service (FSPN) who are being transferred to his new agency. (ITAR-TASS, 3 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0403, via World News Connection) The anti-drug committee will consist of 40,000 personnel, three-quarters of whom will come from the recently liquidated FSPN. The drug agency also will inherit most of the disbanded tax police service's material resources. Despite Cherkesov's assurances, some law enforcement specialists have their doubts about the feasibility of transforming tax police (who are often more the administrative than the gung-ho type) into drug fighters. (IZVESTIA, 9 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via Lexis-Nexis)

Some analysts fear that there is more to Cherkesov's appointment, as well as to the drug agency's establishment, than meets the eye. The creation of this entity does not gel with the concept of centralizing the security-related agencies under the umbrella of three ministries. And the fact that Cherkesov gained all the human and material resources from the former tax police service also raises questions. Some specialists do not rule out the possibility that Cherkesov's agency may be a forerunner to a new, extensive secret service performing key functions currently belonging to the interior ministry. (SOVERSHENNO SEKRETNO, Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via Lexis-Nexis)

Adding to Cherkesov's team, President Putin last week relieved Alexandr Fedorov, Cherkesov's former deputy when he served as presidential envoy in the Northwest Federal District, and brought him to Moscow to serve again as deputy to Cherkesov. Until this presidential decree, Fedorov had been serving as deputy to Cherkesov's successor, Matvienko.

Fedorov's Kremlin-appointed replacement in the Northwest Federal District, Colonel-General Andrei Chernenko, raises questions concerning early speculation about the reasons for Putin's selection of Matvienko as the presidential envoy. Originally it was believed that her appointment was intended to allow her to use the envoy position as a stepping stone toward the St. Petersburg gubernatorial elections in 2004. (REUTERS, 2 Apr 03; via Johnson's Russia List) Matvienko's new deputy, Chernenko, has held the post of a deputy interior minister and headed the Federal Migration Service, an agency under the interior ministry. If the original theory of Matvienko's appointment were correct, then perhaps Chernenko had been intended to become the envoy once she became governor. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 8 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via Lexis-Nexis)

However, according to another theory, Chernenko is there to "look after" Matvienko to ensure she does not gain the support required to run for governor, thus paving the way for his good friend (and former prime minister) Sergei Stepashin, the current chairman of the parliamentary Audit Chamber, who is reported to be interested in the gubernatorial post. Given the long political alliance between fellow FSB officers Chernenko and Stepashin, it is likely that Stepashin would have Putin's support in the upcoming poll, and Chernenko's task would be to help ensure his victory. (WWW.GAZETA.RU, 8 Apr 03; via Johnson's Russia List)

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Scott Fleeher

The silence is deafening

Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) continues to remain tight-lipped with regard to the seemingly endless list of revelations concerning its relationship with

Iraq. The head of the SVR press bureau, Boris Labusov, provided a classic response to the newest wave of allegations: "We do not comment on baseless and unproven assertions published in the tabloids." (INTERFAX, 13 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0413, via World News Connection) The "baseless and unproven assertions" originated in part from secret documents recently uncovered in Iraq. If proven authentic, these allegations-turned-evidence could be quite illuminating with regard to Russian-Iraqi intelligence relations.

The list of data recently surfacing begins with reports that Arabic-language documents discovered in a destroyed Iraqi Mukhabarat headquarters on 12 April reveal more cases of direct SVR assistance to Iraqi intelligence. One document is said to contain details of a (presumably bugged) conversation between British PM Tony Blair and Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi, purportedly quoting Blair as questioning United States policy toward Baghdad. (THE TELEGRAPH, 13 Apr 03)

Other documents recovered from the rubble reportedly reveal that Moscow provided the Iraqi regime with a list of assassins who could be employed for "hits" in the West. In this virtual "Yellow Pages" of assassins, signed by an agent calling himself "SAB," Moscow indicated that it was more than willing to share these services with associates in Baghdad. (THE TELEGRAPH, 13 Apr 03)

Another document uncovered by the newspaper appeared to confirm the existence of a nuclear arms program in Iraq. In the March 2002 document, Russia warned the Iraqis that failure to comply with the UN mandates could give the United States "a cause to destroy any nuclear weapons." (THE TELEGRAPH, 13 Apr 03) Such a warning is remarkable in that the Baghdad regime denied possession of any such weapons to the very end.

Several other papers found amid the rubble chronicle Russian information regarding arms deals with other Middle Eastern countries, along with information

detailing how Russia could assist Iraqi politicians in procuring visas to Western countries. (THE TELEGRAPH, 13 Apr 03) A number of the documents mention that Osama bin Laden constructed training camps in Afghanistan in order to train mujahideen fighters for service in Chechnya.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Ansel Stein

Is Russia reassessing its power in the post-Saddam Hussein world?

The speed and ease with which the American armed forces plowed through Iraq's army appears to have jolted some in Moscow into a more realistic view of Russia's position in the world. "The key conclusion we must draw from the latest Gulf war is that the obsolete structure of the Russian armed forces has to be urgently changed," Vladimir Dvorkin, head of the Russian defense ministry's official think tank on strategic nuclear policy, said last week. "The gap between our capabilities and those of the Americans has been revealed, and it is vast. We are very lucky that Russia has no major enemies at the moment, but the future is impossible to predict, and we must be ready." (THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 16 Apr 03) The Council on Foreign and Defense Policy—a group of top Russian military experts and former policymakers—recently concluded that the Kremlin must drop all post-Soviet pretense that Russia remains a superpower, and make rebuilding and redesigning the nation's military forces a top priority. Other analysts are calling on Russia to reassess its position politically, especially its membership in the "axis of weasel." "Tactically, they [Russia, France and Germany] must know they have lost through miscalculation and they have to accept this. They must also know that they will lose much more heavily if they continue to oppose the United States and attempt to keep their axis going," said Dmitry Trenin. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 14 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Re-thinking in Moscow is evident also in the recent adjustment in Russian relations with North Korea. On 11 April, Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov said that a nuclear-armed North Korea was against Russian national interests and that the Kremlin would re-evaluate its opposition to international penalties should the North Koreans develop nuclear weapons. However, Losyukov subsequently again denounced America's stance vis-à-vis Pyongyang: "The United States would rather stay on the margins, taking part in negotiations led by a group of countries. Such an approach has no prospects, and we will not get involved with it." (INTERFAX, 14 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

By 15 April, Losyukov said that Russia "can only welcome" North Korea's announcement that it was ready to join multilateral talks with Washington over its weapons program. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 14 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis) The same day, a South Korean official stated that "[the] North sees no reason for Japan and Russia to join the multilateral talks because it wants to discuss the abolition of the armistice pact and the signing of a nonaggression pact with the United States during the forum." Instead of Japan and Russia, North Korea wants the European Union (EU) to join the multilateral forum in an apparent hope that the EU may play a leading role in providing economic aid to North Korea, the official reportedly said. (BBC MONITORING INTERNATIONAL REPORTS, 15 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis) That the DPRK would not want Japanese participation should come as no surprise, but the revelation that Pyongyang perceives no benefit from having Russia involved is interesting. By 17 April, the Russian foreign ministry was reduced to saying, "We would welcome any format for negotiations and any agreement that would lead to a peaceful settlement." The US State Department, the proponent of multilateral talks, even began to leave Russia out of the formula. Spokesman Philip Reeker said that the United States hoped to expand the talks in later rounds: "We are looking for the early inclusion of Japan and South Korea." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 17 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Did Russia find out that North Korea did not want its support? The North wants economic aid which the EU, and not Russia, can provide. Russia's inability to offer realistic solutions is another cause. During Ivanov's recent trip to Seoul, Moscow's proposal was for Russia to guarantee the North's security. After the war in Iraq, this is no guarantee.

Putin has offered that he sees the need "to coordinate the efforts of the international community in order to make real progress in the effort to guarantee lasting peace in the Middle East." (ITAR-TASS, 16 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis) This clearly contrasts with Russia's doom-and-gloom predictions of the consequences of confronting Iraq; however, this is only the public face of Russian policy. It is very doubtful the subterranean world of Russian arms sales and intelligence training will end any time soon.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

MEDIA

Russian government rejects US allegations, then proves them

The US Department of State issued its annual reports on the state of human rights internationally and Moscow was quick to note its general dissatisfaction with the result. Certainly, the evidence refutes media ministry claims that the government supports a free press. But that should come as no surprise to anyone who has watched the situation for any length of time.

In its report on Russia, the State Department noted that officials at the federal and regional levels regularly hindered the media:

"At times the authorities exerted pressure in a number of ways on journalists, particularly those who reported on corruption or criticized officials. They selectively denied journalists access to information, including, for example, statistics theoretically available to the public and filming opportunities. On many occasions, particularly in regions outside Moscow and St. Petersburg, they demanded the right to approve and then censored certain stories prior to publication and prohibited the tape recording of public trials and hearings. They systematically withheld financial support from government media operations that exercised independent editorial judgment and attempted to influence the appointment of senior editors at regional and local newspapers and broadcast media organizations. On occasion they removed reporters from their jobs, brought libel suits against journalists, and intimidated and harassed journalists," the report said. (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2002, 31 Mar 03; via www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18388.htm) Moreover, increased state control over outlets through outright ownership or majority stake-holdings in media groups "continued to undermine editorial independence and journalistic integrity in both the print and broadcast media," the report warned.

Direct attacks on journalists' independence could be seen. "As in 2001, the senior staff of [the state-owned] RTR — the station with the most extensive coverage area — reported that managers offered 'guidance' to program announcers and selected reporters, indicating which politicians should be supported and which should be criticized; criticism of presidential policies was discouraged strongly and even prohibited," the report said.

More blatant restrictions also occurred, the report added: "At times government officials actively restricted freedom of press, particularly during election periods.... For example, reporters from the newspapers *Nezavisimaya gazeta* and *Komsomol'skaya pravda* were denied access to a polling station in Voronezh during city council elections; armed police in Volgograd prevented New Wave Radio and Alternative Broadcasting News correspondents from observing vote

counting during mayoral elections. The Moscow City Electoral Commission prevented correspondents from Novyye izvestiya newspaper and Russian Public Television (ORT) from attending a meeting where the registration of mayoral candidates would be discussed, on the grounds that ORT would draw 'a distorted picture of the Commission's performance.' ... Journalists who published critical information about local governments and influential businesses, as well as investigative journalists writing about crime and other sensitive issues, continued to be subjected to death threats, threats of beatings, and other physical violence by unknown assailants." (Many of these instances have been reported in earlier issues of The NIS Observed.)

Citing what it views as violations of media freedom by US officials during the war with Iraq, the Russian media ministry said it "takes with sarcasm attempts by the American Department of State to describe Russia as a country without a free press." (INTERFAX, 1446 GMT, 1 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring International Reports, via Lexis-Nexis) Indeed, the press service asserted, the ministry "reaffirms the inviolability of the principles of freedom of speech and the independence of media in Russia, hoping that US statements will be more balanced and unbiased in the future."

Such assurances aside, of course, the ministry has worked to weaken the power of any remaining independent press in Russia, most noticeably through discussions of a draft law in the fall of 2002 that would have hobbled the media from coverage of any organization that the government deemed "terrorist." (THE NIS OBSERVED, 20 Nov 02) While President Putin eventually vetoed that law, familiar concepts from the earlier draft have resurfaced, now with the acquiescence of media owners. On 8 April, managers of leading media groups signed an anti-terrorist convention that details rules of conduct for journalists during a terrorist attack or a counter-terrorist operation. (INTERFAX, 1555 GMT, 8 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0408, via World News Connection) The convention appears to be somewhat of an improvement over the earlier bill: It is a voluntary

acceptance of limitations, rather than a legislated mandate, and it provides specific parameters of when such limitations on coverage of "terrorist" activity are in force.

Meanwhile, the State Duma has launched another attack, by way of amendments to the Law on Elections proposed by President Putin. These proposals have evoked vociferous complaints from ... just about everyone. Alexander Lyubimov, president of Media Soyuz, noted that the amendments provide for suspension of mass media activity after two warnings from the Central Election Commission. Moreover, he said, the amendments contradict earlier agreements between the media and government that "no changes would be made to the current laws on the mass media and we would work on creating a new law." (INTERFAX, 1533 GMT, 31 Mar 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0331, via World News Connection)

Despite Duma passage in the first reading, the future of the proposed amendments does not look too bright. "[T]he State Duma draft law proposes that the procedure for revoking mass media licenses be simplified. The mass media will be punished for the slightest infringement. But even that is not the main thing — the point is that this amendment essentially has nothing to do with citizens' electoral rights. Because it will also apply to the periods of time between elections," Viktor Ignatov, a member of the Federation Council Commission for Information Policy, said. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 11 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0414, via World News Connection) The head of the Central Elections Commission, Alexander Veshnyakov, admitted that he also had problems with the Duma-approved law. Veshnyakov said his commission was ready to work with journalists to draft amendments to the bill. "We do not want licenses to be withdrawn. We are ready to remove these provisions and clarify many other aspects concerning suspending the functioning of media outlets involved in legal violations. We will submit our amendments when the bill goes to the second reading," he said. (INTERFAX, 1322 GMT, 4 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0404, via World News Connection)

The UNESCO Department of Intellectual Property, headed by Mikhail Fedotov, the secretary of the Union of Russian Journalists, reviewed the draft and noted several incongruities. For example, a media outlet that has been charged with — rather than convicted of -- administrative violations twice is vulnerable to penalties. Fedotov offered as assurance his belief that the closing of publications or television stations likely would occur rarely. (VREMYA MN, 19 Mar 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0320, via World News Connection) However, Fedotov did note that, if the new mass media bill were to be passed, editorial independence would be at risk, as the entire legal framework affecting the media would change. Interestingly, Fedotov sees the media minister as the guarantor of press freedom. "Lesin made a very big contribution to it. Moreover, the power given to the press ministry by the bill is so enormous that all of us should be asking God to leave Lesin at the top of the ministry as long as possible. If someone who does not share liberal market values comes in his place, the law will become a noose," Fedotov said. (Ekho Moskv, 1030 GMT, 17 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring International Reports, via Lexis-Nexis)

While the proposed amendments to the election law have been the most controversial, they are not the Duma's only attempt this session to govern the media. Three additional bills are to be discussed, including legislation that would ban scenes of violence, torture and murder conspiracy (except, one assumes, on the news). (ITAR-TASS, 1637 GMT, 4 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0404, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Steve Kwast and Dan Rozelle

Russia struggles to figure out the lessons learned from Iraq's defeat

The jury is still out as to whether Russia will learn the right lessons from the overwhelming defeat of Iraq by the coalition forces over the last month. Many in Russia are using that defeat as a platform to put their own spin on the consequences of the war.

Top administration officials apparently refuse to see the outcome's military significance, while others within the government understand the implications. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov used his recent visit to South Korea as a platform to articulate the official stance about the war's consequences. "All regimes will want to obtain nuclear arms as the only containment factor. In circumstances when a blow [is] struck on the UN prestige and role, many states around the world will prefer to act at their own discretion, without heeding international rules and previously achieved agreements, including the non-proliferation sphere." (IZVESTIA, 11 Apr 03; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Such rhetoric insinuates that a worldwide arms race will result. Another administration official, Air Force Commander Colonel General Vladimir Mikhailov, opted for a sales pitch. "It's easy to fight meeting no resistance. I assume the Americans made an excessive use of the aviation [force]; the situation didn't require that. If Iraq had [the new Russian] S-300 missile complexes, U.S. pilots wouldn't have that much bravery and ostentatious resolution," he claimed. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 14 Apr 03; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Others in the administration, however, clearly understand the significance of Iraq's defeat. At the New Army Concept conference, which opened in Moscow on 9 April, prominent politicians, soldiers' mothers, military experts and political consultants discussed the Iraq situation. Army General Makhmut Gareev, president of the Academy of Military Science, said, "we must take immediate measures to overcome the technological gap between US and Russia in the sphere of high-precision weapons, the role and significance of which the Iraqi war evidently displayed." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 10 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Likewise, former Russian Air Force commander General Petr Deinekin said, "the main lesson for Russia from the current conflict in Iraq is that we should enhance preparedness for war." He noted that 80 percent of the weapons used in the Iraq war are high precision, compared to just 10 percent in the 1991 Gulf War and 40 percent during the 1998 campaign in Yugoslavia.

Additionally, retired General Aleksandr Rutskoj, who served as Boris Yel'tsin's vice president from 1991-93, said "Russia should cancel its military-reform plans and instead begin improving its military capabilities. Anyone can see that we must forget the demagoguery of armed-forces reform and begin to restore our defensive and offensive capabilities." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE SECURITIES, 9 Apr 03) A defense ministry source was more specific: "[T]he military conflict in Iraq has yet again confirmed that the trends for developing the Armed Forces are quite clear. [The trends] stem from the strengthening of the role of aviation, guidance systems and high-precision ammunition, as well as from the decreasing role of tank troops in tackling combat tasks during local wars." (INTERFAX, 0958 GMT, 31 Mar 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0331, via World News Connection) Clearly some persons in Moscow see Iraq's defeat as a reason for reform and modernization.

Sergei Ivanov and General Mikhailov would be wise to listen to these other voices in their administration. They also should look to see how this war is changing the way countries act before they conclude that the war on Iraq will destabilize the world and create an arms race to nuclear weapons. To Russia's east, for example, "North Korea may have softened its stance on the nuclear crisis as a result of the war in Iraq. I think the war might have prompted a change in the international political landscape," South Korea's national security advisor Ra Jong-Yil said. (DECCAN HERALD, 14 Apr 03; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) To Russia's west, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said he has approved a military exercise for October codenamed "Clear Skies." "The exercise will be modeled approximately in such a

way as the war in Iraq is developing today, in order to resist such a mass attack by a possible enemy," Lukashenka said. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 9 Apr 03)

Actions speak louder than words. In this case, international actors such as North Korea backing down from hard-line positions against the US indicate that predictions of increased arms races and weapons proliferation might be nothing more than hype. Closer to the truth might be that coalition forces acting against a belligerent international threat have posted notice to the rest of the world to behave. It also indicates that other nations take serious the threat of force if they harbor terrorists or develop weapons of mass destruction. Russia will do well to learn the lesson that true military reform is mandatory if it wants to increase its capability and modernize. Such a lesson is the only responsible one to learn if Moscow expects to provide security for its people in the 21st century.

Is US success in Iraq a military defeat for Russia?

The scene in central Baghdad of US Marines helping Iraqi civilians topple a statue of Saddam Hussein squelched criticism by many analysts of the US military's war plan. While the present success silenced some critics in the US, it also exposed the outdated tactical mindset of the Russian military. The entirely off-the-mark predictions of Russia's defense "experts" prior to and during the war speak volumes about how Russia's military leaders might fight a war themselves.

Consider the following analysis and critiques offered by the Russian press as well as current and former senior Russian military officers -- some of whom may actually have had a hand in preparing Iraq's poorly executed defense:

"It will be extremely difficult to break the multi-layer defences of Baghdad, including self-sustained reinforced positions with dug-in tanks and other anti-tank assets, as well as large underground trench net," stated Colonel General Vladislav Achalov, a former Soviet deputy defense minister and specialist in urban warfare, who visited Iraq repeatedly before the war. "I used to see their

(Iraqi) training in the so-called central guerilla camp, and I am bound to say that it was similar to the training of [Russian] special operations units," he added. (Interfax-AVN, 7 Apr 03; BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis)

Former defense minister and current Duma Deputy General Igor Rodionov stated, "I observed the Desert Storm in 1991... Iraqi servicemen surrendered without a fight by the thousands then. The situation is wholly different these days. I used to think that Saddam Hussein's popularity was somewhat ostentatious but now I see that I was mistaken. Iraq is united and rallied and can put up a worthy fight. Even [if] it had it, Iraq should not use chemical warfare means: heat, changing winds, the possibility of infecting its own troops...." General Rodionov's statement here is especially noteworthy since he seems to believe that chemical weapons should not be used by the Iraqis not because they are (supposedly) unavailable or unlawful, but because of tactical battlefield drawbacks.

Another former Russian general, Valentin Varennikov, once a commander of Russia's ground forces, also weighed in: "As for the Iraqi command, I'd recommend counter-strikes and counter attacks. This is a viable option because the Iraqis do have tanks and artillery. I think this is the tactic they will choose. Wherever the terrain permits it, the Arabs will resort to guerrilla warfare, putting oil to fire." (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 26 Mar 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) The tactics espoused by General Varennikov are simplistic at best and somewhat naïve. They amount to little more than telling the Iraqis to fight back. His remark about burning oil was, however, realized. The Iraqis did burn oil to obscure potential targets in Baghdad but the effect was negligible since global positioning system-guided bombs do not require the pilot to see the target.

Major General Nikolai Revazov, Candidate of Military Science and former military advisor to Syria, stated, "There can be no doubts that the coalition will not go for a frontal assault. It will lay siege to Baghdad and start bombing it day and

night...the allies will set up sorts of garrisons around Baghdad, a process that will take about a month. The garrisons will be mostly supplied by air transports. That is why the paratroops will have to seize at least six airfields more first...seizing all of the territory of the country will not mean triumph. I do not think that [US General Tommy] Franks has considered it yet.... As for the capital itself, the siege may take as long as needed...fighting in Baghdad will occur only when presidential bunkers or other underground objects are approached." (Stolichnaya VeCHERNAYA GAZETA, 4 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

The Russian media, supported by their own "armchair generals," forecast that, "the Pentagon will make broad use of non-lethal weapons in Baghdad. For example, army chemists may use CS gas, pepper aerosols, and so-called tranquilizing gases." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 7 Apr 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Even Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, surely familiar with how the US military operates, missed in his prediction that, "If the Americans continue to fight accurately, avoiding high casualties, the outcome is uncertain. If the Americans begin carpet bombing, Iraq will be defeated." (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 15 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Clearly the Russian military views the war in Iraq through the lenses of its own experience and tactics in Chechnya. According to Pavel Felgenhauer, a Russia-based independent military analyst, "It would appear that the Russian generals and (Defense Minister Sergei) Ivanov assume it's the Americans that should be learning from them how to flatten cities — the way our military destroyed the Chechen capital, Grozny." (One might add -- based on the Russian press statement above — the example of the hostage rescue attempt in the Dubrovna theater, in which used "so-called" tranquilizing gases killed the hostage takers as

well as many of the hostages.) (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 10 April 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Grozny, as Felgenhauer mentions, stands as Russia's textbook example of how not to conduct urban warfare. The Russians stormed the Chechen capital on New Year's Eve in 1994 only to lose nearly 2,000 troops in a matter of days. With little intelligence information, the Russians entered the city in tanks and personnel carriers, quickly becoming lost and immobilized. The Chechens easily decimated the poorly trained Russian soldiers. Stung by its military failure, the Russian army pulled back and launched an indiscriminate bombardment that razed the city. After two months and an estimated 25,000 civilian casualties, the Russians finally took the capital. Unfortunately, the conflict in Chechnya continues today and the Russian military seems to have learned little from the experience. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 5 Apr 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

Obviously some of the statements quoted above can be ascribed to the typical propagandistic bluster often heard from Russian politicians and senior military officers. But the mindset displayed shows the tactical bankruptcy of the Russian military. The speed, precision and efficiency with which the US military operates surely must have shaken and embarrassed all those responsible for Russia's security. Even Russia's lowest-ranking servicemen must be asking questions. Why else would Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of the General Staff, order the urgent production and posting of patriotic slogans and other paraphernalia in military headquarters, libraries and barracks and lead discussions to improve servicemen's morale? (RossiYskaya Gazeta, 21 Mar 03; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Whether they can learn from the US military's experience in Afghanistan and Iraq remains to be seen. So far the refusal of Russia's senior officers to embrace any type of reform -- elimination of conscription, brutality and corruption, reducing the

forces' sheer size to a more manageable organization -- indicates that they continue to cling to an outdated and discredited Soviet military model.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Nadezda Kinsky and Scott Fleeher

UKRAINE

New neighbors

When the EU Treaty of Accession was approved in Athens on 9 April and signed on 16 April, an important step was taken towards extending the borders of the EU deep into Eastern and Central Europe. One of the most important statements of the day was the conclusion that there would emerge a Europe that had moved beyond iron curtains. The treaty's second paragraph states that "This union represents our common determination to put an end to centuries of conflict and to transcend former divisions on our continent." After the treaty has been ratified and backed by referenda in the accession states, 10 new countries will become EU members; 8 of them had been within the Soviet sphere. Throughout the accession debate, one of the hot topics has been the need to avoid another iron curtain, moved farther East. Ukraine is one of the countries that will form the EU's new border from 1 May 2004. Kyiv has noted its concern with the future status of the changed borders, particularly with Poland. The move towards concrete EU enlargement is also once again a forum in which to explore the course of Ukrainian foreign policy and its aspirations and chances of EU accession.

In March, Ukraine received some blows to its plans to move closer to Europe, particularly when German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer denied the country's chances of attaining EU member status "now or in the foreseeable future." Nevertheless, President Leonid Kuchma continues to declare his wish to integrate Ukraine into NATO and the EU, although he does at times find himself

at odds over his country's orientation vis-à-vis Russia. Fischer's rejection of Ukraine's EU hopes was considerably toned down on 9 April by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, however, who tentatively backed Ukraine's plans. Talking to Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, Schroeder said "We fully support the process of bringing Ukraine closer to the European Union. In the not-too-distant future, there must be the possibility of associate EU status for Ukraine." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 10 Apr 03) The day before the EU accession treaty was signed, Kuchma chose to reiterate Kyiv's hopes: "Ukraine will be going ahead with its entry into the EU to the extent that Europe will be entering Ukraine." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 16 Apr 03) In his speech, he praised European standards and values, which he said must become "part and parcel" of everyday life in Ukraine. He also framed two recent foreign relation issues within this context. On the one hand, he portrayed his presidency in the CIS -- which had largely been interpreted as a move closer to the Russian sphere of influence -- as an opportunity to increase Ukrainian influence in the region. He also cited his recent decision to deploy an anti-nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons battalion to Kuwait despite considerable domestic opposition as a move towards constructive dialogue with the US and as "a sign of our civilized nature and our commitment to universal values."

Ukrainian foreign policy is likely to be affected noticeably by the presidential elections in 2004. One of the most probable candidates to stand for the opposition is Victor Yushchenko, who has continued to receive the highest approval rating in recent polls concerning potential presidential contenders. (INTERFAX, 11 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0411, via World News Connection) Yushchenko is known for his pro-Western stance. What is certainly clear with a single look at the map of Europe is that, with this round of accessions, the EU has not yet finished the journey. As European Parliament President Patrick Cox noted when the treaty was signed, "Today, here in Athens, in returning to this cradle of civilization and democracy, we mark a decisive step forward in our

common journey to a European Union and a European continent which is whole and complete."

BELARUS

Mixed signals

On 14 April, the US and 14 EU countries lifted their travel ban on top officials in Belarus, which had been imposed in response to the expulsion of the last OSCE mission in the country. Since a new OSCE mission has begun operations in Minsk, the lifting of the travel ban was overdue -- although the real reasons for disapproval of the Lukashenka regime (i.e., its dictatorial environment and appalling human rights record) are far from improved. Juxtaposing the decision to lift the travel ban, a resolution on the human rights situation in Belarus was entered on the agenda of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 16 April. Belarus Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Savinykh condemned the move, and called the resolution "politically motivated." (INTERFAX, 9 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0409, via World News Connection) The resolution was co-written by Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia and was sponsored by the United States, where the "Belarus Democracy Act" recently was submitted to Congress. Unlikely to be passed before next year, the bill would secure approximately \$40 million to support the democratic opposition and human rights groups in Belarus in a clear move against the Belarusian president.

Since his contested reelection in 2001, Lukashenka has continued his harsh regime, and the country has endured economic hardship as well as a highly restrictive media environment and judicial persecution of the opposition. In recent months, the government met with very mixed signals from the West: clear rejection of its policies, as well as moves that served to feed the pro-Lukashenka channels with positive spins. The lifting of the travel ban is the latest example of the latter, while the UN resolution, a highly symbolic document following close on

the heels of recent appalling human rights reports, is a clear example of the former — another statement of disapproval of the Lukashenka regime.

Such mixed signals are unlikely to sway the regime's behavior significantly, as long as it retains the grip it has on the country. Extreme isolation of the leadership would inevitably carry with it a negative effect for the Belarus people, who are in dire need of economic and human rights support, just as extending tacit approval indiscriminately would give the regime too much leeway. While the West's contradictory measures may be one way of treading a middle path between the two extremes, the Belarus opposition and public would no doubt be thankful for a more consistent line.

The decision to lift the travel ban is linked further to Belarus' future status as an EU neighbor country. The ban was removed in time to allow a representative of the Minsk leadership to attend the Athens conference for the current and acceding EU members, including three countries that border Belarus -- Lithuania, Latvia and Poland.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

GEORGIA

Storm in a teacup

The Russian Duma voted overwhelmingly (350 in support, three against and one abstention) on a resolution calling a recent military agreement between the US and Georgia "an act running counter to the spirit of good-neighborliness and cooperation

between the Russian Federation and Georgia." The Duma deemed the agreement an "unfriendly act," and a violation of the Conventional Forces in

Europe (CFE) Treaty. (ITAR-TASS 0749 GMT, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection)

In response, the Georgian foreign ministry said it was surprised by "the Duma's overreaction to steps taken by a neighboring sovereign state towards developing military cooperation with its ally under the antiterrorist coalition." Moreover, interpreting the Georgian-US agreement as a violation of the CFE Treaty "does not [call for] any criticism," the statement says. (INTERFAX, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection) The CFE limits quantities of weapons and soldiers, which are not affected under the new document.

At issue was the ratification -- after months of deliberation in Georgia's parliament -- of an agreement governing the legalities of the implementation of the US Train and Equip mission. The new agreement, ratified on 21 March, makes no changes whatsoever in the existing program, according to which 80 US special forces officers have been engaged for a year in training Georgian special forces to conduct counter-terrorist operations. The new agreement allows US soldiers and civilians working for the US Department of Defense, while on official assignment, to enter Georgia without a visa, to carry arms, and to receive standard diplomatic immunity. (AP, 21 Mar 03; via Lexis-Nexis)

According to the Georgian ambassador in Moscow, Zurab Abashidze, the most recent agreement closely resembles those signed as part of the NATO Partnership for Peace training programs and does not indicate any change in the security architecture of the Caucasus. (EKHO MOSKVY, 17 Apr 03; via www.echo.msk.ru) If Russia wishes to have regular security dialogue with respect to Georgian-US cooperation, Abashidze offered to form a Moscow-Washington-Tbilisi forum for discussion of mutual security concerns, such as terrorism and the conflict over Abkhazia.

CHECHNYA

The new constitution

On 23 March, the Chechen Republic obtained a new constitution. According to the official version, 80% of the electorate participated in the referendum and over 95% voted in favor. (LOS ANGELES TIMES, 24 Mar 03)

The constitution pretends that the Chechen Republic is a Federation subject like an ordinary Russian region. Three features of the document are particularly noteworthy. First, there is no residency requirement for presidential or parliamentary candidates. (Article 66) This means that the Kremlin is not limited in its choice of future Chechen presidents to ethnic Chechens or indeed to persons who have had any connection to Chechnya. Second, Moscow will closely supervise appointments within Chechnya. Putin will have unlimited power to remove the Chechen president, (Article 75) and the federal procuracy will have complete control over the Chechen procuracy, including appointments, and determining the duties and responsibilities of the republican procuracy officials. (Articles 103 and 104) Finally, Chapter 10, which governs the transfer of power from the existing administration to the new government, makes it amply clear that the administration simply will be renamed a new government. For instance, Akhmad Kadyrov, the present head of the Russian-installed administration, has become acting president of Chechnya until elections are held, probably in December. Until a Chechen parliament is elected (probably in March 2004) the council of local administrations will perform the functions of a parliament. There is no reason to suppose that the facelift from "administration" to "president" and "parliament" will have an impact on what have been utterly ineffective institutions.

Conditions after referendum

According to recent reports from the human rights monitoring groups Human Rights Watch and Memorial as well as the French newspaper Le Monde, it is not possible to speak of any improvement of conditions in Chechnya.

Le Monde caused a sensation on 12 April when Natalie Nougayrede published a summary of an official document attesting that more than 100 Chechens civilians are executed every month. The document, which had been presented to Putin in late March 2003, counts 1,314 murders of Chechen civilians in 2002. "These are deaths which happened away from any armed confrontation, artillery fire, bombardments or explosions of remote-controlled mines. It's a calculation of the victims of summary executions." The document also provides other previously unknown details about 49 mass graves. The document makes it clear that the emergencies ministry and other government structures are compiling detailed lists of bodies and mass graves found in Chechnya that far surpass estimates produced by Memorial and Human Rights Watch. (CHECHNYA-SHORT LIST, 15 Apr 03; via Chechnya-sl@yahoo.com)

Human Rights Watch reported on 7 April that the practice of night raids where masked men drag off civilians is ongoing, with about three persons disappearing every week.

"In a disturbing new trend, Russian forces increasingly resort to blowing up the bodies of executed Chechens -- a crude ploy that eradicates signs of torture, obscures the cause of death, and makes identification of the corpse extremely difficult. Human Rights Watch documented three such cases. Memorial, a Russian non-governmental human rights organization with permanent offices in Chechnya and Ingushetia, documented thirty-eight cases in January and February in which the corpses of Chechens were found; in twenty of these cases, the bodies had been blown up." (WWW.HRW.ORG)

The Memorial report on the conduct of the referendum noted numerous grenade attacks in and around Grozny leading up to the vote. Protest against the referendum attracted 300 attacks in the city center on 22 and 23 March. Memorial also documented many infractions of normal voting procedure. Memorial activists were able to vote repeatedly because registration was not

required. At a polling station in Grozny, they counted only 243 persons entering the station, while 1457 votes were reported. In some locations more than 100% of those eligible voted because they were told that those who did not vote would be subject to FSB reprisals, or that pensions would be withheld. "Generally, anxiety was visible in all settlements. People believed that each citizen who did not vote or voted negatively would be considered a supporter of Maskhadov and this could lead to reprisals." (WWW.MEMO.RU)

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

Russia, defense and dissent on jihad

As Russia seeks to expand its influence in the region, several Central Asian states are moving to cultivate a renewed closeness with the Putin administration, particularly in trade and military relations. These republics share similar views regarding threats to existing power structures. And, as all players in the region are anxious to develop further available resources, Islamic extremism remains a threat that unites policies and enhances military budgets.

A closer relationship with Russia

The Central Asian states (except Uzbekistan) are placing greater emphasis on their relationship with Moscow. As Russia builds up a rapid-deployment force in Kyrgyzstan, under the Collective Security Treaty (CST), Tajik members of parliament have expressed a desire for increased bilateral cooperation with Russia. (ITAR-TASS, 1632 GMT, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection) The Russian military maintains a strong presence in Tajikistan, primarily assisting with drug control along the Afghan border, but many Tajiks want to strengthen Russo-Tajik relations by integrating more deeply bilateral economic and trade activities. Tajik President Emomali Rahmonov, in a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, emphasized the importance

of a Russian technological and economic presence in Tajikistan's development. According to Rahmonov, both sides must be "united in the fact that it is necessary to raise radically the level of economic cooperation between the two countries." (ITAR-TASS, 0646 GMT, 11 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0411, via World News Connection)

Turkmenistan, which recently discovered a large gas and oil field in the Caspian Sea (the Shatut field), also has made gestures toward Russia. (ITAR-TASS, 1503 GMT, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection) During a recent visit to Moscow, Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov and Russian President Putin signed an energy deal worth up to \$500 billion over 25 years. The economic interests imbedded in such a relationship also led to the signing of a security accord. (EURASIANET, 15 Apr 03; via www.eurasianet.org) The collapse of Saddam Hussein's authoritative control over Iraq's oil reserves no doubt left an impact on the Turkmen leader, one of the more oppressive world leaders remaining in control of substantial oil reserves; the recent agreements with Russia may bolster Niyazov's level of confidence.

Kazakhstan, with its large energy reserves and a substantial Russian population, continues to work with Moscow. Putin stressed in a recent meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, "We are not just neighbors, we are close neighbors." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection) Nazarbaev, in clear reference to the importance of developing stronger ties, said that "a close neighbor is better than a distant relative." (INTERFAX, 1511 GMT, 15 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0415, via World News Connection) Putin met with Nazarbaev in Omsk and expressed concern that trade turnover between the two countries dropped 11 percent between 2001 and 2002. (ITAR-TASS, 1243 GMT, 15 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0415, via World News Connection) Both have agreed to become more active in promoting trade along the border regions. Furthermore, Putin urged that Russia and Kazakhstan integrate at a military level and "move to a joint defense of borders." (ITAR-

TASS, 1213 GMT, 15 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0415, via World News Connection)

Developing the military and countering calls for jihad

Under the CST, Russia has been working with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (as well as Belarus and Armenia) to develop the rapid-deployment collective forces, standardizing equipment and building up a presence in Kyrgyzstan. (ITAR-TASS, 1542 GMT, 8 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0408, via World News Connection) Kazakhstan, however, is taking steps to develop its defense industry. Nazarbaev has ranked the revival of the defense industry as one of his priorities, and said that new weapons should be developed and old arsenals restored. (INTERFAX, 1529 GMT, 15 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0415, via World News Connection) Learning from the experience of US-led forces in Iraq, the Kazakh military conducted exercises in the Caspian region of the country. According to Kazakh military sources, the Batys-2003 military maneuvers were the first of their kind in 11 years. (INTERFAX, 0623 GMT, 16 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0416, via World News Connection)

One reason for the Kazakh military exercises and the development of the rapid-deployment collective forces is the fear of militant Islam. Groups such as Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT) are increasingly active throughout the region. According to local police, HT pamphlets distributed in Chimkent in southern Kazakhstan had changed: "They used to be anti-Israel, and now they contain anti-American propaganda." (INTERFAX, 0815 GMT, 10 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0410, via World News Connection) HT literature circulated and confiscated in Kyrgyzstan called for a "jihad against the infidels who unleashed a war against Iraq." (INTERFAX, 1026 GMT, 6 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0406, via World News Connection) While the non-US military buildup in the region is not directly connected to such anti-American propaganda, anti-Americanism does represent an economic and security threat to the governments that are seen as being friendly with the US.

In Ufa, Russia, Mufti Talgat Tajuddin, head of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia, called for a jihad against the US, a statement that was downplayed by the Patriarchate of Moscow as "an emotional outburst." (ITAR-TASS, 1409 GMT, 4 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0404, via World News Connection) Regardless of the emotional nature of such pleas, they are often directed at an unsettled population and cause concern for the governments and more moderate Muslims.

Abdurashidkori Bakhromov, head of the Uzbek Muslim Board, said that "we should view such calls as actions misguiding the Muslims, but benefiting the destructive extremist groups and certain forces." (INTERFAX, 0806 GMT, 5 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0405, via World News Connection) Echoing those concerns, the spiritual leader of the Tajik Muslims and chairman of the Ulema Council, Amonullo Nematzoda, spoke against jihad, saying that it would only "increase bloodshed and the unwanted sufferings of ordinary people." (ITAR-TASS, 1020 GMT, 4 Apr 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-0404, via World News Connection)

While the cautions of Bakhromov and Nematzoda clearly reflect the positions of the government, the military buildup reflects the state's concern regarding the more radical Islamic influences, such as HT. And it is such threats, as well as mutual economic interests, that will pull the governments of Central Asia and Russia closer together.

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