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Russian Federation: Executive Branch and Security Services

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Yel'tsin recovery slow, staff still jockeying for position

As doctors warn Yel'tsin's recovery will take more time, his staff continue the infighting that has marked the president's convalescence. The appointment of MVD chief Anatoli Kulikov to the government as deputy prime minister, tasked with fighting economic crime and supervising tax and customs services, pulls this critical duty away from the purview of Anatoli Chubais. Chubais had been leading the charge for improved tax collection through the Provisional Emergency Commission created in October 1996. Control over economic policy has proven quite contentious since the summer, with overlapping and contradictory powers meted out between the presidential and governmental apparatus. This round would seem to go to the government as Chernomyrdin is said to have been the motivating force behind the decision to bring in Kulikov.

Yel'tsin also stepped in to force a public display of goodwill between the Defense Minister Rodionov and the Defense Council head Yuri Baturin. After days of sniping back and forth between the two over military reform, Yel'tsin ordered a joint press conference to demonstrate their commitment to work out a reform plan together. Yesterday (17 February) however, Yel'tsin acknowledged that the two had different "points of view", and claimed that he would make the final decision on military reform and funding. (OMRI, 18 Feb 97)

Old staffers shed new light

Interviews with former Yel'tsin Chief of Staff Sergei Filatov (Kuranty, 29 Nov 96) and former Press Secretary Sergei Medvedev (Moskovsky Komsomolets, 11 Nov 96) reveal some interesting details of Kremlin operations and intrigues.

Medvedev, in response to a question of whether or not Aleksandr Korzhakov had hired him as Press Secretary, explained that while the President had actually hired him, everyone who worked in the administration was interviewed by the president's bodyguard. The subject of his interview with Korzhakov centered on his biography, extent of loyalty to the president, and the nature of the post of press secretary. Medvedev did add, however, that Korzhakov never attempted to control the press service or "foist off any kind of information for official reports."

Sergei Filatov also had quite a bit to say about Korzhakov. According to Filatov, the strengthening of the Presidential Security Service came in the wake of the corruption scandals of 1993, when Rutskoi claimed to have "suitcases" full of information on corrupt officials. Korzhakov appealed to the president for the right to run checks on all administration staff. Filatov says, "This check was the beginning of everything. People collected compromising material -- true and untrue, verified and unverified, I do not know, this is for the procuracy to look into." Filatov also points out that it was not Korzhakov alone who gathered information on people, suggesting that the leaks of Kompromat could be coming from other quarters as well.

Filatov also described the smear campaign launched by Korzhakov, Barsukov and their security services to have him dismissed from the post of Chief of Staff. A newspaper article attacked the personnel policies of an unnamed "Benefactor," taken to be Filatov. When Filatov confronted Korzhakov over it, Korzhakov denied authorship but not the possibility that one of his men had done it. He then criticized Filatov's work for the president. Filatov believes Korzhakov then convinced Yel'tsin, through persuasion and misinformation, to replace him with Nikolai Yegorov.

RF SECURITY COUNCIL

Boris Berezovsky sues Forbes over mafia allegations

Deputy Secretary of the Security Council Boris Berezovsky has filed suit against Forbes magazine for libel in connection with an article in its December 30, 1996 issue. The article, published anonymously for fear of Berezovsky's retribution, details some of Berezovsky's financial transactions, as well as his ties with mafia organizations and his alleged involvement in the 1995 murder of Vlad. Listiev. In a press release distributed in connection with the suit, Berezovsky said. "The Forbes article should have been labeled as fiction. It is constructed on falsehoods and mean-spirited assertions that have nothing to do with the reality of my life. I deeply resent being falsely accused as someone who would ever physically hurt someone. I know who Paul Klebnikov [The Forbes editor he claims contacted him (under false pretenses) for the story] is and I know what he wrote, and he has nothing to worry about. To suggest otherwise is absolutely ludicrous. However, I do expect Forbes to retract the story and apologize to those it has hurt through this careless and highly unprofessional episode."

It may do well to note that Forbes is not the first, and by no means the only, publication to point out Berezovsky's mafia ties or his status as a suspect in the Listiev slaying. In an article published in The Observer, May 5, 1996, Andrei Piontkowski, a respected political analyst tied Berezovsky not only to the Listiev murder, but to Aleksandr Korzhakov as well: "When he was hauled in for questioning after Vladimir Listiev's murder (the media mogul murdered in March 1995), he was openly boasting about how he got out thanks to a phone call from Korzhakov. (...)"

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger

WEST

National Patriotic Front leader Zyuganov ambivalent about "Elders" hoax

Speaking to an audience at Northeastern University in Boston, MA on February 17, Communist Party and National Patriotic Front leader Gennadi Zyuganov said that he had read 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' but was "not sure if it is a real document. Maybe it was some type of fantasy. I believe that it is maybe considered to be some kind of political essay that you must know but not that doesn't mean that you will follow it, but not more than some kind of historical paper."

The Protocols, which began circulating in Russia in the late 1800s, claimed to reveal a plot by which Jews sought world domination through such devious means as organizing pogroms against their own villages. Richard Pipes, the historian of Russia, described the Protocols "as a scurrilous forgery concocted at the end of the nineteenth century by the tsarist police."

Audience members peppered Zyuganov with accusations that he is an anti-Semite. One quoted Zyuganov's book I Believe in Russia, in which he had written that "the ideology, culture and international attitudes of western countries are being influenced more and more by Jews." Zyuganov denied that members of his National Patriotic Front were anti-Semites and said that most anti-Semites had rallied around Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. (Recorded by ISCIP staff, 17 Feb 97).

Comment

National Patriotic Front leader Gennadi Zyuganov has failed again to dispel the suspicion that he remains an anti-Semite at heart. But, as one ISCIP fellow noted after the Q & A session at Northeastern, Zyuganov also revealed that not only Jews would be in trouble under an NPF regime. Asked whether the Communist Party that he leads should seek to make amends for the Gulags of its past regime, Zyuganov launched into an apparently irrelevant discussion of how much Russia had suffered during World War II. By indulging in a self-pity that diminishes even the most valiant struggles of Russia's past, Zyuganov reveals

exactly the sort of 'victim-complex' that has made Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic so popular -- and so dangerous.

Russia in violation of Chemical Weapons Convention?

Decrying White House pressure to abide by the Chemical Weapons Convention, foreign policy analyst J. Michael Waller has argued that a group of countries including Russia "maintain clandestine chemical weapons programs designed to elude detection."

The Clinton administration, Waller wrote, "has virtually ignored reports of Moscow's continuing covert development and production of binary nerve agents, and made no visible attempt to terminate the programs" until the violations were reported in The Washington Times in mid-February. Waller noted that claims of Russian scientists who had quit the secret weapons programs in disgust have been ignored for five years. (The Wall Street Journal, 13 Feb 97).

Fear of lack of prestige driving Russian anti-Western movement?

Comments by the deputy director of Moscow's Institute of U.S. and Canada Studies seemed to indicate that a fear of lacking prestige on the world stage is driving Russia's elites into opposition to the expansion of NATO. Assessing new U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Viktor Kremenyuk, deputy director of the institute, said that Albright's emphasis on Russia showed "a serious indication that the accent of U.S. foreign policy has changed slightly compared to the preelection situation." Before the election, Kremenyuk said, the White House had "tried to picture relations with Moscow as insignificant," as if Russia were "now just a regional power, is not very important for the United States." (Moscow Interfax in English, 1803 GMT 4 Feb 97; FBIS-SOV-97-024)

EAST AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Baltics as a buffer zone against NATO?

Vadim Lukov, the Foreign Ministry's director of foreign policy planning, said on 13 February that the Baltic states could not join any Western alliances and should serve instead as a buffer zone against the expansion of NATO, ITAR-TASS reported.

Russia wants the Baltic states to remain neutral in the growing dispute over NATO expansion, Lukov said. Moscow would prefer that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia work with Russia on the basis of "economic cooperation, the "indivisibility" of each state's security, and respect for human rights and national minorities," he said. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 32, 14 Feb 97)

SOUTHWEST AND SOUTH ASIA

Controversial sales to India, Iran

Moscow plans to sell India two nuclear power reactors in spite of U.S. objections, according to a report in The New York Times on 6 Feb 97. The sale appears to violate a 1992 agreement which Russia signed that prohibits the sale of nuclear technologies to states which have not allowed inspection of all their nuclear facilities. Russian Deputy Minister of Atomic Energy Yevgenii Reshetnikov said that Moscow and New Delhi had originally agreed on the sale in 1987. The nuclear suppliers agreement exempts deals concluded before 1992. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 27, 7 Feb 97).

The U.S. has also issued a diplomatic warning to Russia for allegedly transferring SS-4 missile technology to Iran that could threaten U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf, according to the Los Angeles Times and news agencies. The SS-4 has a range of 1,250 miles, giving Iranian warheads a range three times greater than that of its current weapons. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 31, 13 Feb 97).

Russian Federation: Regional Elections and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

Discussion of regional elections continues

Anatoliy Guzhvin has remained governor of Astrakhan Oblast, and Viktor Ishayev governor of Khabarovsk Kray. The Communist Oblast Duma Chairman Ivan Shabanov has won in Voronezh Oblast. Nikolay Vinogradov, member of the Russian Federation Communist Party, has won in Vladimir. In Kostroma the Communists' candidate, Viktor Shershunov, and current Oblast Administration Head Valeriy Arbuzov have gone through to the second round. Oleg Bogomolov, the candidate of the people's patriotic forces, has become governor in Kurgan. In Ryazan, Vyacheslav Lyubimov, member of the Russian Federation Communist Party, and Igor Ivlev, acting oblast administration head went through to the second round. In Perm, the current governor, Gennadiy Igumnov, and the publisher Sergey Levitan went through to the second round.

Ironically, in those regions where procedural problems occurred, the growing stabilization of the democratic process can be seen. In the Kurgan region for example, voters received ballots with only one name -- Oleg Bogomolov. The opposition, a businessman named Koltashev, refused to participate in the second round. This decision by the local electoral commission resulted in a call for a moratorium on future elections by the Central Election Commission in Moscow until the Federal Assembly could close legal loopholes. Significantly, the citizens group -- Movement for Honest Elections -- filed a protest with the Russian constitutional court. (Itar-Tass in English, 8 Dec 96, 2003 GMT)

The emerging Lebed power base

Colonel Aleksey Lebed, Aleksandr Lebed's brother, was elected chairman of the Republic of Khakassia during the second round of voting with 77% of the vote. Rumors that Aleksandr Lebed is forming a party to coordinate his almost certain run for the presidency are common. His brother in the Federation Council is certainly helpful. (Itar-Tass World Service in Russian, 22 Dec 96, 2130 GMT)

REGIONS

Kovalev insists on refugee return

Aleksandr Kovalev, the Russian President's Plenipotentiary Representative in North Ossetia and Ingushetia, said, "Without a return of refugees, the consequences of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict of 1992 cannot be eliminated.

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

The right to bear arms

Perhaps bowing to the realities of Russian contemporary life, President Yeltsin signed a bill permitting individuals to use guns in self-defense or in extraordinary situations to protect their lives, health or property. Under the law, before using arms, a person should clearly warn the attacker. If that is not possible, deadly force may be used as long as the authorities are notified within twenty-four hours. Presumably this will be the responsibility of surviving defendants. This bill is part of a long legislative trend of reconciling the needs for public safety with the state's inability to provide it. Just how Faustian this solution is, remains to be seen. (Itar-Tass in English, 16 Dec 96, 1648 GMT)

Russian Federation: Chechnya

By Miriam Lansky

Maskhadov's inauguration and the race for recognition

Despite his image as a moderate and Moscow's favorite, Alsan Maskhadov has stated that he favors Chechen independence and will push for international recognition. The Russian Foreign Ministry has made it clear that it will view the recognition of Chechnya by any country as an unfriendly act. Thus far there has been no indication that any state is ready to recognize Chechnya, but the chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament called on Russia to be the first. Vytautas Landsbergis, chairman of Lithuania's parliament, told a news conference: "It would be a normal decolonization method. I think Russia will opt for this path to

recognize both de facto and de jure that Chechnya can independently manage its matters and maintain international links." (ELTA, 29 Jan 97)

Indeed, the actions of the executive fall just short of formal recognition: Security Council Secretary, and Chechnya envoy, Ivan Rybkin attended the ceremony and personally presented Maskhadov with a letter of congratulations from President Yel'tsin in which the Russian president acknowledges that "the democratic elections in Chechnya on January 27 mark an important step toward the political settlement of relations between the authorities of Russia and Chechnya." (Interfax, 2 Feb 1997)

Nevertheless, Russia would regard representatives of foreign states attending the inauguration as interference in the internal affairs of Russia according to Mikhail Demurin, First Deputy Director of the Information and Press Department of the Foreign Ministry. (TASS, 5 Feb 97) According to the Chechen side, the Russian Foreign Ministry denied visas to delegations from Lithuania, Turkey, and the Netherlands that intended to attend the inauguration. Also air corridors for delegations from Ukraine and Jordan were not made available.

The only leaders of North Caucasian republics that attended President Aslan Maskhadov's inauguration were Magomedali Magomedov of Dagestan and Ruslan Aushev of Ingushetia. (Interfax, 12 Feb 97) This low turnout is hardly surprising since the first session of the Federation Council, which dealt with the budget, coincided with the inauguration on February 12. President Boris Nemtsov of Nizhniy Novgorod and Tatar President Mintimer Shaymiyev expressed their regret that they would have to attend the Federation Council session and sent state delegations to represent them. (Interfax, 10 Feb 97) Yet, it did not escape notice that Magomedov and Aushev were also the only North Caucasian Republic leaders who refused to sign the November 1994 address to the Russian President which urged him to "restore constitutional law and order in Chechnya" and constituted a pretext for the invasion.

Final vote count in presidential elections

On February 1 the Central Electoral Commission completed processing returns from all 437 polling stations. In total 241,951 people (59.3%) voted for Maskhadov. Shamil Basayev received 95,841 (23.5%) votes. Zelimkhan Yanderbiyev received 41,180 (10.1%) of the votes.

Voter participation was 407,696, or 79.3% of all those on the electoral rolls. (Interfax, 1 Feb 1997)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By CDR John G. Steele

Arms sales

Concerns have been raised about Russian transfer of SS-4 missile technology to Iran (1,250 mile range/3000 lb TNT (equivalent) warhead). This transfer would constitute a significant increase in Iranian surface-to-surface missile capability -- in range, accuracy and payload. Iran would then have the ability to target, among other things, U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia.

NATO expansion

Russian rhetoric is becoming increasingly hostile towards NATO expansion, but some voices of moderation are being heard. These groups see no threat from NATO, but do see a threat from the exploitation of the issue by reactionary elements. Anti-NATO (anti-Western) rhetoric is one of the few areas on which the most politically active elites seem to be able to find common ground.

In a stunning statement, the chief of Russia's Federal Security Service warned that NATO expansion could result in increased terrorist attacks against NATO facilities. The comment was widely perceived as a thinly veiled threat.

Turkey has indicated it may link its support for NATO expansion to EU membership (i.e., NATO expansion may be held hostage to a more forthcoming European attitude toward the Turks).

Russian military woes

The Russian Defense Minister, Igor Rodionov, stated the country's military was in such bad shape that the reliability of its nuclear weapons (and their command-and-control structure) was in doubt. This astounding statement met with little or no media interest. It would be hard to overstate the furor which would result from a similar statement by a Western nuclear power.

Russia's military may undergo de facto downsizing as a result of massive draft avoidance. Military reform efforts have been paid much lip service, but substantive change has not yet been forthcoming. Benign neglect may be the only way to effectively reduce forces in the face of entrenched bureaucracies.

60 Minutes recently ran a story about Russian military problems, which showed pictures of Russian conscripts begging on Moscow streets. These images must be extremely painful to a military which only six years ago was considered one of the finest in the world. Predictions continue of imminent Russian military collapse, leading to massive social upheaval.

Arms Control

The U.S. has accused the Russians of continuing to produce nerve gas, though the Russians deny it. This can only serve to make the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Treaty more problematic.

Russian military doctrine has been formally changed to allow for the first-use (or threat thereof) of nuclear weapons. Given the manifest atrophy of the conventional Russian force structure, this development is hardly surprising. The weaker Russia perceives itself to be, the harsher the rhetoric is likely to become.

International incidents

Russian border troops expelled (by firing on) Turkish fishermen poaching in Georgian waters. This is not the first instance of Georgian-based Russian troops acting unilaterally in the Black Sea.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

Next CIS summit scheduled

Moscow Interfax reported on February 5 that the likeliest date for the next summit of the CIS is 28 March. The meeting, originally scheduled to be held in Moscow in January, has been put off twice.

Lukashenka concerned about Russian-Ukrainian relations

Belarusian President Lukashenka said he was concerned about the deterioration of Russian - Ukrainian relations over Sevastopol "as a city and the chief fleet base." "This is a problem for the two countries. However, at the same time, this confrontation affects the general political climate in the CIS," Lukashenka said, adding that he could not ignore that. (Interfax, 6 Feb 97)

Solana surprised by press secretary's statement

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana was surprised when Russian Presidential Press Secretary Sergey Yastrzhembskiy claimed there was a secret agenda to Solana's tour of CIS nations. According to Moscow Interfax, Yastrzhembskiy indicated the hidden purpose was to confirm that NATO enlargement plans remained unchanged. Solana replied that he was personally invited by the presidents of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to visit their countries. Solana also indicated that he intended to visit all the 27 countries involved in the Partnership for Peace program, and that he intends to visit the Central Asian countries next March.

Preparing for CIS-China summit

The Voice of Russia World Service reported on February 1 that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin visited Beijing, meeting with Chinese diplomats to make preparations for a summit between Chinese and Russian leaders in Moscow next April. Moscow and Beijing are making preparations to sign a political document reflecting the stance of the two countries on the international situation, and to explain the current role of Russian-Chinese relations.

INTEGRATION

Several countries dissatisfied with CIS integration

ITAR-TASS reported on February 5 that Kyrgyzstan is dissatisfied with the current level of CIS integration. "Life itself demands deeper integration in the CIS," said Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev Akayev, who confirmed that his country is mostly cooperating with Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. He continued, "There is no alternative to . . . integration because it is the only way to develop our economies. We have no other markets than that of the CIS." Other Kyrgyz officials are concerned by the fact that although 128 agreements and accords have been concluded between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, the implementation of many of them leaves much to be desired. One official elaborated, saying, "Russia must not lose its power of attraction for all the CIS countries, the need for closer economic, political, and military cooperation between our countries is plainly evident." President Nazarbayev had a similar opinion, stating that the integration process within the CIS is proceeding slowly. Additionally, Kazakhstan supported the draft concept of the CIS's economic integration development at a meeting of CIS heads of government.

SECURITY

Rodionov describes Russia's spheres of interest

Russian Defense Minister Rodionov, when asked by what Russia's spheres of interest included replied, "First and foremost, Russia's sphere of strategic

interests includes the independent CIS states, with which we are linked by our past life in the all-Union home." (Trud, 11 Feb 97)

Lukashenka downplays Belarusian-Russian cooperation

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenka has denied the speculation that he wants to use the Belarusian-Russian Community in order to create "something similar to the former Soviet empire and again throw the continent into the times of the Cold War and confrontation." (Moscow Interfax, 6 Feb 97)

Pastukhov comments on CIS military coordination

The stepping up of military coordination among CIS member nations "is in no way a response to NATO enlargement and poses no threat to our partners," Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov told a round-table meeting in Moscow. He admitted that emergence of the Community of Russia and Belarus was not universally welcomed among CIS member nations. "The mistrust has to an extent been overcome, but a kind of jealousy and a suspicion that Moscow and Minsk are secretly planning something harmful to other CIS member states still exist," Pastukhov said. (Moscow Interfax, 4 Feb 97)

ECONOMY

Intra-CIS trading increasing

Last year marked a significant increase in trade among the CIS countries. (Minsk Belpan, 5 Feb 97)

Trans-Asian railway under construction

The Iranian Islamic Republic Railways (IIRR) has assured its participation in the trans-Asian railway project which is expected to link Europe and CIS countries to major emerging economies of Asia. (Tehran IRNA, 4 Feb 97)

Russia wants its money back

The debt payment by CIS countries to Russia will speed up in the current year. Russia received only 500 billion rubles from CIS countries toward the repayment of their indebtedness, mostly for energy carriers, in 1995. It expects to receive 1,000 billion rubles in 1996 and no less than 2,000 billion rubles in 1997. (ITAR-TASS, 31 Jan 97)

CIS countries selling arms

The former USSR republics are behaving "not quite decently" according to Mikhail Timkin, first deputy general director of the Rosvooruzheniye state-run arms trading company. CIS countries are offering the same military hardware as Russia does, but two or three times cheaper. (Moscow Interfax, 3 Feb 97)

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Alexandra S.Y. Kim

BELARUS

NATO's Solana rejects Lukashenka's non-nuclear zone idea

NATO Secretary General Solana welcomes the voluntary withdrawal of all former USSR nuclear weapons from Belarus to Russia in line with the Lisbon Protocol. However, Solana rejects President Lukashenka's proposal to establish a nuclear weapon free zone in Central and Eastern Europe (Interfax in English, 11447 GMT 30 Jan 97).

EU delegation investigates social and human rights situation

A delegation from OSCE and EU's Council of Europe visited Belarus to assess the socio-political situation, as well as the issues of death penalty referendum. The delegation interviewed "disgraced" members of the "legitimate" Supreme Soviet, President Lukashenka, and other members of the government (Rossiyskays Gazeta in Russian, 30 Jan 97 p.7). [Due to the violation of agreement on a moratorium on death penalty and failure to uphold the original Constitution,] Belarus was recently stripped of its special guest status at the

Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly session and its application for membership has been put on hold. A report on this investigation will be presented on February 24 to the European Union Council of Ministers (BELAPAN in English, 1827 GMT 31 Jan 97).

Popular Front supporters continue to picket at Russian Embassy

In Minsk, some 20 supporters of the opposition Belarussian Popular Front are protesting against Yeltsin's integration initiatives. They protest against the possibility of a political and economic unification of Russia and Belarus. There was no violence; however, the two leaders of BPF received a protocol on the breach of public order by the police. BPF will continue to protest until March 25 (Interfax in English, 1157 GMT 30 Jan 97).

Dissident parliament members meet

Forty-eight members of the Supreme Soviet loyal to the 1994 Constitution held a session on January 29. The session accepted Viktor Hanchar's proposal to form a Commission for a Legal Assessment of the Violations of the Constitution and Laws by President Lukashenka (Belapan in English, 0640 GMT 31 Jan 97).

MOLDOVA

Views on NATO expansion

Prime Minister Ion Cubac states, "Moldova has proclaimed its neutrality [as stated in the 1994 Constitution] and will strictly observe it with regard to NATO as well as the CIS military-political union. As before, Moldova's participation in the CIS will be limited to economic cooperation." Chisinau does not regard the enlargement as a threat to its security, but he insists that NATO needs to take Russia's interests into account in admitting new members. (Interfax in English, 0957 3 Feb 97)

Military assets will be sold

Andrei Turcanu, presidential spokesman, said salary and pension arrears may be partially covered from the sale of "useless" military equipments. The most likely scenario will be the sale of MiG-29 planes. Three years ago, the Chisinau cabinet sold several MiG-29 planes (Basapress in English, 1415GMT 1 Feb 97).

Prime minister on reforms

Prime Minister Ciubuc urged economic and governmental reforms to get ready for the March 1998 parliamentary elections. He stresses the urgency to repay the external indebtedness, including energy debts (Infotag in English, 1550 GMT 31 Jan 97).

Tiraspol accused of violating 1992 Agreement

The leadership of the Dniester region refuses an inspection of the Joint Control Commission for Peacekeeping to check the facilities in the security zone.

Sources reveal that Dniester armed units are quartered in the security zone and that parts of armaments are manufactured there. This action violates the 1992 peace agreement signed with Russia's mediation (ITAR-TASS in English, 1017 GMT 31 Jan 97).

President Lucinschi supports talks with Tiraspol on Transdniester issue

Lucinschi will soon appoint a full-time envoy to lead a team of experts to settle the Transdniester dispute. Lucinschi did not sign the memorandum for normalizing the relations which was initialed last June, but he now wishes to continue the negotiating process. However, Igor Smirnov, president of the self-proclaimed Transdniester Republic, states that he sees no point in continuing talks until the original memorandum is signed (Interfax in English, 1740 GMT 6 Feb 97).

President Lucinschi formed new government to avert crisis

Lucinschi explained that he had accepted the new Cabinet to avoid a parliamentary crisis. He explained that those in the previous government had

resigned, but continued to rule without bearing responsibility for what might happen in the country (Infotag in English, 1900 GMT 4 Feb 97).

UKRAINE

Talks begin with G-7 on Chernobyl shutdown

On Monday, Feb. 10, a Ukrainian official delegation in Washington started the three-day-long negotiations with the G-7 countries on how to shut down the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (Kiev Intelnews in English, 0044 GMT 11 Feb 97). Earlier, France had agreed to give financial assistance for the closure of the plant. It is targeted to close before the year 2000 (Interfax in English, 1528 GMT 30 Jan 97).

Kuchma seeks expansion of ties with NATO

Speaking at a conference in Davos, Kuchma stated, "We do not see any threat in NATO's expansion." However, he added, he is not quite pleased with the Partnership for Peace program. He wants to expand cooperation (ITAR-TASS in English, 1738 GMT 1 Feb 97).

Council of Europe sees resistance to EC capital punishment request

Council of Europe is pressing Ukraine to introduce a moratorium on capital punishment, but the Ukrainian government answered that "Ukraine's population refuses to see any alternative to capital punishment." The Ukrainian government has sent a bill concerning the additions and changes to the criminal code relating to capital punishment (ITAR-TASS in English, 0952 GMT 30 Jan 97).

Ukrainian aircraft in Asia cited and investigated

The sale of Ukrainian SU-17 M4 combat aircraft to Yemen was a barter deal, exchanged for medicines and some property, according to Colonel General Kuzmuk (Kiyevskiye Vedomosti in Russian, 30 Jan 97).

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakh party calls for ban on all protests

Kazakhstan's most powerful political party, the Party of People's Concord (also known as the Party of People's Unity, President Nazarbaev's party) has called on all other parties and public movements to refrain from staging any rallies, strikes or other protest actions in 1997 in order not to hinder government measures to stabilize the economy (reported by ITAR-TASS, 6 Jan 97). Instead, party leaders suggested that collective problem-solving and negotiated compromise should be the methods used to address popular dissatisfaction. It is estimated that approximately 10% (6 million people) of Kazakhstan's working age population is currently unemployed.

Workers on strike in southern Kazakhstan

RFE/RL reported on 21 January 1997 that the workers at the Achisay Polymetal plant in southern Kazakhstan had gone on strike to demand payment of their back wages. Local transport workers joined the strike on 20 January.

Boycott of auction for TV, Radio frequencies fails

An auction organized by Kazakhstan's Transport and Communications Ministry to sell the rights to television and radio frequencies took place as scheduled on 24 January 1997, despite efforts by a few independent media stations to stage a boycott in protest of the government's recent attempts to censor independent media broadcasts. However, the auction was deemed a failure because only four frequencies were actually sold. Due to the large number of stations which applied for frequencies, very few of them were able to garner a 3/4 majority of votes among the members of the tender commission. A second auction was scheduled for 28 January 1997, at which the remaining frequencies were sold.

US journalist found murdered in his apartment

Christopher Gehring, a US journalist and head of Internews, a USAID-funded project to support independent media stations, was found murdered in his apartment in Almaty on 9 January 1997. Police believe that Gehring was killed during the burglary of his apartment, due to the fact that his laptop computer and answering machine were missing. On 14 January police arrested three men in whose possession the missing items were found, and all three suspects subsequently confessed to Gehring's murder. However, there has also been speculation that his murder may have been in connection with his work. Apparently, Gehring had recently received a large bank loan to sponsor independent TV and radio stations at the media auction which took place on 24 January, and members of the journalist community have suggested that his murder could have been a contract hit.

Following Gehring's murder, the international Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP) sent a letter to President Nazarbaev, demanding that he ensure that Gehring's death be thoroughly investigated and asking for his public assurance that Kazakh authorities would protect the safety of all local and foreign journalists working in the country. The letter also contained a warning about the Kazakh government's recent efforts to suppress the independent media.

Kazakhstan plans more nuclear power plants

Moscow Interfax reported on 22 January 1997 that Vladimir Shkolnik, the Kazakh Minister for Science and New Technology, is formulating plans to build several more nuclear power plants with a total capacity of 4-6 million kilowatts over the next four to six years. One location under consideration is near Lake Balkhash (420 km north of Almaty), the site of an abandoned coal-fired plant. \$220 million have already been invested to prepare the site for construction, but Shkolnik stated that ultimately it would be up to the public to decide whether or not to go ahead with the plant's construction.

Kazakh railways face bankruptcy

The Kazakh government passed a resolution to grant the country's three railroad companies an additional year in which to settle their outstanding debts to the state budget. Their debts total approximately 65 billion tenge (\$1US=75.15 tenge). The Kazakh Commercial Bank is responsible for supervising the railroad companies and an audit of their finances is in progress (reported by ITAR-TASS, 20 Jan 97).

Pension, wage arrears equal to 40% of Kazakh GDP

At a meeting with government members and regional administration chiefs on 27 January 1997 in Almaty, President Nazarbaev stated that it would require 40% of Kazakhstan's GDP to pay the pension and wage arrears owed by the government to its citizens. He suggested that a special task force be established which would give him weekly reports on the steps being taken to clear these debts. He also ordered the government to come up with repayment plan by 1 March, on which date government leaders must issue a public announcement to inform its citizens of when they can expect to receive their pensions and wages. Local budget spending has been frozen until the pension and wage arrears are paid in full.

President Nazarbaev orders privatization to be completed by 1 July

At his 27 January meeting with government members and regional administration chiefs mentioned above, President Nazarbaev also ordered his Cabinet to complete the privatization of Kazakh state enterprises by 1 July 1997.

Approximately 88% of enterprises in basic economic sectors have already been privatized, however, President Nazarbaev stressed that the development of small- and medium-sized businesses still needs encouragement. Efforts made thus far by the Cabinet and regional administrations to promote the growth of these businesses have been a failure, Nazarbaev stated.

Kazakh Security Council approves new foreign policy guidelines

The main objectives of the new foreign policy guidelines approved by the Kazakh Security Council on 22 January 1997 are to establish a balanced relationship with Russia and China, as well as to improve ties with the US, Western Europe, India, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran. Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasymzhomat Toqayev also stated that his country intended to cooperate with the UN and its agencies and with the IMF and the World Bank.

Crime rate increasing in Kazakh armed forces

The Kazakh military prosecutor's office held a meeting on 14 January 1997, in order to discuss disciplinary problems in Kazakhstan's armed forces. In 1996 Kazakh servicemen were responsible for 3,065 of the crimes which were committed, and there were 203 deaths in the military, including 66 suicides. Many of the convicted servicemen were officers (277 officers were convicted in 1996). The solution proposed for reducing the crime rate among military personnel is to increase the servicemen's wages.

KYRGYZSTAN

Opposition leader found guilty of embezzlement

Topchubek Turgunaliyev, former chairman of the Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party (a pro-reform opposition party), was found guilty of embezzlement by a Bishkek municipal court and sentenced to a 10-year prison term and confiscation of all his property on 8 January 1997. He was accused of embezzling \$10,000 from the Bishkek University for the Humanities in 1993 when he was rector of the university. He allowed the deputy director, Timur Stamkulov, to withdraw \$10,000 from university funds. Stamkulov repaid only part of the money. Turgunaliyev was also accused of embezzling funds from the Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party in the fall of 1996, and was subsequently expelled from the party. His supporters claim that his arrest and conviction are politically motivated and stem from his opposition to President Akaev. Turgunaliyev received a suspended sentence for his activities during the 1995 presidential campaign, when he distributed leaflets which reportedly blackened President Akaev's character.

Human Rights Watch sent an appeal to President Akaev on 13 January 1997, asking him to overturn Turgunaliyev's conviction, on the grounds that the \$10,000 which he obtained from the Bishkek University for the Humanities was actually a loan. The university's chief accountant has stated that the university has no financial claims against Turgunaliyev. Human Rights Watch also protested the harshness of the sentence and the way in which the case had been handled. Since 1994, Turgunaliyev's case has been re-opened six times, due to disagreements over whether it should be tried in a civil or criminal court.

A demonstration of approximately 30 people was held in front of the Kyrgyz government building in Bishkek to protest Turgunaliyev's prison sentence, RFE/RL reported on 23 January 1997. The protesters also delivered petitions to President Akaev and to the Supreme Court.

New Kyrgyz opposition movement applies for registration

A new opposition movement, For Deliverance From Poverty, founded by Topchubek Turgunaliyev and Jumagazy Usupov in December 1996, applied for registration as an official opposition bloc on 21 January 1997. The movement has charged President Akaev's government with implementing policies which have caused delays in payment of wages, deterioration of social services, and a general decline in the standard of living in Kyrgyzstan. Both Turgunaliyev and Usupov were arrested at the movement's founding congress in December 1996. Usupov was released after 15 days.

Parties oppose privatization of electric company

On 8 January 1997, President Akaev issued a decree ordering the government to draw up plans for the privatization of Kyrgyzenergokholding, the country's largest electric power company. Seven political parties and public movements (including the Agrarian Labor Party, the local communist party, and the trade union which represents agricultural workers) issued a joint statement on 29 January

expressing their opposition to President Akaev's decree. They stated that privatization of Kyrgyzenergokholding would result in loss of government control over the electric power industry, and allow the company to shut off power to entire cities in Kyrgyzstan (presumably to those cities which are unable to pay for the electricity). This, in turn, would damage the development of the Kyrgyz national economy.

Kyrgyz government owed 600 million soms in back taxes

President Akaev expressed grave concern about the low level of state revenues in a 17 January address to senior law enforcement and financial officials. He accused the officials of failing to prevent economic crimes such as tax evasion, inaccurate payment of customs duties, failure to repay state loans, and misuse of state funds, and ordered them to crack down on these offenses. At a 20 January news briefing on the president's address, Deputy Finance Minister Alymbek Biyalinov stated that in 1996 more than 600 million soms (\$1US=17 soms) in tax revenues had gone uncollected and that approximately 50% of customs duties which are paid never reach the state treasury. He blamed the government's inability to pay wages, pensions, and welfare allowances on time on the lack of tax revenue.

TURKMENISTAN

Penalties increased for public morals violations

Amendments to Turkmenistan's Criminal Code which raise the penalties for the violation of "public morals" went into effect on 16 January 1997. Public morals violations include prostitution, black market transactions, participating or organizing illegal rallies and meetings, and hooliganism. Anyone found engaging in activities which violate public morals will be held by the authorities until the case is brought to trial. Penalties for these violations range from fines equal to 10 times the average monthly salary to prison terms of 8-10 years.

President Niyazov speaks out on corruption in police force

In a speech reported by Tashkent Radio Mashal on 23 January 1997, President Niyazov stated that prostitution is one of the most serious problems currently afflicting Turkmen society. He further stated that one of the reasons for the problem's gravity is the fact that many members of the police force allow prostitution rings to operate in return for bribes. Following his speech, 63 policemen were arrested and prosecuted. Tashkent Radio Mashal noted that the significance of this speech was the fact that it was the first time that President Niyazov publicly admitted the existence of serious problems with crime and corruption in Turkmenistan.

Foreign visitors to Ashgabat face restrictions

RFE/RL reported on 23 January 1997 (in OMRI Daily Digest) that the mayor of Ashgabat has issued an order that all future foreign visitors will be required to stay either in apartments which they lease from the city, or in officially approved hotels. Turkmen government offices and businesses which invite foreign visitors to the city must register their presence with local authorities.

Transfer of state farm land to private owners begins

On 18 January 1997, President Niyazov presented the first certificates of private land ownership to 80 people. This constituted the first step in his program for agricultural reform in 1997, which is intended to decrease Turkmenistan's dependence on agricultural imports. Land formerly belonging to state and collective farms is to be transferred to private ownership by 1 March. The new owners may not resell the land or give any part of it to anyone else.

Gas pipeline to Iran to be completed by October 1997

Turkmenistan plans to finish the construction of a natural gas pipeline from the western Karakum desert to Iran by October of this year. The construction is currently underway and is proceeding at a rate of 800 meters per day. Iran is funding 90% of the construction cost (\$190 million) in return for Turkmen natural gas deliveries for the first 3 years after the pipeline's completion. When the

pipeline is finished it will be the first Caspian gas export route to bypass Russian territory entirely.

Turkmen, Azerbaijani Disagreement Over Caspian Oil Fields

In an interview with the British Financial Times (published on 23 Jan 97) President Niyazov made the statement that the Azeri oil field located in the Caspian Sea is actually in Turkmen territorial waters, and therefore does not belong to Azerbaijan. The Turkmen government also disputes Azerbaijan's claim to the Caspian Chirag oil field. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry responded to President Niyazov's statement by admitting that there were ownership questions about a number of oil fields which are located along the border between the two countries' territorial waters and suggesting that a joint commission should be set up to discuss the issue. However, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry also stated that the Azeri and Chirag oil fields are clearly located within its own territorial waters. This dispute could have negative repercussions for an agreement which Azerbaijan signed with a consortium of international oil companies (including US, British, and Russian oil companies) in 1994 to develop the Azeri and Chirag oil fields in a \$7.5 billion project. The two countries have agreed to begin a dialogue soon in order to try to resolve their dispute.

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbek parliament approves 1997 budget

The Uzbek parliament (the Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Uzbekistan) passed a resolution on 27 December 1996 to approve the state budget draft for 1997 and to release the official results of the 1996 state budget, as given by the Cabinet of Ministers (published on 3 Jan 97 in the Tashkent Narodnoe Slovo). The 1997 state budget sets the deficit ceiling at 3% of Uzbekistan's GDP; increases allocations for the development of priority investment projects and for the development of infrastructure in rural areas; and pledges to increase public social welfare, based on quarterly budget returns. Domestic debt repayment is to be completed within the next five years. The official results of the 1996 state

budget are as follows: state revenues totaled 182.5 billion soms, expenditures totaled 202.1 billion soms, and the resulting deficit came to 19.5 billion soms (approximately 3.5% of Uzbekistan's 1996 GDP).

Uzbekistan's foreign trade volume increasing

According to an ITAR-TASS World Service report on 11 January 1997, Uzbekistan's trade relations with foreign (non-CIS) countries are increasing. Today, Uzbekistan engages in trade with 80 countries, as opposed to 60 countries three years ago. Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover has nearly doubled in the past year, especially with the developed, industrialized countries, and apparently the US is one of its leading foreign trade partners.

President Karimov ends first official visit to Czech Republic

President Karimov completed his first official visit to the Czech Republic on 16 January 1997 by signing a joint statement on the development of bilateral cooperation with President Havel. A cooperation treaty between the Uzbek Foreign Economic Relations Ministry and CKD Praha Holding (the leading industrial company in the Czech Republic) was also signed. In their discussions about NATO, President Karimov assured President Havel that Uzbekistan does not support Russia's opposition to NATO expansion and does not intend to join any type of military alliance with Russia.

President Karimov meets Slovak prime minister

President Karimov met with Prime Minister Meciar in Bratislava on 17 January 1997. As a result of their discussions, six agreements were signed on such topics as the cancellation of visa duties for holders of diplomatic and service passports; cooperation in tourism; international passenger and cargo transport; aviation; and fighting organized crime.

New law on political parties takes effect

A new law on political parties came into effect in Uzbekistan on 7 January 1997. The law forbids the formation of political parties based on ethnicity or religion, as well as those which promote war or subversion of the constitutional order. The Uzbek Supreme Court has the power to ban or suspend any political party found guilty of persistent legal violations. (OMRI Daily Digest, No.5, Part I, 8 Jan 97)

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