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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

As the government teeters

Vladimir Putin's presidency has differed in many ways from Yel'tsin's regime; one of the most notable absences had been the constant flux in government and Kremlin personnel. This year, however, Putin seems to be tilting toward a shake-up in the government. Or is it possible that he has discovered that Yel'tsin's trademark volatility in personnel decisions actually served several important aims in bureaucratic management? It helped balance factions, playing them off against each other in a constant low-grade struggle. Also, uncertainty in office was a check on most (!) officials since the threat of ouster and replacement dampens long-term corruption schemes (it is notable that some apparatchiki take what they can get while in office, but here the threat of a possible audit by the new regime was wielded on one or two occasions). Finally of course, reshuffles permit the shifting of responsibility for intractable problems away from the Kremlin.

The creation of the Public Chamber, and the tasking of the Chamber to deal with "National Priority Projects," also seemed to represent another step into a familiar pattern of duplication of authorities between the Government and the Kremlin. At President Putin's recent press conference, a Rossiyskaya gazeta correspondent addressed the issue of duplication directly: "Why has such a strange mechanism been created to work on these (national priority) projects when we already have a functioning parliament and government?" (1) Putin's answer could scarcely comfort the Prime Minister: "The Prime Minister heads the government of the Russian Federation and is responsible for overseeing everything that happens.... However, there were justified reasons, in my view, for

creating an additional mechanism.... These reasons are namely that we want to avoid the kinds of mistakes that have already been talked about here, the misappropriation of the funds allocated for these projects—and this is a huge amount...." (2)

Is that a not-so-polite way of saying that Fradkov is in charge, but he and his ministerial friends are so corrupt and inept that they can't be counted on to implement the business of the country?

In addition to the public backhand at the press conference, Prime Minister Fradkov had another rude surprise when Putin invited his one-time rival and resurgent foreign policy rudder, Yevgeni Primakov, to comment on the work of the government. At a meeting ostensibly slated to discuss the work of the Primakov-led Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Putin was informed about the Chamber's excellent work in fostering cooperation with Arab states" "We are cooperating with all Arab world countries," Primakov beamed. (3) He also enthused that the Chamber was working "effectively" and "properly" across all of Russian territory. (4)

When asked by the president about his experience working with the Prime Minister, specifically on the issue of food distribution for the military, Primakov let loose: "The progress is poor." (...) "Russia has 173 territorial chambers of commerce and industry today. They all may [sic] control the food of the army. But this business plan has stalled because of Fradkov's government." (5)

Primakov's remarks appear not to have startled the president. Perhaps Primakov (and possibly Putin) decided to wade into the current dispute between the Defense/First Deputy Prime Minister, Sergei Ivanov, and the Prime Minister. (Please see "RF Armed Forces: Internal Affairs" below for more on this dispute.) Perhaps it is another signal to Fradkov that his government's days are numbered.

Stoking the rumor mill's flames is the question of Fradkov's health. The Prime Minister reportedly missed two weeks of work (and one meeting, which was chaired in his absence by Dmitri Medvedev) for either a cold or diabetes-related problems. (6) While some analyses tie the possible dismissal of the government to the search for a successor to Putin, it seems far more likely that the issue of a successor falls further down Putin's list of priorities (if not the lists of his friends and deputies), and that the move is contemplated to deal with possible crises, such as the possibility of another terrorist attack, or a mid-term issue as mundane as a potential decrease in oil revenues. It is interesting, however, that criticism of the government seems to be focusing on military issues and regional questions. The topics suggest the source of the complaints and may point to perceptions about "heirs apparent."

In his own words: Putin and free speech

In his January press conference, President Putin was asked about a stain on a community perpetrated by a newspaper report. "A word is not a sparrow," the questioner cautioned. President Putin's response, meant, no doubt, to comfort the correspondent, riffed on the sparrow metaphor: "As to the saying a word is not a sparrow, Zoshchenko said that a word is not a sparrow—once it flies out you cannot catch it. But in Russia, we chase them, catch up with them and put them in prison." (7)

Putin had more blunt, if not more threatening, comments for those who questioned Russia's status, particularly in foreign affairs. Interestingly, the questioner asked what foreign press Putin read, but Putin responded with a sweeping denunciation of his foreign critics, "die-hard Sovietologists...who do not understand what is happening in our country and do not understand the changing world." "There is not even any sense in entering into discussion with them.... They really deserve no more than a 'Bah! Be off with you,' and that's that." (8) I guess that would be a "no" to a subscription to The ISCIP Analyst?

2005 Roundup: Putin decrees FSB personnel restructuring

President Putin has made official adjustments to his decree on the structure of the Federal Security Services. The Director of the FSB will now have two first deputies, one of whom will have specific oversight of the Border Guard Troops. (For more on the Border Guards, please see "Security Services" below.) The Director also will have three deputies and a state secretary. The previous structure of the FSB upper echelons would have been set by a decree of the president, following the proposals of the Kozak administrative reforms, which specifically abolished the positions of first deputies throughout the government.

(9)

Source Notes:

- (1) Transcript of the Press Conference of the Russian and Foreign Media, 31 Jan 06 via www.kremlin.ru.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) "Primakov tells Putin about CCI work with foreign partners," Itar-Tass, 6 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) "Putin asks to accelerate administrative reform," SKRIN Market & Corporate News, 8 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) "A False Start for the Prime Minister's Dismissal," Izvestiya, 15 Feb 06; What the Papers Say (WPS) via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Transcript, Ibid.
- (8) Transcript, Ibid.
- (9) Interfax, 2 Dec 05; FBIS Translated Text via WNC.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By John Kafer

Border Guard Troops

Last fall, Russian Border Guards transferred control of the Tajikistan/Afghanistan border to Tajik control, representing a reduction in the presence of Russian Border Guards outside of Russia's borders. The Border Guard Service, organized under the Federal Security Service (FSB), is charged to protect Russia's borders and administer the ports of entry, but those boundaries changed substantially after the breakup of the Soviet Union, eventually drawing most border troops back to the new Russian borders. While border troops clearly remain active in certain CIS countries, including some that do not share borders with Russia, the extent of their activity remains largely unknown. Meanwhile, the number of Border Guard troops continues to increase and Russia substantially increased their funding for 2006.

Border Guard activity outside of Russia

Following the Tajikistan civil war, Russia and Tajik authorities agreed to transfer control of the Tajik border from Russian to Tajik border troops. The original agreement projected the complete withdrawal of Russian troops by early 2005, later postponed to begin in August, perhaps extending into 2006. (1) Unlike planned military withdrawals in several other CIS states, which were often substantially delayed, Russia formally transferred control of the Tajikistan/Afghanistan border to Tajik border troops on October 19, 2005, largely adhering to the original timeline. At Tajikistan's request, Russia will maintain only a small contingent of senior Border Guard advisors in Tajikistan. (2)

Russia continues to emphasize security coordination and information sharing with neighbor states, including Russian leadership of the formal Council of the Leaders of CIS Security Organs and Special Services (SORB). While the footprint of Russian Border Guard troops on foreign soil has diminished over the years (the mission to patrol and protect Russia's borders would not seem to require any border troops outside of Russia), they have gone beyond the framework of coordination and cooperation to maintain a presence in several

countries. For example, officials in Armenia's National Security Service claim they are grateful for the assistance of Russian Border Guards who patrol over 400 km of Armenia's border with Iran and Turkey. (3) In a recent interview, FSB Director, Nikolai Patrushev stated "In our cooperation with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan we take into account Russian border guards' presence on the territory of these states." (4) He did not elaborate on what they are doing in those states, three of which do not share a border with Russia.

Moscow funds plan to improve borders

While Russia has drawn border troops back from several CIS states, someone has a plan for them; they have grown from an estimated 140,000 troops three years ago to their current size of an estimated 160,000 and received a substantial budget increase. (5) A September 2005 report announced that the Duma would approve a 30% increase to the Border Guard Service budget to a total of over R45 billion. (6) While one certainly can expect Russia to spend a large amount of money protecting its borders (the country has the longest borders in the world), the size of the increase indicates a definite plan to improve the financing of the Border Guard Service at a pace substantially greater than the other security services or the military.

A consistent message from senior Russian officials emphasizes their efforts to improve border fortifications, particularly in the North Caucasus. Last May, Army-General Vladimir Pronichev, head of the Border Guard Service, outlined a future development program for which R15 billion, allocated over two years, is earmarked to improve border fortifications, primarily along the Russian-Georgian border. The program includes building 1,341 facilities to support three areas of development: improving border guards' living conditions, installing space communications systems to enable transmission of a real-time "picture" to the FSB headquarters in Moscow, and installing video and radar surveillance systems. (7)

The September budget announcements indicated support for the program. Lt-Gen Viktor Trufanov, deputy head of the Border Guard Service, stated that the 2006 budget included R6.2 billion for border protection and fortification, a four-fold increase from 2005. He confirmed the money was part of the five-year Russia State Border program to build over 1,300 installations throughout the North Caucasus and along the Russian-Kazakh border. (8) A later budget announcement stated that R1.6 billion from the 2006 budget increase would be spent on switching to a contract system of recruitment. (9) It appears that these two areas of improvement, contract soldiers and border installations, account for nearly all of the 30% funding increase; the remainder of the budget increase accounts for a mere six percent.

More recent announcements indicate that officials intend to follow through with the plan. In a January interview, Colonel General Mansur Valiyev, Senior Deputy Director of the Border Guard Service, acknowledged the five-year plan to construct border facilities including modern visual and technical controls. He also highlighted the fact that over 250 of 600 border guard vessels (ships, boats and tenders) are beyond modernization and must be replaced. (10) President Putin, during a recent speech to the board of the FSB, commended the border troops for their work implementing the “Russia’s State Border” program, particularly in the North Caucasus. (11)

Will plans survive military reorganization?

Reports of efforts to reform Russia’s military agencies are proliferating once again. The aggregate strength of armed forces within the Interior Ministry (MVD), the Emergencies Ministry, and the FSB (primarily border troops) is comparable to the Armed Forces in the Ministry of Defense. The parallel structures often result in duplication of resources, manpower, and loss of efficiency. President Putin recently attacked the current establishment for its redundancy and inefficient spending. Once again, proposals are surfacing to unite the various armed forces

within the security ministries. (12) A less comprehensive proposal to use the Armed Forces increasingly in security and law enforcement roles, would transfer some border guard troops (as well as MVD) to the Armed Forces. So far, the Border Guard Service appears to have developed a longer-term and a short-range strategic plan for improvement. If the reorganization rumors come to pass, the new bureaucracy created, along with its new priorities, could jeopardize the vision established for the Border Guard Service.

Russia has been trying to reorganize its military establishment since shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, but the security structure remains essentially the same. Although some reorganization may occur within each of the security apparatuses, there are too many influential stakeholders among the power ministries to make major reform likely. Additionally, reducing the flow of terrorists in the North Caucasus will remain a priority. Therefore, fueled by the increase in petrol dollars, the Border Guard Service will likely follow through on efforts to build more border fortifications and improve border security.

In our last issue, an incident in Blagoveshchenks, in the Republic of Bashkortostan was misidentified as occurring in Blagoveshchensk in the Far Eastern District.

Source Notes:

(1) The ISCIP Analyst (formerly the NIS Observed: An Analytical Review), Vol IX, Number 12, 15 Jul 04.

(2) "Tajik President Hails Russia's Role in Maintaining Regional Security," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 21 Oct 05 via Lexis-Nexis.

(3) "Armenia Commander on Cooperation with Russia Border Guards," ITAR-TASS, 4 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.

- (4) "Partnership for Security. FSB Strengthening Ties With Foreign Counterparts" FSB Director Patrushev Interview by Timofey Borisov, Rossiyskaya gazeta, 23 Jan 06, OSC Translated Text via WNC.
- (5) The Military Balance 2005-2006, International Institute for Statistical Studies (Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, London, UK), Oct 05.
- (6) "The Budget of the Border Guard Service Will Increase," Krasnaya zvezda, 22 Sep 05; What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (7) "Russia Border Guard Chief Outlines Future Development Plans," ITAR-TASS, 27 May 05, FBIS Translated Text via WNC.
- (8) "Russia to Increase Border Financing Fourfold in 2006," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 2 Sep 05; via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Ibid, Krasnaya zvezda.
- (10) "Border Service Switches to Contracts" by Boris Dmitriyev, Voenno-promyshlenny kurier, No 49, 28 Dec 05 – 10 Jan 06; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Speech at a Meeting of the Board of the FSB, Kremlin.ru, 7 Feb 06 via JRL 2006 #37.
- (12) "The End of Collective Armies" by Alexi Alexandrov, Rossiiskie vesti, No. 39, 3 Nov 05; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Marisa Payne

Russia's rendezvous with rogue regimes.

Since President Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, Russia has sought to create diplomatic influence with so-called rogue states around the world. Lately, Russia has established itself successfully as a key player in the controversy surrounding Iran's nuclear ambitions. While Russia officially has strayed little from the common IAEA line, including agreements to allow the IAEA to report Iran's recalcitrance to the United Nations Security Council, Russia's insistence on waiting until March for any action actually has provided Iran with precious time to

continue on its path to acquire nuclear weapons – an outcome that IAEA was set up to avoid. Now, Russia is hoping to become a decisive force by becoming a conduit through which the United States and Europe can communicate with the newly-elected Hamas leadership in the Palestinian territories.

As one-fourth of the Middle East Quartet, which also includes the United States, the European Union and the United Nations, Russia officially has established itself as one of the major powers that seeks to influence policy in that region. Since 2003, Russia has aligned itself with the policies of the Middle East Quartet's "Road Map," which calls for a peaceful two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. Sergei Lavrov continued to promulgate the official Quartet line in a February 7 statement, stating that Russia "is hoping for the formation of a viable Palestinian government which will reaffirm Israel's right to exist." (1) On the same day, President Vladimir Putin stated, during a press conference in Spain, that although Hamas is viewed as a terrorist organization by the other nations and institutions in the Quartet, it would be a mistake to impose sanctions on the Palestinian Authority. He continued, "I have certain ideas about what we can do and how we can go about [establishing a peaceful Middle East]." (2)

Two days later, Putin's "certain ideas" were revealed to the chagrin of the remaining members of the Quartet. On February 9, Russian officials extended an open invitation to Hamas leaders asking them to come to Moscow for diplomatic talks. Aleksandr Kalugin, Russia's special envoy to the Middle East, was quoted by Russia's Interfax news agency, "What we want is for [Hamas] to respect previous agreements and that there should be no terrorist acts...And, of course, they must move towards the recognition of Israel's right to exist." (3) Israeli cabinet member Meir Sheetrit explained his country's perceived betrayal by accusing Putin of "stabbing Israel in the back," adding, "I wonder what Putin would say if we invited the Chechens here and talked to them." (4)

Only a few weeks earlier, Russia had been a cosignatory of the quartet demand that dealing with Hamas be contingent on that organization renouncing terrorism, disbanding its armed network + recognizing Israel's right to exist—demands that Hamas has rejected explicitly since the Palestinian elections. While it is possible that Russian officials may believe they can convince Hamas to accept the existence of Israel and become partners in the peace process, it is more plausible that Russia is using its leverage to assert itself, once again, as a viable world player. A researcher at the Carnegie Endowment's Moscow office, Aleksei Arbatov, voiced the latter view: "Russia wants to win global clout by acting as a mediator amid growing tensions between the West and the Islamic world." (5) Arbatov pointed out that many researchers are beginning to see parallels between Russian policy in the Middle East now and former Soviet Middle East policy: "The Soviet Union was engaged in Mideast games for decades and got nothing in return. It's useless to get involved in that again. It may bring some tactical benefits, but incur big strategic damage." (6)

Russia is performing a dangerous balancing act on a shaky wire. Russia is using its leverage with Iran and the Palestinian Authority to ensure their status on the world scene, and not necessarily for altruistic motives. Putin fancies himself as the link between East and West, but, in reality his policies could make him a vulnerable target from all sides. His policy toward Iran has given the Iranians precious time to pursue a nuclear arsenal; his recent arms deal with Iran to provide that country with a fleet of missiles, has given the country the capabilities needed to defend a nuclear weapons cache (7); and, his goal to engage Hamas has startled and may alienate many of the very countries Russia hopes to impress.

Russian reasoning behind their actions regarding Iran and Hamas is perplexing. It seems unlikely that Russia does not realize it is allowing and even helping Iran acquire nuclear weapons. Questions abound: Why would Russia want these weapons to sit just on the other side of Georgia – a country over which Russia

would like to hold the only real influence? Why would Russia risk alienating itself from the leading powers of the world to legitimize an organization that has been declared a terrorist institution by much of the world? (especially in light of one of Putin's latest statements on terrorism: "No civilized nation can allow itself the luxury of negotiating with terrorists because negotiations with terrorists only weaken the state and strengthen the terrorists.") (8)

Hamas has expressed a desire to establish relations with "Islamic," "Arab," and "communist" countries, but has not specifically answered whether those categories include Russia. (9). Either way, Russia is not likely to possess any real negotiating power regarding the policies Hamas chooses to pursue, especially as long as Russia aligns itself with the Quartet.

Likewise, Russia does not seem to be asserting any real power over Iranian nuclear ambitions. Russia offers enrichment deals and trying to bargain, but leaves it up to the Iranians whether they wish to accept the terms. If they do not perceive the Russian deals as beneficial to their nuclear programs, there is no real incentive held out for Iran to accept a deal. Konstantin Kosachev, a member of the lower parliament who is said to be "Kremlin-connected" stresses Russia's supposed weakness toward Iran, claiming that Russia has "practically no levers to put pressure on Iran." (10)

Iranian officials confirmed Russia's supposed lack of influence in the region by indefinitely postponing talks that were supposed to occur on February 16. (11)

Muhammad cartoon conspiracy?

In the wake of the "spy rock" scandal that accused four British diplomats of spying by means of a computer-equipped mock rock in a park, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has surfaced once again in the news regarding a new, even more ridiculous conspiracy. However, this time, instead of the FSB accusing British diplomats, a former FSB lieutenant colonel, who now lives in

London, has accused his former FSB colleagues of planting in a Danish newspaper the infamous Muhammad cartoons, which have sparked extremist violence around the globe.

Ekho Moskvyy reported that Aleksandr Litvinenko revealed that a culture editor, Fleming Rose, of the Danish paper that ran the cartoons was working in conjunction with the FSB: "I have data that this individual [Rose] has direct links to Russian special services, the FSB. He is married to a Russia woman. His wife's father is a KGB general. This man was the first or among the first to have written in Denmark that Akhmed Sakayev killed a priest, father Filip, who subsequently turned out to be alive. When I looked at these materials, I put two and two together and was left in no doubt at all that it is Russian special services which are behind this whole provocation." (12)

Rose denied any involvement with the FSB or KGB and has apologized to the Muslim community for his involvement in publishing the cartoons. (13)

At the time of press, Russia had not addressed Litvinenko's accusations, but Russian President Vladimir Putin did condemn the publication of the cartoons while addressing journalists in a February 7 press conference during his state visit to Spain. While he strongly criticized the creation and publication of the cartoons (he compared them to child pornography and devoted some five sentences to that condemnation), he only devoted one sentence to criticism of the extremist violent reactions: "[E]xtremist manifestations are very dangerous from any quarters and we very much hope that Muslim religious leaders and the leaders of the Muslim world will be able to bring this situation under control." (14)

While not at all corroborating Litvinenko's conspiracy theory, which seems to say more about the shady connections between the Soviet-era KGB and today's FSB than anything else, Putin's clearly light chiding of the extremist reactions versus his sharp condemnation of the publication of the cartoons does illuminate

Russia's current policy line regarding the Middle East: Putin is trying to appease the East and the West. The real question is: how long before that policy – and not a silly conspiracy – leads to a volatile eruption?

Source Notes:

- (1) "Russia's Lavrov hopes Palestinians will accept Israel's right to exist," BBC Monitoring, 7 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Transcript of "Interview to the Spanish Media," 7 Feb 06 via president.kremlin.ru.
- (3) "Russia-Hamas talks anger Israel," BBC News, 9 Feb 06, via news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4701312.stm.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) "Russia seeks to expand its global clout by reaching out to rogue regimes," 10 Feb 06, AP Worldstream via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) "Foreign Relations," 8 Dec 05, ISCIP Analyst via <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol11/ed1104.html#foreign>.
- (8) Transcript of "Interview to the Spanish Media," 7 Feb 06 via president.kremlin.ru.
- (9) "Russia-Hamas talks anger Israel," 9 Feb 06, BBC News via news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4701312.stm.
- (10) "Russia walking fine line in Iran nuclear standoff," 8 Feb 06, Prime-Tass via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) "Iran Moves Forward on Atomic Production," 13 Feb 06, New York Times via nytimes.com.
- (12) "Former FSB man says Russian secret service behind cartoon row," 7 Feb 06, BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Transcript of "Interview to the Spanish Media," 7 Feb 06 via president.kremlin.ru.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Robyn Angley

Spy rocks and NGO scandals – Vindication?

In a fiasco that could have significant impact on Russian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive foreign funding, the Russian secret services (FSB) have accused members of the British embassy of espionage. The scandal centers around what has become known as the “spy rock,” a transmitting device disguised as a rock that supposedly received and dispatched intelligence information from its repository in a park in central Moscow. Of the four British embassy employees “implicated” in the scandal, one of them, Marc Doe, had substantial ties to Russian NGOs. Doe is the second secretary of the British embassy in Moscow and overseer of the Global Opportunities Fund, a section of Britain’s foreign office which dispenses money to NGOs.

The espionage story broke on 22 January when Rossiya, the state-owned television channel, broadcast a show entitled “Spies.” The program centered on the “discovery” of the spy rock by the FSB and the alleged involvement of the British embassy. The second half of the show switched the focus to Britain’s ties with Russian NGOs, purportedly showing documents signed by embassy personnel and recording the receipt of money by NGOs. Among those implicated were the prominent human rights organization Moscow Helsinki Group and the Eurasia Foundation.

The story follows closely on the heels of the passage of an unpopular law mandating stricter oversight of NGOs by the state. The law was protested by many Western governments, including the United Kingdom. The law was widely

interpreted as the Kremlin's attempt to squelch the development of a Russian "Color Revolution," such as those that occurred in Georgia and Ukraine. The "disclosure" that a spying British embassy employee played a key role in the disbursement of Western funds to Russian NGOs constitutes an attempt to justify the harsher NGO legislation.

Pressing its advantage, the state has announced its appeal to the Moscow Basmany District Court to close the Russian Human Rights Research Center on the grounds that it has not reregistered since 1999. (1) The Center is the umbrella organization for 12 NGOs, including the Moscow Helsinki Group and the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees. The two organizations have proved a thorn in the side of the Kremlin administration and its military apparatus on numerous occasions, most notably over the situation in Chechnya. In response, the Moscow Helsinki Group has announced its intention to sue state-owned Rossiya and Channel One as well as Gazprom-owned NTV over their broadcasts of the allegations that it is funded by the British secret services. Predictably, the group does not expect a favorable response. Its leader, Lyudmila Alekseyeva, said it was prepared to take its case to the European Court of Arbitration in the likely event of an unfavorable hearing in the Moscow Arbitration Court. (2)

The Public Chamber, which met for the first time on 22 January, is also getting in on the action. It has asked Putin not use the "British Scandal" as an excuse for curbing civil society, but also has proposed special regulations for NGOs receiving state funding along the lines proposed by Putin in July 2005. (3)

The irony of the situation is that, spy rocks aside, the British funding of NGOs was done in a completely legal and transparent manner. Unfortunately, now NGOs have been linked to foreign spies because of the broad media coverage. It will be difficult to recover the lost ground and the legitimacy needed to counter authoritarian controls over NGOs and civil society generally in light of the events of the last few weeks.

Hazing, Soldiers' mothers and Private Sychev

The recent disclosure of the case of Private Andrei Sychev has brought increasing attention to the well-known but intractable problem of hazing in the Russian military. Private Sychev was subjected to beating and torture by other servicemen, then left without medical treatment for three days while his condition worsened. His legs and genitals had to be amputated once he finally did receive medical care. Unfortunately, Sychev's case is by no means unusual, although the response of military authorities is telling. Sergei Ivanov, Minister of Defense, shunted questions about the case when he first learned of it from journalists, saying that if it had been a serious incident, he would have heard about it. (4) The official response changed soon after authorities realized that it was, indeed, a serious incident and as well as a public relations disaster. Putin promised money to cover Sychev's hospital expenses and discussed the possible implementation of an earlier scheme to create a military police force.

Hazing often goes unreported in the media or to upper military officials. Many of the cases that do come to light do so through the offices of the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees, which have been campaigning against hazing in first the Soviet and then the successor Russian army since the latter portion of the Soviet Afghan War. This organization offers a valuable service in helping conscripts and their families deal with issues such as hazing, deferments, and even collection of state allotments for conscripts' families if the soldier dies in action. The group is led by Valentina Melnikova. Neither of Melnikova's two sons served in the army because she got involved with a group of soldiers' mothers when her oldest son was up for the Soviet draft in 1989. She has been involved ever since. The soldiers' mothers have proven remarkably effective in helping conscripts and their families negotiate interactions with the military. It has proven one of the relatively few Russian organizations to develop solid popular support. This effectiveness in challenging the state and in holding it accountable for its military actions are the driving factors behind the state's attempts to shut the Union down

by closing its umbrella organization, the Russian Human Rights Research Center.

The Sychev incident has encouraged other people to press charges against the military for various abuses including the renting of conscripts for slave labor in order to supplement the income of certain officers. (5)

Still trying to define its mission, role, and actual ability to influence policy, the Public Chamber has become involved in the hazing fracas. Chamber members Anatoly Kucherena and Nikolai Svanidze traveled to Chelyabinsk to investigate the Sychev matter personally. The Public Chamber's commission for monitoring law enforcement and security organs has established a working group that will draft proposals on how to address the issue of hazing in the armed forces. The commission will include Valentina Melnikova and Ella Pamfilova, Secretary of the President's Council for Developing Civil Society.

Source Notes:

- (1) "Russian Authorities Aim to Close Human Rights Research Center," 27 Jan 06, Mayak Radio; FBIS transcribed text via World News Connection (WNC).
- (2) "Moscow Helsinki Group to sue Russian TV channels," 31 Jan 06, Prime-Tass English-language Business Newswire via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) "Public Chamber focuses on funding NGOs from the budget," 8 Feb 06, Kommersant; Russian Press Digest via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) "Russian Non-state TV Highlights Pressure on Defence Minister over Bullying Case," 1 Feb 06, BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) "Russian Officer Hired Out Troops for Slave Labour," 3 Feb 06, The Guardian via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Marcel LeBlanc and Jeffrey Butler

INTERNAL

Internal battles stifling defense industry

Bureaucratic infighting and diffusion of institutional authority continue to hamper the effectiveness of Russia's defense industry. Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov and newly-appointed Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov waged one of the most recent battles. Ivanov (the Defense Minister) added the title of Deputy Prime Minister in part to increase his ability to control defense industry as well as the Ministry of Defense. Indeed, a week after his promotion in mid-November, Ivanov embarked on a tour of military enterprises across Russia with clear aspirations for assuming a leading role in the military industrial complex. (1) Along the tour Ivanov speculated that he would likely chair Russia's military-industrial commission which he stated is "one of the two main mechanisms for managing the defense sector." (2) Ivanov added, "I don't rule out the possibility that I might chair this commission, and I am well aware of the burden of responsibility that would rest on my shoulders, which are none too broad." (3)

However, Fradkov had other ideas, as he resisted yielding chairmanship of the commission and eventually won the right to maintain his symbolic position. After a two-week delay, Fradkov signed the document detailing the distribution of power among the deputy prime ministers with the understanding that he would retain chairmanship of the military industrial commission. (4) In addition, Fradkov announced his intention to retain control over distribution of funds in the defense industry. Ivanov was given the role of deputy chair for the military-industrial committee and given a "coordinating responsibility" for the defense industry. This was clearly not his first preference. More importantly, this type of bureaucratic maneuver significantly diminishes hope for any improvement in the splintered distribution of authority for managing the defense industry.

Fradkov also made clear his intention to preclude Ivanov and the defense ministry from establishing a new agency for managing the defense industry.

There is widespread speculation that a ministry for the defense industry will soon be re-created with presidential envoy Ilya Klebanov mentioned as the director, given his previous experience in a similar post. (5) It also is expected that the new organization would be embedded in the ministry of defense. However, Fradkov downplayed this speculation on his own personal tour of the defense establishment: "As yet, there is no need to establish a separate agency; better coordination is a more immediate need." (6) Fradkov instead suggested that time was needed to evaluate the current arrangement: "a deputy prime minister (also the defense minister) working with the prime minister who chairs the military-industrial complex commission." (7) Hence, the battle lines already are drawn opposing a badly needed central authority for managing the defense industry.

Beyond individual maneuvering, institutional pathologies also are hampering the likelihood of improving management of the defense industry. Even within the defense ministry, competition between personalities and offices creates turmoil especially since there is no single leader to keep the various factions in line. For example, plans to institute a single authority to manage defense contracts continues to suffer from a pitched battle between General Aleksei Moskovsky, Deputy Defense Minister for Armament, and Andrei Belyaninov, Director of the Federal Defense Order Service, which was created by Presidential Decree a year ago. (8) Moskovsky's and Belyaninov's empires control nearly \$35 billion annually, and there are also other fiefdoms within the MoD which wield substantial influence over defense industry funds. (9) Other MoD oligarchs include Sergei Chemezov, director of Rosoboronexport, which handles approximately \$7 billion per year primarily in Russia's expanding export market as well as General Vladimir Isakov, deputy defense minister and chief of the Armed Forces Rear Services, who is in charge of billions of dollars in purchases made by the state's security-related agencies. (10) It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Russia to improve its defense efficiency without breaking

down the artificial divisions of resources, and centralized planning, and instituting more accountability.

Fradkov appears to have achieved his near-term goal of maintaining the chairmanship of the military-industrial commission, but storm clouds are on the horizon. First, rumors of Fradkov's departure are increasing in intensity, and his recent one week absence due to illness only serves to increase speculation that he will soon be replaced. (11) Second, past reforms continue to fail and production has not improved. As Belyaninov admitted, military spending has increased 30% in recent years with no discernable increase in production output. (12) Finally, while Ivanov may not have the seat at the head of the table, he has direct access to Putin, which is far more valuable. The best that Fradkov can hope for is to keep some semblance of relevancy by creating additional commissions; Ivanov's connections give him far greater potential to effect real change...if Russia ever gets serious about improving defense industry performance. The harsh truth for Russia's defense industry is that the military industrial complex is not a driving issue in the 2008 election and its leaders are not serious about implementing needed changes.

Export market continues to boom

All the news for the defense industry is not bad, as military exports continue to rise. Mikhail Dmitriyev, the head of the Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, announced that Russia achieved a post-Soviet arms sales record of \$6.1 billion in 2005. (13) Moreover, Dmitriyev is also optimistic about the future as Russia has \$23 billion in new weapons contracts already on the books:

"These orders will be fulfilled starting in 2007, and our annual sales will exceed \$7 billion starting in 2007." (14) India and China are the primary recipients of Russian hardware. Vyacheslav Dzirkaln, deputy head of the Federal Military-Technical Cooperation Service stated, "More than \$7 billion worth of weapons and military hardware were sold to India in the last five years. We are working on nearly \$10 billion worth of new contracts with India nowadays." (15) Russian

military exports to China continue to be strong particularly in the wake of last year's Peace Mission 2005 joint military exercises.

Russia also is beginning to diversify its customer base to maintain strong growth in the arms export business. Indonesia and Malaysia have made large purchases and Vietnam has agreed to a billion dollar deal for Russian naval ships, missiles, and aircraft. (16) In the Middle East, Russia plans to continue a billion dollar deal to sell twenty-nine Tor-M1 and Pechora-A2 air defense systems to Iran, despite international concern over Iran's nuclear program. Russia also continues to cultivate business in Syria. (17) In Latin America, demand for Russian arms continues to grow particularly in countries such as Venezuela that have adversarial relationships with the US. Venezuela recently purchased 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles from Russia and is considering buying more AK-47s and perhaps even MiG fighters, much to the chagrin of the US. (18) Russia is undeterred by the prospect of US disapproval on arms sales in Latin America. As Dmitriyev states, "If Venezuela wants to get MiGs, we are ready to cooperate." (19)

In Africa, Russia is poised to consummate the single largest post Soviet defense export deal with a \$4 billion package of arms to Algeria. The basic agreement has already been hammered out and is awaiting a planned visit by Putin in February or March. The list of weapons includes Mig-29 and Su-30 fighter aircraft, S-300 air defense systems, and T-90 battle tanks along with additional maintenance and support contracts. (20) If this sale proceeds as planned, Algeria could account for as much as 20 percent of Russia's military exports in the near-future. (21)

Furthermore, Russia is innovating to improve maintenance and servicing of its arms exports. In the post-Soviet era, Russia's indifference or inability to provide logistics and maintenance support to clients has been a significant liability, in contrast to Western arms dealers. Russia appears to have re-discovered that

much of the profit in arms deals is in long-term support and is now planning to increase and upgrade its customer service operation. Dmitriyev said that new or expanded weapons service centers are being considered worldwide and specifically mentioned Vietnam, China, Ethiopia, Jordan, Algeria, and Venezuela as possible sites. (22)

Source Notes:

- (1) "Sergei Ivanov Tours His New Job By Tank," Kommersant, 23 Nov 05, WPS Defense and Security via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) "Mikhail Fradkov Distributed The State Defense Order," Kommersant, 1 Dec 05, WPS What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (5) "There May Be Variants," Vremya novostei, 28 Nov 05, RusData Dialine - Russian Press Digest via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) "Mikhail Fradkov Denies Sergei Ivanov An Agency," Kommersant, 30 Nov 05, WPS Defense and Security via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) "Options Are Possible," Vremya novostei, 28 Nov 05, WPS Defense and Security via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) "Oligarchy In Epauettes," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 29 Nov 05, RusData Dialine - Russian Press Digest via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) Ibid
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(14) Ibid.

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(20) "Russia, Algeria to Strike \$4 Billion Arms Sale Deal," Moscow Times, 26 Jan 06 via Lexis-Nexis.

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EXTERNAL

Georgia and Russia: Approaching the boiling point

Givi Targamadze, head of Georgia's parliamentary Defense and Security Committee, had unusually strong words for Russia on 6 February when he threatened that Georgia would use force to expedite the removal of Russian "peacekeepers" from his country. (1) Targamadze's statements typified the rhetoric of what has been a particularly busy year for leaders in Georgia and Russia looking to affect the outcome of the conflicts in separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As Georgia's parliament formally prepares to debate the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the republics, Georgia has turned up its rhetoric on the issue. Once again, while politicians on both sides of the debate

stoke the fires, Russian and Georgian troops find themselves in a simmering cauldron that threatens to boil over into armed conflict.

Political rhetoric in South Ossetia and Abkhazia

Last October, the Georgian parliament may have planted the seeds for the current war of words when legislators set February 2006 and July 2006 deadlines to complete their evaluation of the effectiveness of Russian “peacekeepers” stationed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. (2) Although it seems pre-determined that these evaluations would find Russian “peacekeepers” ineffective, tensions between Georgia and Russia have escalated as the politicians’ deadlines approached.

Much of the rhetoric centers on South Ossetia. On 10 January, officials from South Ossetia accused Georgia of deploying troops to the region in violation of existing agreements. (3) Moreover, Russian Major-General Marat Kulakhmetov, commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Force in the conflict zone, charged Georgian politicians with “aggressive” statements that make the demilitarization of the region and disarmament of illegally armed groups there impossible. (4) These charges seem to offer Russia more excuse to claim that its peacekeepers cannot be asked to leave the area.

In response to accusations leveled by Russia and South Ossetia, the Georgian Foreign Ministry has reiterated its long-held position that Russia illegally provides armament to South Ossetian forces. (5) This claim dovetails with Georgia’s more fundamental complaint that Russian “peacekeepers” do not fulfill their mandate of disbanding illegal armed formations, disarming “self-defense forces,” and preventing the concentration of heavy weaponry in the conflict zone. (6) Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhushvili furthered his government’s position in a plea for support he made 25 January to the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee. In his statements, Bezhushvili argued that Russia is the chief impediment to a solution in the region. (7) Although the EU likely will be

slow to act on Bezhuashvili's plea, Georgia appears to be building its case for any future steps it might take in South Ossetia.

Matters are not much different in Abkhazia. The day following Bezhuashvili's remarks about Russia and the conflict in South Ossetia, Russia seemed to take a step back in its stated commitment to solving the conflict in Abkhazia.

Specifically, during a 26 January meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Russia made clear it no longer supports the "Boden Paper" as a basis for negotiations on Abkhazia's status within Georgia. Although Abkhaz officials never before had accepted the document, crafted by German diplomat Dieter Boden, this was the first time Russian officials explicitly denied the document's viability. Furthermore, at the same meeting, Security Council members voted to extend the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) by only two months, far short of the six-month extension that heretofore had been the norm.

(8) Ending the UNOMIG early could prove convenient for parties that do not want international observers present in a conflict zone.

Georgia's Armed Forces

The questioning of Georgia's military status looms large in the issues at hand. Russian officials, along with those of Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionists, have questioned Georgia's recent military build-up. Perhaps they are alluding to the fact that Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, on 5 January, signed into law plans to expand Georgia's armed forces from 21,550 personnel to 31,878 personnel, an increase of nearly 50%. (9) Moreover, additional plans for changes in Georgia's military seem consistent with Georgia's intent to join NATO. On 3 February, Georgian President Saakashvili confirmed Georgia's desires for military accession to NATO in a speech he made at the annual Munich international security conference, just one day after he signed a decree to end Georgia's participation in the CIS Defense Council. (10) Georgia's three-pronged approach of increasing the size of its military, disengaging from CIS structures, setting Georgia on a course for NATO membership likely will produce a series of

repercussions, including the intensification of tension between its troops and those from Russia or the breakaway republics.

Georgian forces increasingly seem positioned for confrontation with Russian troops. In a 3 February announcement, Georgian authorities voiced their suspicions that a Russian-made “Igla” surface-to-air missile discovered near South Ossetia was intended for use by South Ossetian terrorists who planned to assassinate President Saakashvili by shooting down his helicopter. Furthermore, Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili stated that the missile could only have been “brought [to South Ossetia] from Russia through the help of Ossetians.” (11) Givi Targamadze went further than Okruashvili and suggested that Russian forces could have tipped-off South Ossetian terrorists of Saakashvili’s travel plans. (12) Although the validity of Georgia’s claims has not been ascertained, they nonetheless seem well-timed to garner political leverage before the 15 February vote by Georgia’s parliament on whether to call for the withdrawal of Russian “peacekeepers” from South Ossetia.

A vote calling for the withdrawal of Russian “peacekeepers” would not be surprising, nor would the call be unprecedented. Still, both sides seem primed for a confrontation. On 31 January fistfights reportedly broke out between Georgian police and Russian “peacekeepers” in South Ossetia following the police officers’ attempts to tow the “peacekeepers” military vehicle after an accident. Reportedly, the fights did not break-up until shots were fired – into the air. (13) More serious is the insinuation made on 26 January that Georgian police abducted and killed an Ossetian man in the village of Kekhvi. (14) These allegations, made by the Foreign Ministry of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, preceded claims by South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity that Georgia had deployed 500 servicemen to the republic in the hopes of provoking armed conflicts with Russian peacekeepers. (15)

Clashes in South Ossetia continue. On 9 February Georgia announced that its military police reportedly arrested three Russian “peacekeepers” in South Ossetia on charges of visa violations. (16) Reportedly, there was no violence in the arrests; nonetheless, the move undoubtedly exacerbated the risks of future conflict. In response to the arrests, Russian Major-General Marat Kulakhmetov claimed, “I believe this incident is yet another gross provocation carried out, once again, by units of the Georgian Defense Ministry. At this stage, we’ve reinforced all our checkpoints and taken all steps so as to not allow any forceful incident to occur.” (17)

More to come...

Georgia’s parliament is scheduled to make a final decision on the presence of Russian “peacekeepers” in South Ossetia by 15 February. (18) A similar decision regarding Abkhazia is scheduled for July. (19) In both cases, it seems a given that Georgia’s lawmakers will rule against the presence of Russian troops in the regions. The next step after such a vote would be for Georgia’s executive branch formally to demand that Russia withdraw all of its troops. If President Saakashvili’s government makes this oft-repeated demand, the difference from past experiences will be the political and military leverage Georgia and Russia have applied to each other in the months leading up to their inevitable confrontation. (For more on the situation in Georgia, please see the Caucasus Report, below).

Military Lagniappe*

In other Georgian military news, the head of Georgia’s National Guard abruptly resigned on 25 January after serving in his post for only 10 days. (20) The resignation of Lt-General Giorgi Tatukhashvili appears to be unrelated to Georgia’s recent spats with Russia over the presence of Russian “peacekeepers” in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, it seems likely Tatukhasvili was a casualty of an on-going political battle between President Saakashvili, who appointed Tatukhasvili, and the president’s Defense Minister, Irakli Okruashvili.

The Defense Minister, who in the past two years also has served as Georgia's Prosecutor General and Interior Minister, reportedly appointed a successor for Tatukhashvili before Saakashvili could accept his resignation.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has reiterated his government's position that Russia will not withdraw its 1,500 peacekeeping troops from Moldova's breakaway Transdniester republic. Ivanov made this announcement just two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin lamented what he suggested was the unacceptable state of Russian-Moldovan relations. (22)

*Lagniappe ('lan – yap) n. something given or obtained gratuitously, something extra.

Source Notes:

(1) "Georgian Parliament Gears Up for Debate on Russian Peacekeepers," LF, 7 Feb 06, RFE/RL Volume 10, Number 23, Part I.

(2) "Moscow Kills Boden Paper, Threatens to Terminate UNOMIG in Georgia," Socor, Vladimir, 7 Feb 06, Eurasia Daily Monitor (EDM), Volume 3, Issue 26.

(3) "Georgian Officer Defends Rotation of Peacekeepers in South Ossetia," LF, 11 Jan 06, RFE/RL Vol. 10, No. 5, Part I.

(4) Ibid.

(5) "South Ossetia Denies it Receives Weaponry from Russia," LF, 23 Jan 06, RFE/RL Vol. 10, No. 12, Part I.

(6) "Georgian Parliament Gears Up for Debate on Russian Peacekeepers," Ibid.

(7) "Georgia: Foreign Minister Pushes for EU Backing in Standoffs with Russia," Lobjaskas, Ahto, 25 Jan 06, RFE/RL via www.rferl.org.

(8) "Moscow Kills Boden Paper, Threatens to Terminate UNOMIG in Georgia," Ibid.

(9) "Georgian president sanctions military build-up," RIA Novosti, 5 Jan 06, via <http://en.rian.ru/world/20060105/42864390>.

- (10) "President Appeals for Georgia to be Admitted to NATO," LF, 6 Feb 06, RFE/RL Vol. 10, No. 22, Part I.
- (11) "Tbilisi Claims to have Thwarted Attempt on Saakashvili's Life," Anjaparidze, Zaal, 9 Feb 06, EDM Vol. 3, Issue 28.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) "Russians, Georgians Come to Blows in South Ossetia," AP, Caucasus Press, 1 Feb 06, RFE/RL via www.rferl.org.
- (14) "South Ossetia Blames Killing on Georgians," LF, 1 Feb 06, RFE/RL Vol. 10, No. 19, Part I.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) "Georgia: Foreign Minister Pushes for EU Backing in Standoffs with Russia," Ibid.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) "Moscow Kills Boden Paper, Threatens to Terminate UNOMIG in Georgia," Ibid.
- (20) "Head of Georgia's National Guard Resigns after 10 Days," Anjaparidze, Zaal, 1 Feb 06, EDM Vol. 3, Issue 22.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) "Russian Defense Minister Says Troops will Stay in Transdniester," LF, 6 Feb 06, RFE/RL Vol. 10, No. 22, Part II.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Kate Martin

GEORGIA

What will Tbilisi do?

For months now, officials from Georgia, the breakaway region of South Ossetia and Russia have been ratcheting up the rhetoric. And tensions have been increasing, to such an extent that few would have been surprised had armed

conflict begun. Indeed, war almost began last week between “peacekeeping” regiments.

This week, the Georgian parliament is scheduled to discuss issuing a demand that Russian “peacekeepers” leave South Ossetia, based on the belief that the Joint Control Commission (JCC), a quadripartite group consisting of Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia and North Ossetia, has not managed to resolve the issue of South Ossetian demands for independence. But how much weight would such a declaration have? None, according to Russian and South Ossetian officials. “Peacekeepers will continue fulfilling their task anyway because the Georgian parliament’s decision means nothing for peacekeepers. Firstly, we are subordinated to the control commission for settling the conflict. Secondly, the decision to deploy peacekeepers was made by the Russian and Georgian presidents in 1992,” claimed Marat Kulakhmetov, commander of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. He warned in a decidedly non-peacekeeping tone that “Georgian military or police units sent to the conflict zone will turn into cannon fodder.” (1)

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and his ministers have been laying the groundwork for increased hostilities and/or a change of peacekeeping authority in the conflict region. Saakashvili has sought an alternative framework to the conflict resolution, arguing that the JCC is ineffective and obstructionist. (2) And Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli continues to carry that banner, charging Russia with “the stalling of the peace process.” (3)

Recent actions are beginning to speak almost as loud as the words. Reportedly in response to a traffic accident in Abkhazia involving a vehicle driven by a Georgian citizen and a Russian army vehicle, hundreds of Georgian troops were brought in. The Russian Foreign Ministry protested that latest “provocative” action by Georgia. (4) The Georgian Foreign Ministry, in response, claimed the Russians had sent armored vehicles to the scene, and that “the Georgian

peacekeeping battalion, which arrived at the scene of the car accident, acted absolutely legally.” (5) Three officers sent from Moscow to settle the conflict were detained by Georgian police because they did not have visas to enter the country. (6) They were sent home with an OSCE escort. Regardless of who was provoking whom, however, the more important thing to keep in mind is that tensions among the peacekeepers themselves – armed military troops – are escalating. Meanwhile, Georgian air space was closed to Russian military transport planes for some time in January – “a purely economic decision” according to a source in the Georgian Civil Aviation Department. (7)

It has been clear that the Georgians hoped Western peacekeepers would either dilute, or replace, Russian troops, by stressing the Russians were not trustworthy. Earlier statements that the “peacekeepers” clearly do not suffice (8) have segued into charges that Russia is now on the attack, holding Georgia hostage by withholding energy supplies. Sometimes, the connection is clear, such as when Russia actually raised the price of energy (9); other charges that Moscow was behind a series of pipeline explosions (10) are less certain.

While continuing its diatribes against the “evil empire,” Georgia has been steadily increasing military capacity. Last month, the government called for an additional 1,000 conscripts for the army. (11) According to defense ministry officials, the number of troops in the Georgian military is expected to reach 31,878. (12)

It’s not just the “peacekeepers” in South Ossetia, either, who are targets for Georgian moves. The Georgians want all Russians out, now. After all, Russia has set – and then pushed forward into the future – repeated dates for evacuating its military personnel. About 25 Georgian military police tried to seize the Russian facilities of the 12th military base in Batumi on 20 January, according to Major-General Andrei Popov, the commander of the Russian Group of Forces in the Transcaucasus. Intervention by the Russian military commanders and ambassador to Georgia and discussions with Georgian military and political

leaders ended the confrontation. (13) According to the Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Yui Baluyevsky, there is a timeline by which troops will be withdrawn – “before the end of 2008.” (14) The military hardware from the Alkhalkalaki base in Georgia is due to be taken to the 102nd military base in 2006-07, Army General Aleksandr Baranov, the commander of the North Caucasian Military District, announced after a visit to the Armenian base by Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov. (15)

But Tbilisi received the very clear signal last week that, while continuing to support the concept of Georgian territorial sovereignty, the West (read: the United States) does not want military conflict in the region. However, in that signal may have continued another – Georgia may be moving in the right direction, just too quickly.

US Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Julie Finley, said she and the OSCE recognize that the existing framework for resolving the conflict is ineffective. She added, however, that “a request for the peacekeepers to leave without anything in their place may be destabilizing. In this regard, we call on Georgia to contribute its full complement of forces to maintain the proper balance within the JPKF.” (16) Hmmmm. That sounds less like a death knell to Georgian aspirations of unifying the country than South Ossetia, and Russia, may have anticipated; indeed, it implies that sufficient Georgian troop strength in the conflict zone could keep the peace. Still Finley’s statement also included the hope that the next JCC meeting will be more productive than the last had been – an acknowledgement of ineffectiveness coupled with the expectation that the JCC forum would continue to be used. This is a setback for Georgian hopes to work outside the Commission. The next meeting is scheduled for February 20 and 21.

Russia has reiterated that it has no choice but to “protect” South Ossetians, many of whom have been turned – following a widespread Russian campaign – into Russian citizens. (17)

NKAO

Still no agreement

The removal of “peacekeepers” elsewhere in the Caucasus was under discussion in Paris over the weekend, but the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan could not reach any conclusive agreement on what was to be done with the Nagorno-Karabakh exclave. (18) According to Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov, only two of the nine issues under discussion – “the return of refugees and forced migrants and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan” – were sticking points. (19) Unfortunately, of course, those are the key points to the conflict.

Negotiations are scheduled to continue in March, but there is little political will evident to resolve the crisis conclusively and peacefully. Indeed, prior to the meeting, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev assured the population that no concessions would be made. “It is our land. Historically, it belongs to Azerbaijan, and we should liberate it by any means necessary. In order to do that, we have to become stronger, our army must be strengthened,” he said. (20)

Never hesitant to insert itself into regional conflicts, Russia offered armed forces as “peacekeepers.” But such a peace would be costly, since the Russians, according to Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, “are ready to arm both Armenia and Azerbaijan, though taking into account the balance of forces and our own national security.” (21) Given that Azerbaijan already has increased its defense spending, and the Russian-Armenian alliance is well-documented, one must assume that such a statement means... arming Armenia, at below-market prices.

AZERBAIJAN

Trust me, it's good for you

Just in case anyone in the Baku government was feeling comfortable enough to start decorating offices, here comes a cautionary tale. The administration has, for the past three months, been a virtual revolving door for hirings and firings and reassignments.

The latest batch of administrative shuffles occurred early in February. Aliyev relieved Kamaladdin Heydarov of his position as chairman of the State Customs Committee, appointing him instead to head the newly-formed Ministry of Emergencies (a combination of Civil Defense, Fire Protection and the State Committee for Reserves). Heydarov will be replaced at the State Customs Committee by the first deputy chairman of the committee, Aydin Aliyev. (22)

Within two days, businessman Fizuli Alekperov was named Labor and Social Security Minister (replacing the dismissed Minister Ali Nagiyev), and businessman Azad Ragimov was appointed Youth and Sports Minister. The reshufflings are intended to streamline government and improve Azerbaijan's image abroad, according to MP Ziyad Samedzade, who heads (at least for now) the parliamentary commission on economic policy. (23)

But the reshuffling has been going on a bit longer, since the October pre-election purge of ministers and high-ranking businessmen suspected of plotting a coup against the president. Early personnel changes occurred shortly after last November's parliamentary election, and originally centered on the energy sector. Most notably, on 9 December, Aliyev named Natiq Aliyev, the Director of the Azerbaijan State Petroleum Company (GNKAR), as Minister of Industry and Energy. Replacing Natiq Aliyev at GNKAR was Rovnaq Abdullayev. Both men reportedly had connections with the president going back over 10 years; Ilham Aliyev was once Natiq Aliyev's first deputy at GNKAR, while the president and

Abdullayev have purportedly known each other since their college days in Moscow. (24)

Source Notes:

- (1) Defense and Security, 10 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) ITAR-TASS, 28 Dec 05; OSC Transcribed Text via WNC.
- (3) Rustavi-2 Television, 26 Jan 06; OSC Translated Excerpt via WNC.
- (4) RIA-Novosti, 1 Feb 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
- (5) Interfax, 1 Feb 06; OSC Transcribed Text via WNC.
- (6) Interfax, 8 Feb 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
- (7) Interfax, 30 Jan 06; OSC Transcribed Text via WNC.
- (8) Vremya Novostei, 28 Nov 05; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Rustavi-2 Television, 19 Jan 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
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- (11) Rustavi-2 Television, 25 Jan 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
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- (18) TASS, 11 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (19) Arminfo, 13 Feb 06 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (20) Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey, 26 Jan 06; OSC Transcribed Text via WNC.
- (21) RIA-Novosti, 24 Jan 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
- (22) Turan, 6 Feb 06; OSC Translated Text via WNC.
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Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Fabian Adami

UZBEKISTAN

Government crackdown continues

In September 2005, the trial of 15 "Islamic militants" accused of instigating the Andijan rebellion took place in Tashkent. Two months later, the court delivered its verdict, sentencing each of the defendants to prison terms ranging from 14 to 20 years. (1)

Some time before the trial began, the Uzbek government launched a massive campaign against the country's opposition forces, human rights activists and organizations (whether Uzbek or foreign), and international media outlets. The Uzbek government's actions were 'justified' retroactively by the Prosecutor's allegations that Western media organizations, specifically the BBC and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, had provided substantial funding to the 'militants.' (2)

The Uzbek government's campaign, unsurprisingly, has been successful. First, on 26 October, the BBC World Service announced that all of its correspondents would be withdrawn from the country, while its offices would close for the foreseeable future. A BBC statement claimed that its announcement was the direct result of a campaign of "harassment and intimidation" by the government. Several Uzbek employees of the BBC reportedly have been granted political asylum in the United Kingdom. (3) During the weeks either side of the BBC's departure, several other prominent organizations, including Internews, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) and the Open Society Institute

also closed their offices and withdrew their correspondents, citing impossible working conditions. (4)

On 12 December, the government refused to renew Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's accreditation, forcing the closure of its Tashkent bureau. In a report published a day after the government's decision, RFE/RL claimed that a number of its reporters and their families had received direct telephone threats from the National Security Service, while others, their recording equipment seized, had been detained and beaten by authorities. (5)

Last month, the Uzbek Justice Ministry issued an injunction against Freedom House, the US-sponsored NGO. Although the term was not used directly by the Ministry, the charges against the organization amounted to subversion. Specifically, the Ministry alleged that Freedom House had violated national laws on non-governmental organizations by providing gratis internet access to Uzbek citizens, and by hosting "unregistered organizations...human rights defenders and political parties." (6) On February 6, a civil court in Tashkent took less than 7 minutes to reject an appeal to reverse the organization's six month suspension.

Freedom House has announced that no local employees will be removed from its payroll, in the hopes that operations can re-commence once the organization's suspension is served. (7) The press release on the court's decision contains one extremely disturbing piece of information—namely that some 200 foreign and domestic organizations have been forced to shut down since the events in Andijan in May 2005. (8) At this point in time, seems unlikely that the Uzbek government will relent in its activities. This is a conclusion supported by the ongoing of the leadership personalities of a major national opposition group.

On 22 October, the National Security Service arrested Sanjar Umarov, leader of Uzbekistan's opposition Sunshine Coalition. Prior to his detention, Umarov had issued repeated calls for President Islam Karimov to dissolve the government

and appoint "progressive officials." (9) Umarov's fate probably was sealed further by his fundraising trip to the United States last year, as well his statement that, should the Sunshine Coalition "win the people's trust," he would run against Karimov in next year's presidential elections. (10)

Two months after Umarov's arrest, the Sunshine Coalition was targeted again. Nodira Khidoyatova, a "coordinator" for the opposition group, was arrested by the NSS on returning from a trip to Moscow. According to the Russian press, Khidoyatova was virulently critical of President Karimov's leadership, and specifically of his handling of the Andijan crackdown, during her stay. (11) She faces charges of a financial nature (including tax-evasion and money laundering), similar to those leveled against Umarov.

The two trials began respectively on 25 and 30 January. Umarov's case was immediately adjourned until February 3 to allow defense attorneys more time to prepare their case. (12) A verdict was expected by 30 January in Khidoyatova's case. (13) As yet, no verdict has been announced in the latter's case, while Umarov's trial reopened—albeit closed to the press—as scheduled on 3 February. (14)

A spokeswoman for the Uzbek Prosecutor's office has been at pains to stress that "Sanjar Umarov and his criminal group," (a phrase clearly designed to include Khidoyatova) are being tried for activities which have "nothing to do with politics," but are purely "economic crimes." (15) Given Umarov's activities as described above, and his direct "election challenge" against Karimov, this statement clearly cannot be taken at face value. It seems likely that Umarov and Khidoyatova face forced exile at best, and lengthy (potentially life-long) custodial sentences at worst.

While Karimov consolidates move into Russian camp.

President Karimov's actions vis-à-vis the opposition, media and NGOs have not been carried out in isolation. The President concurrently has conducted a "diplomatic offensive," designed to remove Uzbekistan from the "Western camp," placing it firmly in alliance with President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Late in November 2005, the United States government, responding to demands issued by Tashkent in July, removed the last of its forces from the K2 airbase near Tashkent. Eight days before the last US troops left, Uzbekistan signed a significant mutual defense treaty with Russia. Then, in late December, Karimov signed a formal declaration, removing Uzbekistan from the US-supported, GUUAM alliance. (16)

In the last few weeks, President Karimov has taken three further steps to re-position Uzbekistan. First, he traveled to St. Petersburg, where he took part in an open meeting of the Interstate Council of Heads of State of the Eurasian Economic Organization (EEO), during which Uzbekistan officially was admitted to the organization. The EEO's stated goals are the creation of a "free trade zone," a joint customs organization, and eventually, a common market. (17) Karimov and Putin used the occasion to sign a number of agreements providing for Russian involvement in Uzbekistan, including a \$1.5 billion deal with Gazprom for an oil and gas extraction project. (18) Secondly, on 7 February, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) General Secretary Nikolai Bordiuzha met with Karimov in Tashkent in order to discuss "urgent international and regional" issues, including terrorism and narcotics trafficking. (19) Although no mention of such a discussion was made by President Karimov's Press Service, a number of sources confirmed prior to the meeting that Uzbekistan's future accession to the CSTO would be on the agenda. (20) Finally, a report in Germany's *Der Spiegel* indicated that the German government has been notified that it may be asked to close the Bundeswehr base at Termez. (21) According to the Uzbek foreign ministry, Berlin violated the basing agreement in that Termez was used to ferry some 400 third party nationals from Afghanistan back to their home countries.

As a condition for the base remaining open, Tashkent apparently has demanded that the German government increase its local "assistance," including building a local hotel and hospital to the tune of 20 million Euros (22), above and beyond the infrastructure agreements reached in December. (23) German officials are due to travel to Uzbekistan in February to negotiate the issue, but should Tashkent hold firm, and should German troops be forced to leave, Tashkent's ties to the 'West' will be fully severed.

KYRGYSTAN

Presidential-Parliamentary battle brewing?

During the last week, there have been indications that a serious power struggle between the Parliament and President Kurmanbek Bakiev may be on the horizon. On 3 February, Bakiev made a surprise appearance at Parliament in order to address deputies. Bakiev complained that Parliament had refused to confirm one out of every five bills sent for debate. (24) Bakiev's attack continued, with the President alleging that the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) had been "sabotaging" the privatization program and had tried to "assume the role of head of state." Bakiev's speech, which also contained admonishments that deputies were abusing their positions for personal gain brought a strong reaction. Jogorku Kenesh Speaker Omurbek Tekebaev claimed that Parliament had never exceeded its remit, while other MP's likened Bakiev's speech to "a Communist Party meeting on a Soviet-era collective farm." (25)

In the week since Bakiev's remarks, the war of words has escalated. On 9 February, Tekebaev addressed deputies, claiming that Bakiev's errors were "grave enough to make the man hang himself." (26) Immediately when making this speech, Tekebaev was forced to leave a meeting of the Security Council, after President Bakiev stated that he would not participate if Tekebaev remained in the room. (27)

The same day, the Kyrgyz Prosecutor General, Kambaraly Kongantiyev claimed that Tekebaev could face charges of defaming the Presidency, and that Bakiev could choose to dissolve Parliament as a result of the Speaker's words. (28) Tekebaev tendered his resignation on 10 February, (29) but his departure may not signal the end of this matter: Azimbek Beknazarov, a former Bakiev ally who served as interim Prosecutor General last year, has labeled Kongantiyev's remarks as "attacks on the Jogorku Kenesh," (30) adding that the issue would be debated in Parliament. As yet, no news of a debate or further action by the Prosecutor General has emerged. Given the already tenuous situation in Kyrgyzstan, it is to be hoped that a major confrontation between the executive and legislature can be avoided.

Source Notes:

(1) See ISCIIP Analyst, Volume XI, Number 4 (08 Dec 05).

(2) See ISCIIP Analyst, Volume XI, Number 2 (03 Nov 05).

(3) "Uzbekistan: RFE/RL Forced To Close Tashkent Bureau After Government Denies Accreditation," RFE/RL Features Article, 13 Dec 05 via www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/12/91956278-7ab3-4e13-883e-2d279827a8e6.html .

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(5) "Closure of Radio Free Europe Signals Endgame For Free Media," Reporters Without Borders, 14 Dec 05 via www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15916 .

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(11) "Uzbekistan: Activists Concerned As Opposition Trials Proceed," RFE/RL Features Article, 26 Jan 06 via www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/f38cb433-a424-48cf-9861-0b6a1dcacf7b.html .

(12)"Uzbek Opposition Leader's Trial Opens, Quickly Adjourns," RFE/RL Features Article, 30 Jan 06 via www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/1/623758F0-FAA7-4562-8614-714B20FA38A0.html .

(13) "Uzbekistan: Activists Concerned As Opposition Trials Proceed," RFE/RL Features Article, 26 Jan 06 via www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/f38cb433-a424-48cf-9861-0b6a1dcacf7b.html .

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(16) See ISCIP Analyst, Volume XII, Number 1 (27 Jan 06).

(17) "Important Step Towards Common Goal," Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 26 Jan 06 via www.press-service.uz/en/content.scm?contentId=17319 .

(18) Ibid.

(19) "Discussing Security Issues," Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 07 Feb 06 via www.press-service.uz/en/mcontent.scm?sectionId=4489&contentId=5630

(20) Interfax, 6 Feb 06, OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(21) Uzbekistan Daily Digest, 02 Feb 05 via www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/news/0000.shtml .

(22) Ibid.

(23) See ISCIP Analyst, Volume XII, Number 1 (27 Jan 06).

(24) "Kyrgyz President Takes on Parliament," 07 Feb 06, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, via www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259428&apc_state=henprca .

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(26) ITAR-TASS, 9 Feb 06, OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

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(30) AKIpress, 9 Feb 06, OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

When will there be real justice for Gongadze?

On 16 September 2000, Ukrainian journalist Heorhiy Gongadze disappeared. Two months later, his decapitated body was discovered in a forest not far from Kyiv. Just one month after that, Socialist Party leader Oleksandr Moroz released recordings on which then President Leonid Kuchma reportedly was heard ordering the journalist's abduction. The ensuing attempt by Ukraine's authorities to deny their involvement in his death and the lack of any credible investigation of the case provided Ukraine's political opposition with an anthem. It sparked the country's largest demonstrations since 1991 and pointed Ukraine on a path toward revolution.

On 1 March 2005, after years of protests in Gongadze's name and an orange revolution that embraced his cause, new President Viktor Yushchenko proudly announced that "the murder of Gongadze has been solved. ... The former regime protected the assassins." Now, he said, the country must "find out who ordered and organized" the killing. (1) But today, over 5 years after Gongadze's death, and almost one year after Yushchenko's triumphant announcement, the organizers of the crime remain free, the trial of "the assassins" drags on with numerous postponements, and his family still waits for justice.

Trial inches forward, behind closed doors

There has been some progress. In August 2005, three former police colonels were arrested and charged with abducting and killing Gongadze. Another suspect and the reported leader of the men, General Oleksiy Pukach, fled the country.

Trial proceedings began against the three colonels on 19 December. At that time, during a preliminary hearing, a Kyiv court decreed that substantive arguments would begin on 9 January “in public.” (2)

On 9 January, however, the tenor of events changed. “The journalists of the Ukrainian mass media who were going to cover the hearing on the murder of Heorhiy Gongadze ... are demanding that a criminal case should be opened over the situation in which they were prevented from carrying out their professional duties,” reported Ukrainian television 5 Kanal. “The guards who accompanied the suspects rudely pushed the journalists out of the courtroom, and several policemen resorted to rubber batons.” (3)

The trial then was quickly adjourned for two weeks after one of the defendants complained of “elevated blood pressure.”

Not long after, in response to complaints from the defendants, the court altered its earlier ruling and said that all trial testimony would be closed to the public and media. “Providing media with access to court sessions may produce negative consequences, [and] impede a comprehensive, full and unbiased investigation of the case,” presiding Judge Iryna Hryhoryeva announced. (4) The State Prosecutor’s Office supported the ruling, suddenly suggesting that certain evidence dealt with state secrets. “There are certain secret documents and individuals who cannot be questioned in public,” Prosecutor General Oleksandr Medvedko said. (5)

However, representatives of the family disputed this statement, saying that they had clearly been informed by the prosecutor when examining the case file that it did not contain anything categorized as a state secret.

What about the organizers?

The court's newfound hesitance to allow media access to the trial developed on what would have been the first day of testimony; before the trial opened, Gongadze's widow Myroslava and a representative of his mother Lesya gave strong statements demanding that not only the direct murderers, but also the organizers of the crime be put on trial.

They also declared publicly their intention to make full use of a provision in Ukrainian law that allows family members of victims to request that the presiding judge call witnesses – witnesses who may or may not be called by the prosecutor.

"I don't think this [trial] is enough," Myroslava Gongadze said, "because these people had no personal motives for killing Heorhiy. They were carrying out a criminal order." While the defendants, she said, must answer for their crimes, since they did not refuse to carry out their order, "the next step will be when the organizers of this crime are brought to justice. Their identities are known and they must be punished," she said, referring to the "Gongadze tapes" released by Moroz in 2000. (6)

On these tapes, which have been authenticated by several laboratories around the world (including the FBI), a voice said to be Kuchma's repeatedly asks for an update on "what to do" about Gongadze, and several times urges that he be kidnapped and "thrown to the Chechens." Former Interior Minister Yuriy Kravchenko responds that his "team" will "do everything you want." (Not incidentally, Kravchenko was reported by authorities to have committed suicide

by shooting himself twice in the head the day after Yushchenko's announcement that the case was solved.) (7)

However, in spite of this evidence, there has been little attempt to question Kuchma about this crime. Myroslava Gongadze suggests that perhaps the resolve to bring the organizers to justice does not exist. "It looks like there is still no political will to hold responsible those who ordered the killing," she said. (8)

The European Court of Human Rights, in an 8 November 2005 decision on the case of Myroslava Gongadze vs. Ukraine, seemed to support this statement. The decision found that, until December 2004, the authorities had violated the European Convention of Human Rights by failing to investigate the case adequately, causing undue suffering and denying effective remedy for the crime.

However, the European Court also took note of the lack of response in 2005 to a detailed Ukrainian parliamentary investigation on the case "which concluded that the kidnap and murder of Mr Gongadze had been organised by former President Kuchma and Mr Kravchenko and that the current speaker of Parliament, Mr V. Lytvyn, and a member of parliament, Mr L. Derkach, were involved in the crimes." The report notes that the parliamentary report was transferred to the Prosecutor General's Office in September 2005, but no action was taken by that office.

The conduct of the trial would seem to support these concerns, as prosecutors appear to use every tool to limit the scope of the inquiry only to the three men. Since 9 January, no substantive testimony has been given. At least three times the hearing has been adjourned because of an expressed "illness" of a defendant, and adjournments have generally lasted at least one week.

This has led Myroslava Gongadze to suggest that an attempt is perhaps being made to postpone testimony until after the 26 March parliamentary election in order to protect those whom she and Lesya Gongadze will call as witnesses.

“We intend to invite many witnesses who will be able to shed a lot of light on this case,” she said on 9 January. (9) Later, she emphasized that “a number of the witnesses are members of election lists.” Therefore, after 26 March, most of these individuals will have either extended or received new parliamentary immunity. (10)

Clearly, the murder itself and the ensuing five year “cover-up” has touched a number of major Ukrainian politicians in some way.

Lesya Gongadze has already officially requested that Kuchma, Parliamentary Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn (heard on the tape encouraging Kuchma to have Kravchenko “handle” Gongadze), former Security Service Head Leonid Derkach, Supreme Court Chief Justice Vasyl Malyarenko and President Viktor Yushchenko testify. (11) Although her attorney makes it clear that he in no way believes Yushchenko is involved in the Gongadze case itself, it is likely that Andriy Fedur would like to ask Yushchenko about a reported agreement on immunity with Kuchma regarding this crime.

Judge Iryna Hryhoryeva has so far refused Lesya Gongadze’s requests for witnesses, but promised to reconsider them later. Myroslava Gongadze, meanwhile, believes that the judge will have to allow at least some of the witnesses.

Full circle?

On 25 January, two of the three defendants pled guilty to all charges against them. There is little concern, based on the evidence seen by the family, that these confessions were forced. Under Ukrainian law, the trial will continue in

order to determine appropriate sentences and to determine the guilt or innocence of the third defendant (who pled guilty to several lesser charges).

But although three out of four of the direct killers of Heorhiy Gongadze now will likely spend the rest of their lives in prison, is this the justice that Ukrainians have fought for since 2000?

The EU's Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which has been one of the most vocal international organizations on the issue throughout the years, doesn't think so. PACE's questioning of the investigation in October – after its initial welcoming of President Yushchenko's rhetoric – must have been a painful point for a government courting Europe. "Five years after the disappearance and murder of the journalist Gongadze," PACE wrote in its 5 October resolution, "the Assembly is dissatisfied that after the indictment in March 2005 of the alleged direct perpetrators of the murder, the investigation of the case has been stalled, in particular as regards the prosecution of those who ordered and organised this crime." The resolution notes prosecutorial action which "is seen as a step towards excluding from the prosecution the masterminds and organizers." (12)

If PACE's representatives hoped that their resolution would alter the course of the investigation, they are no doubt disappointed, as are many Ukrainians who stood on Independence Square in November of 2004.

Throughout the Orange Revolution, Ukrainians loudly demanded – "Bandits to jail" and "Murderers to jail" – and it's clear they weren't talking about three police colonels. But in February of 2006, despite increased press freedom, and despite greater government transparency, the Gongadze case is, in many ways, where it was in 2004.

The organizers of the murder are technically unknown, yet the names are discussed by everyone involved in the case. Those who directly committed the crime will go to prison, but likely without being made to shed any light on their actions. The organizers of the crime continue enjoying their lives, seemingly secure in their freedom. The president of the country repeatedly speaks of justice, but does little to ensure that it will occur in this particular case. And the family of Gongadze is left isolated, wondering why, after five years and a revolution, they still cannot find justice for Heorhiy.

MOLDOVA

Moldova's two-track development: Foreign and Domestic policies follow different paths

Over the last several years, Moldova President Vladimir Voronin has won international praise for his attempts to steer his country's foreign policy toward Western international structures. Moldova has entered the WTO, expressed its desire to join the EU, adjusted many of its customs and tariff laws in the direction of European standards, refused to further integrate into the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independence States, welcomed an EU border-monitoring mission, and invited EU and U.S. representatives to participate in the stalled talks over the status of the Transnistria region.

At the same time, however, President Voronin's domestic policies have resulted, at a minimum, in a continuation of Soviet-style political practices, and at worst, a rolling-back of some of the gains made in the 1990s. The press is stifled, political competition is limited and civic oversight of political decisions is almost non-existent. There is no better example of these tendencies than the plight of already-imprisoned former Defense Minister Valeriu Pasat. The former minister and current external relations advisor to Russia's Unified Energy Systems (UES), has worked consistently in opposition to President Voronin while maintaining a close relationship to UES head Anatoly Chubais. Pasat now appears to be paying the price.

On 7 February, Moldovan prosecutors accused Pasat of attempting to overthrow the government and plotting to kill Iurie Rosca, leader of the pseudo-opposition Popular Christian Democratic Party.

In a convoluted indictment, authorities suggest that Pasat approached Rosca a year ago with an offer of assistance for his party in the run-up to the 6 March 2005 parliamentary election, and offered to support a violent overthrow of the government in the event that his party did not win the election. This assistance reportedly would be both financial and logistical.

Rosca, in a statement to the media, vigorously supported the charges. “Pasat told me he was looking to remove Vladimir Voronin from power,” he said, and “proposed to finance the electoral campaign of the PPCD.” Additionally, “If the Communist Party [headed by Voronin] won, it was planned to organize large-scale street rallies to dispute the results of the election and to stage a so-called orange revolution in imitation of the events in Tbilisi and Kyiv. The PPCD was given the role of organizer of the rallies.” (13)

Prosecutors and Rosca also suggested that, if these scenarios failed to remove Voronin, the PPCD leader was to be killed and, according to Rosca, “it should have led to turmoil for which President Vladimir Voronin was to be blamed.” (14)

Despite, or perhaps partly because of, Rosca’s statements, numerous questions surround these charges. This is particularly true when examined in light of previous charges against Pasat and within the context of Moldova’s oppressive political environment.

Pasat was first arrested in March 2005 on charges of abusing his position while defense minister by selling 21 MiG 29 fighter jets to the United States for \$40 million. Authorities accused Pasat of selling the fighters too cheaply, “inflicting

great damage” to the country. The arrest came less than two weeks after the aforementioned parliamentary elections – during which Pasat reportedly worked closely with the opposition Democratic Moldova Bloc. This Bloc ran separately from the PPCD.

Less than one month ago, in a trial widely condemned by international human rights groups, a Moldovan court convicted Pasat for this “crime” and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

During the trial, former Moldovan President Petru Lucinschi testified on Pasat’s behalf, noting that he, not his defense minister, had given final approval of the price paid by the U.S. for the MiGs. Additionally, E. Wayne Merry, former U.S. Defense Department regional director for Eurasia, and one of the chief negotiators for the deal, submitted a deposition on Pasat’s behalf.

In a letter to the Financial Times, Merry called Pasat “a stubborn and difficult interlocutor, who prolonged the bargaining for months to gain more compensation for his country.” He further called the deal “an entirely fair one for both sides,” and dismissed the so-called additional \$55 million that Moldovan officials claim Pasat could have earned from an unnamed third party as “phantom money.” “In fact,” he said, “many within the U.S. government believed we overpaid for the aging aircraft.” (15)

Speaking during a briefing for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Merry said that his deposition and willingness to give further information were ignored. He suggested that former U.S. Ambassador John Todd Stewart’s deposition in support of Pasat’s position also was not taken into consideration. (16)

This may not be the case in the European Court of Human Rights, where Pasat has said he will take his case. As pointed out by Merry, “Mr. Pasat may find

justice from the European Court of Human Rights, which would at least consider the publicly available evidence.” (17)

Pasat has denied the new claims as vigorously as the previous charges. “Rosca is desperate and he is going to great lengths in a bid to doctor his political image, which was greatly harmed ... when his party voted for the re-election of President Vladimir Voronin.” (18)

In private, U.S. officials who have worked with both Pasat and Rosca express strong misgivings about the current claims, and suggest that this may be intended as “insurance” for the Moldovan government given the likelihood of Pasat’s success in the European Court of Human Rights. While Moldova could ignore any European Court ruling, its EU aspirations and need for support against Russia’s pressure would make that a difficult position.

Officials may hope that these new charges provide a better pretext for removing Pasat from the political scene – or even more, for providing an example to future politicians who choose to work either against Voronin or with Russian interests. What they may find, however, is that these charges have simply underscored the growing concerns about Moldova’s deteriorating domestic policies at a time when Moldova desperately needs Western support.

Source Notes:

- (1) Agence France Presse, 1713 GMT, 1 Mar 05; via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Interfax-Ukraine, 1534 GMT, 19 Dec 05; BBC Monitoring, via ProQuest.
- (3) TV 5 Kanal, 1300 CET, 9 Jan 06; via ProQuest.
- (4) ICTV, 1645 CET, 23 Jan 06; via ProQuest.
- (5) UNIAN News Agency, 1201 CET, 31 Jan 06; via ProQuest.
- (6) Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Ukrainian Service and Newsroom, 9 Jan 06.

- (7) See www.rferl.org and search for “Gongadze tapes” to read transcripts of Kuchma’s conversations.
- (8) Agence France Presse, 1348 GMT, 9 Sept 05; via Lexis-Nexis.
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- (11) ICTV, 1645 CET, 23 Jan 06; BBC Monitoring, via ProQuest.
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