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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Yel'tsin ill, defensive

Concerns over the state of President Yel'tsin's health resurfaced recently as announcements about his need for a vacation were followed by news of Yel'tsin's hospitalization with the flu. The president has been remarkably low-profile since the start of the Chechen campaign, and this most recent hospitalization raises new doubts about his governance of state affairs. While he has been released from the hospital to recuperate at Gorki-9, the question of just who is making critical political decisions remains open. (INTERFAX, 1114 GMT, 11 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1011, via World News Connection)

One such decision is likely to result in another shake-up in the Kremlin administration. Vyacheslav Khizhnyakov, the president's representative to the Federation Council, recently requested that the council take up the issue of former Procurator-General Yuri Skuratov's dismissal. (ITAR-TASS, 1341 GMT, 11 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1011, via World News Connection) Khizhnyakov was apparently prompted to this action by Kremlin Chief of Staff Aleksandr Voloshin, who may well be sacked in the aftermath.

The Federation Council did vote on Wednesday, but chose once again not to dismiss Skuratov. Skuratov, speaking to the council members, reiterated his claims that corruption investigations reached the president's family. The Kremlin press service issued a defensive refutation on Thursday, claiming "The Russian president has never opened foreign bank accounts, and he has never had, and doesn't have, any assets abroad." (UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, 1030 PDT, 14 Oct 99; via ClariNet) It should be noted that Skuratov did not specifically

mention the president and has, in the recent past, remarked that Yel'tsin was not personally implicated in the investigations.

In a related story, the head of the Kremlin's economic management office, Pavel Borodin, who is reported to be deeply complicit in the Mabetex corruption investigation, spoke out last week to deny charges that he embezzled millions of dollars. Borodin believes, as do most, that the investigations are politically motivated and claims to "know who is ordering it." (INTERFAX, 1558 GMT, 8 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1008, via World News Connection) Perhaps most interesting, considering the gravity of the allegations being launched at the Kremlin, is Borodin's remarkable staying power. He may know a lot more than just who is behind these corruption claims.

GOVERNMENT

Security Council, Military-Industrial Commission meetings

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin presided over a 5 October meeting of the Security Council at which the design of a new national security/defense concept was debated. (ITAR-TASS, 0707 GMT, 5 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1005, via World News Connection) Putin sounded the now familiar theme of the scourge of international terrorism as prompting the need to reconsider means of protecting Russian national security.

The following day, 6 October, Putin chaired a meeting of the Military-Industrial Commission, which is tasked with the coordination of actions by the federal executive organs in the development and financing of armaments and other supports for the defense industry. There have been five previous meetings of the commission, which is mandated to meet at least once a month; no details of the agenda of this particular meeting were made available. (ITAR-TASS, 0723 GMT, 6 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1006, via World News Connection)

Chechen conflict spawns new government agencies

In an apparent effort to control media coverage of the military campaign in and around Chechnya, Prime Minister Putin has ordered the creation of an Information Center to provide reports and updates on events in the region. The center will be run by a working group made up of personnel from the new press ministry, the interior ministry, border guards, the State Television Company, and the tax police, among others. (ITAR-TASS, 1657 GMT, 4 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1004, via World News Connection)

The prime minister has also decreed the creation of a special government commission to oversee the "social rehabilitation" of the military-occupied sectors of the Chechen Republic. Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matvienko will head up the commission, which will initially deal with refugees displaced by the bombings and later turn to re-building infrastructure. In announcing the new commission, Putin stressed that Chechnya is still an integral part of the Russian Federation. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 6 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1005, via World News Connection)

Koshman appointed to 'liberated' Chechnya

Deputy Railways Minister Nikolai Koshman has agreed to become the Russian government's representative to the so-called "liberated" areas of Chechnya. (ITAR-TASS, 15 Oct 99; via nexis) Koshman, who will apparently co-ordinate with the above-mentioned commission, is charged with supervising the structures currently being established to consolidate Russian control of the area.

FSB

Zdanovich: Terrorists hiding in Chechnya

Federal Security Services spokesman Aleksandr Zdanovich stated definitively on Saturday that the terrorists who carried out the September bombings in Russia were currently hiding out in Chechnya, presumably in the sectors not yet occupied by Russian troops. According to Zdanovich, "[T]hey are in Chechnya right now because they were fulfilling orders that came from there." (ITAR-TASS,

16 Oct 99; via nexis) Once again, the circular logic which Russian officials apply to establishing the guilt and whereabouts of the purported terrorists is on full display.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger

Scandal prompts some concern over IMF tranche

The International Monetary Fund delayed a \$640 million tranche of its most recent loan to Russia in part due to fears that previous funds had disappeared into privately held foreign bank accounts. Of \$7 billion alleged to have been laundered through the Bank of New York, investigators said they feared at least \$200 million had come from funds loaned by the IMF. (Associated Press, 5 Oct 99; via nexis, and Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 1 Oct 99)

The accusations of money laundering unnerved Western bankers because evidence suggested that both the Russian Central Bank and the Kremlin might be implicated. Dispersal of the final tranche would depend on the Central Bank's willingness to accept quarterly Western audits, switch to international accounting standards and sell its stake in branch offices abroad. (INTERFAX, 0541 GMT, 30 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0930, via World News Connection) IMF officials also said they had been prompted to delay the loan by Russian reluctance to investigate one of the banks believed to be involved. Although Central Bank chairman Viktor Gerashenko called the IMF's demands "far-fetched and unrealistic," he said the bank would be willing to sell its international branches. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 8 Oct 99)

Two Russians close to the Kremlin are suspected of money laundering. Leonid Dyachenko, President Boris Yel'tsin's son-in-law, had two accounts in a branch of the implicated Bank of New York. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 5 Oct

99) Sobinbank, alleged to have been at the heart of Russian money-laundering operations, has on its board of directors Aleksandr Mamut, an advisor to the head of Yel'tsin's administration. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 6 Oct 99)

Worries that the IMF tranche would help to pay for the war in Chechnya prompted IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus to warn that if "the budget is over-shooting because of an uncontrolled increase of military spending, we shall interrupt our support." (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 13 Oct 99; via ClariNet) The State Duma's conciliatory commission recommended a 22-percent increase in the defense budget, while Duma Defense Committee chairman Roman Popkovich said the conflicts in Chechnya and Dagestan would require an increase in military spending of \$4 billion rubles (\$154 million). (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 7 Oct 99)

'Clash of civilizations'? Russia's Chechen war wins friends in Middle East

International reaction to the conflict in Chechnya showed no evidence that the post-Cold War world order would break down along ethnic and religious lines. The theory of "The Clash of Civilizations" might have predicted that Muslim states would fall in behind their counterparts in Chechnya. In fact, Russia's only critics were among the Western democracies. The Islamic states offered almost no criticism -- indeed, Iran offered full-throated, if somewhat hypocritical, support of Moscow's "anti-terrorist" campaign.

Western criticism was, admittedly, rather faint. A troika of European Union commissioners on a 7 October visit to Moscow denied even the suggestion that the EU had offered its mediation services (which Russia had, in any case, pre-emptively rejected). (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 11 Oct 99) US reaction was somewhat stronger. In his least optimistic assessment of Russia to date, US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott admitted that the future development of the Russian state was not inevitably towards liberal democracy. The crisis in the

North Caucasus was, Talbott said, "a moment of truth for the new Russian state."
(USIA, 1 Oct 99; via Johnson's Russia List)

In the Middle East, on the other hand, the split between support or criticism fell along strategic rather than ethnic or religious fault lines. Far from condemning the oppression of fellow Muslims, the Iraqi government welcomed Russian Fuel and Energy Minister Viktor Kalyuzhny, pressing him to sign new contracts to develop Iraqi oil fields in defiance of United Nations' sanctions. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 8 Oct 99) Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi praised Russia's campaign against terrorism and offered the aid not only of his own government, but of the Iranian-led Organization of the Islamic Conference as well. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 29 Sep 99)

Moscow uses grievances with American stance on ABM and Test Ban

Although American critics predicted that the US Senate's rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty would provoke outrage abroad, the Russian government was far more concerned to block all American attempts to revise the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Russian officials raised the specter of nuclear instability and a breakdown of inspection regimes required by other treaties. The Russians even suggested that they could not be held accountable for their own actions if the Americans developed and deployed a missile defense.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov began the international campaign with a speech to the United Nations, in which he suggested that the ABM treaty was a cornerstone of all arms control efforts, which would only remain feasible "if the existing agreements in this field -- first of all the ABM treaty -- are strictly observed." (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 1954 GMT, 21 Sep 99; via nexis)
General Vladimir Yakovlev, chief of Russia's strategic missile forces, went still further, suggesting that Russia would be forced to take unspecified "countermeasures" if the treaty were abandoned. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 1308 GMT, 5 Oct 99; via nexis)

Don't worry, alliances are so passé

To assuage Western fears of a Russo-Chinese alliance, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin revealed that in Russia's view, axes, alliances, and bilateral power struggles are "things of the past." (INTERFAX, 1754 GMT, 30 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0930, via World News Connection) In separate interviews carried by the Russian and Chinese press, Russian President Boris Yel'tsin and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov stressed the importance of a "new" kind of partnership emerging with China based on mutual trust and multipolarism. Both comments comes at a time when the press is abuzz with unsubstantiated rumors about arms sales and alliances. (See The NIS Observed, 13 Sep 99.)

As with many rumors, they may contain some element of truth; although Russia is far from forming an alliance with China, it is concluding some highly visible arms and technology exchanges as well as improving the general trend of its relationship with its neighbor. In this respect, the well-publicized 50th anniversary of Russo-Chinese diplomatic relations, recent joint naval exercises, and friendly exchanges between Russian President Yel'tsin and President Jiang Zemin are testaments to Ivanov's comment that "today is the best period" of Russo-Chinese relations. (INTERFAX, 8 Oct 99; via nexis) While the West shouldn't fear an old-fashioned, Cold War-style alliance, a "new" Russo-Chinese partnership is emerging which embraces multipolarism and a united voice on international issues. The policy may be new, but the anti-Western tilt isn't.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

POLITICAL PARTIES

The birth of another electoral bloc

It seems that anybody who is anybody has a political party or movement in pre-election Russia these days. No wonder that the Kremlin wants one too. In recent days, a seemingly spontaneous alliance of governors from 39 minor regions has emerged which calls itself Unity (Yedinstvo), though its provenance is linked to the Kremlin more directly than its leaders would like to admit.

The Kremlin connection is no secret. Yel'tsin pal and oligarch, Boris Berezovsky, apparently has worked very hard to get this movement underway. He convinced federal Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu to head the movement. But when an increasingly public tussle between the two became apparent, Berezovsky suddenly departed for warmer climes in Italy and France to nurse a bout of hepatitis. Berezovsky's removal from the scene might in fact have been prompted by the Kremlin in order to forestall a Berezovsky-Shoigu rumpus which might shake apart the nascent party.

In addition to the 39 gubernatorial signatories, a handful of minor parties who are registered to participate in the upcoming election, is also involved. This answers the vexing question of how a newly formed movement can participate in the Duma elections after the registration dates are well passed.

Much effort and no doubt cell-phone airtime was spent trying to coax Our Home is Russia (NDR) into the alliance, but to no avail. Former prime minister and the once and present head of the Russian natural gas monopoly Rosneft, Viktor Chernomyrdin, still wants to go it alone. It would seem that nobody, even former friends, wants to associate with Boris Yel'tsin, reeking of only two percent approval ratings. Unity continues to court several prominent NDR politicians, however: Mikhail Prusak (Novgorod governor), Dmitry Ayatskov (Saratov governor), and Vladimir Ryzhkov (leader of the NDR Duma faction).

But perhaps the biggest problem may be that, if Unity summons up a respectable degree of popular support, it would most likely come at the expense of Fatherland-All Russia, YABLOKO, and NDR. The beneficiary could only be Zyuganov's communists and agrarians, or Zhirinovskiy's xenophobic nationalists. (MOSCOW NEWS, 13 Oct 99; via nexis)

REGIONS

Luzhkov's wife set to run for the State Duma from Kalmykia

Yelena Baturina, better known as Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's wife, has decided to run for election to the State Duma from Kalmykia. Luzhkov supports her decision.

She is, of course, welcome to run for office, but her independence from her husband and his politics cannot but be subject to question. Those who wish her ill will of course look for some sign that her run for office is a simple attempt to gain parliamentary immunity, especially in light of ongoing claims that her company, Intenko, was involved in illegal activity. (See The NIS Observed, 4 Aug 99.)

Others may wonder why, if she desired to sit in the Duma, she did not run from some Moscow district where she would most certainly have received favorable treatment by the city government. Or, why not from Vladimir where she is well known and has business connections? It appears that her brother, Viktor Baturin, works in Kalmykia as the state advisor to the president of Kalmykia. Previously it was he who represented Yelena Baturina's Intenko firm which built Chess City -- the Russian chess capital. Her connections seem to be everywhere. She is not a member of Luzhkov's Fatherland, though; her party affiliations are as unclear as her reasons for running. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 21 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0921, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By LCDR James J. Duke Jr. and Lt. Col. Jill Skelton

Russia-China military partnership growing

Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Mikhail Zakharenko led a two-ship visit to Shanghai, China in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Also on the five-day visit's agenda were meetings between Admiral Zakharenko and the Chinese Eastern Fleet commander to discuss future cooperation in military affairs. The visit ended on 6 October with both Russian and Chinese warships leaving for a one-day exercise at sea. (ITAR-TASS, 0620 GMT, 27 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0927, via World News Connection) The exercise was not intended to be a demonstration of military power, but it did constitute another step in the continuing process of "confidence-building measures." Russia-China relations have been warming over the past decade after a bitter 1960s split. (See The NIS Observed, 27 Sep 99.) Russian arms sales to China are brisk as China's military moves towards modernization with the goals of projecting power and influencing events throughout the Western Pacific. The arms sales also provide a source of hard cash to Russia's economy and help Russia's arms industry to stay afloat. Russia and China believe they can mutually benefit from their partnership and challenge US dominance in international affairs.

Budding friendship on the Black Sea?

Russia and Ukraine recently completed their second joint naval Black Sea exercise, code-named "Peace Fairway-99." The neighboring countries held their first joint naval exercise in 1997. This year, seven warships, a submarine, combat aircraft, helicopters, and 150 marines represented Russia, while two corvettes, a combat plane and helicopter represented Ukraine. The ships conducted live fire drills, anti-air and anti-ship exercises, as well as search and rescue operations. They also landed marines in support of a simulated peace-keeping operation.

(ITAR-TASS, 1621 GMT, 22 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0923, via World News Connection)

The atmosphere between the two navies has shown marked improvement. In 1997 officers from both navies grumbled of being "ordered to be friends," however, the atmosphere in Peace Fairway-99 was more amicable. (Mayak Radio Network, 1207 GMT, 24 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0925, via World News Connection) The more friendly atmosphere may be the result of a series of agreements between the countries which include division of the former Soviet Union Black Sea Fleet, debt payments, Ukraine leasing shore infrastructure to Russia, radio frequency usage, customs issues, and even medical assistance to veterans and pensioners. (MOSKOVSKY KOMSOLETS, 8 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0608, via World News Connection) Perhaps the Russian sailors will forget the one week last winter when Ukraine halted supplies of water and electricity to the Russian fleet at Sevastopol after Russia's debt to Ukraine reached 13 million rubles. (See The NIS Observed, 15 Feb 99.) As a tenant in Ukraine, Russia can only benefit from a positive working relationship with the Ukraine navy. Perhaps the Russian sailors will have a winter of uninterrupted water and electricity.

Lethal missile boat in the works

Russia intends to test launch the supersonic SS-N-22 Sunburn antiship missile from a prototype Molnia (Lightning) missile patrol boat designed by the Almaz central sea design office and built by the Vympel shipyard in St. Petersburg. The Molnia is a follow-on to the successful Soviet Tarantul-class missile boats. The Molnia is intended for the export market and is expected to displace approximately 550 tons, slightly more than the Tarantul class. (ITAR-TASS, 1533 GMT, 28 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0928, via World News Connection) The Sunburn missile has a top speed of Mach 3, the fastest flying speed among all antiship missiles in the world. Due to its high speed, a defending ship's reaction time is limited to 25-30 seconds, making it extremely challenging to employ electronic countermeasures or shoot down the incoming missile. In comparison,

the French Exocet antiship missile, successfully employed by Argentina in the Falklands conflict, gives an opponent about 120-150 seconds reaction time due to its much slower speed. (NOWA TEKHINKA WOJSKOWA, March 1995; JPRS-UMA-95-023, via Military Analysis Network) Due to potential buyer interest, Vypel has already commenced construction of four Molnia boats. Vypel can only sell its patrol craft to foreign buyers since it is unlikely the Russian navy will procure new equipment in the near future. High-speed missile patrol boats would be suitable for many coastal nations. The boats' relatively small size enables them to blend in with coastal merchant and fishing traffic, making them difficult to locate and target. With a skilled operator, Russian-built patrol craft armed with Sunburn antiship missiles would be a significant threat to any seagoing adversary.

Summary of Russian military operations in Chechnya

On 1 October, Russian defense and interior ministry troops began ground operations in Chechnya. These operations follow fighting in Dagestan last month when Chechen militants crossed into Dagestan in an attempt to establish an independent Islamic state. Russian forces were deployed into Dagestan to stop the militants and forced them to retreat back into Chechnya. Additionally, Russia has labeled these same militants as "terrorists," blaming them for the recent spate of apartment bombings in Russia.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has identified two official objectives for military operations. The first goal is to establish a security zone around Chechnya to contain the militants and prevent their penetration into neighboring territories: Stavropol Krai, Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and Georgia. The second objective is to destroy the militants/"terrorists" and their ability to conduct operations against Russian interests and citizens. Unofficial, but no less real, objectives most likely include a desire to regain some credibility after the humiliating defeat of Russian forces during the 1994-96 Chechen War, and a Russian need to re-establish a firm presence in wavering North Caucasus

territories. Putin made an intriguing statement, that Russian forces would further "liberate" Djokhar-gala (Grozny) if "real Chechens" request it. (BBC WORLD BROADCASTS, 1600 GMT, 12 Oct 99; via nexis) "Real Chechens" refers to a group of pro-Moscow Chechen parliamentarians. (See further information under Caucasus section.)

Ground operations followed an aggressive air campaign over Chechnya which Russian military leaders openly stated was patterned after the NATO air campaign in Kosovo. (MOSCOW TIMES, 29 Sep 99; via nexis) Russian military targeted militant camps and strongholds, logistic depots and routes, communications infrastructure, and sources of militant financing. Russian officials reported up to 50 sorties a day were flown primarily by SU-24 bomber and SU-25 attack aircraft. Specific targets have included oil refineries, a television station, a cellular phone exchange, and militant camps. Also destroyed was the Chechen Air Force: one biplane and radar site at the Grozny airport. The "militant camps" included villages in the Sharoi, Vedeno, Nozhai-Yurt, Gudermes, Achkoi-Martan and Uras-Martan districts. Air strikes were also conducted in the northern Shelkovskaya and Naurskaya districts in preparation for the planned Russian ground offensive. It now appears, with the initiation of the ground offensive, that the air campaign has changed from a strictly strategic focus to more of support to ground operations. Strikes are still occurring on strategic targets -- railway nodes, bridges, and targets along the Terek River and in northern Chechnya for instance -- but they seem to coincide more precisely with ground objectives and operations.

Russian ground forces moved in largely unopposed and now occupy the northern third of Chechnya down to the bank of the Terek River. These defense ministry forces are made up primarily of elements of the Russian 58th Army, North Caucasian Military District, commanded by Lt Gen Gennady Troshev. Russian forces are reported to number approximately 50,000 against an estimated 20,000 Chechens. (INTERFAX, 1332 GMT, 3 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1003, via World

News Connection) The 58th Army units are supported by interior ministry law enforcement, lighter armed troops and border guards from the Federal Border Guard Detachment at Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia. The federal border guards have secured the southernmost sector of the Russo-Georgian border, reinforcing control over key mountain passes and transportation routes. Specifically these include the Dzheirakh and Zheyrakh gorges and accesses to the Georgian military and Transcaucasus highways. Russian forces have established forward lines along the northern bank of the Terek River in northern Chechnya and defensive lines along the Chechnya-Dagestan border. These defensive lines are described as three deep on the Dagestani side of the border. The first line is made up of interior and joint police troops. The second and third lines are composed of defense ministry forces. (INTERFAX, 0648 GMT, 3 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1003, via World News Connection) Federal forces accompanied by artillery are also positioned on the western Chechen border with Ingushetia. Fighting with Chechen forces has been reported along the whole spectrum between fierce and light. The Chechens seem to be picking their battles, retreating into the mountainous regions and then conducting hit-and-run tactics. Last week the Russians reported they had surrounded and had within their grasp Shamil Basaev, one of two leaders of the militant cause, but apparently he slipped out. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 12 Oct 99) The most intense fighting to date, as acknowledged by both sides, was on 7-8 October when Chechen forces crossed the Terek River and engaged Russian forces on the northern bank in a four-hour battle around Ishcherskaya. Russian military officials admitted to seven soldiers killed and 37 wounded. Chechen killed and wounded figures were not announced.

Casualty figures difficult to ascertain

An accurate count of Chechen casualties, both civilian and militant, is difficult to obtain. It is, however, safe to assume that civilian casualties have been fairly high since a majority of air strikes have been carried out in civilian-populated areas. Civilian casualty numbers, more so than militant numbers, vary widely between

Russian and Chechen reports. The Chechens report numbers on the high side in order to exploit them as sympathetic propaganda. The Russians, on the other hand, keep them low in order to maintain support for military operations. Militant casualties are particularly difficult to determine accurately. Because of the nature of guerrilla-type warfare, it is often difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff, the civilians from the combatants. In addition, each side manipulates the numbers to gain perceived "win points." Russian casualties vary between 156-243 troops (defense and interior) killed since fighting began against Chechen militants in August, with over 800 wounded. So far, reports are between 30-40 dead since the Russian offensive in Chechnya began 1 October.

So what happens next?

Currently Russian forces are firmly entrenched in northern Chechnya. Will they cross the Terek and move south to the capital? Yes, the indications are they will, for two reasons. First, they left the door open to do this in their objectives. They want to destroy the militant threat in Chechnya and, according to Russian leaders, Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov has openly sided with the militants, declaring martial law and a "holy war" against Russian forces. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE (North European Service), 1456 GMT, 5 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1005, via World News Connection) Second, there is the real question as to whether Russian forces, now that they occupy Northern Chechnya, can sustain that occupation indefinitely under current conditions. The realistic answer is no, despite the Russian leadership's recent assurances of increases in the defense budget. For these two reasons, credibility and sustainment, Russia perceives it must take definitive actions to secure Chechnya and place it firmly back into its pocket.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

The same old stagnation

Despite the diplomatic fanfare that accompanied the CIS summit in October, once again another CIS summit has accomplished very little. For all of its resolutions and joint programs, the main impediments to a functioning Commonwealth endure; Russia remains a domineering voice and implementation is scarcely ever realized. Such was the case on 8 October in the famous seaport Yalta, where CIS prime ministers and foreign ministers met to discuss the CIS Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and international terrorism.

The FTZ issue has plagued the CIS since the April 1994 summit at which it was first introduced. Even now, despite several members' approval of the conditions for an FTZ, Russian opposition prevents its establishment. At the most recent summit, the members signed some FTZ documents which gave the impression that some progress was made. But, on closer inspection, the documents mean little as long as Russia continues to conduct economic practices that prevent it. Specifically, Russia objects to taxation of the country of destination rather than the country of origin on goods shipped amongst CIS members. This measure would make the FTZ partners WTO-compliant, which could break Russia's monopoly on CIS-produced goods. According to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Russia is just acting "within the CIS on the basis of its own national interests." (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 11 Oct 99) By doing so, Russia is not only carrying out its own interests but sabotaging other member states' efforts -- with Ukraine at the helm -- to create an FTZ. And yet, given the poor CIS implementation scorecard, even with Russian support it is unclear how quickly FTZ could resuscitate inter-CIS trade, which is already down by one-third since last year. (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 8 Oct 99; via yahoo.com) Regarding the CIS joint initiative to combat international terrorism, a similar story unfolds. Only a week after a joint session of CIS interior ministers decided to create an ad hoc anti-terrorism center, Putin announced that the CIS prime ministers were "unable to announce any new anti-terrorism measures." (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 8 Oct 99; via nexis) In their haste to sign anything indicative of their resolve to fight

terrorism, the interior ministers failed to devise the functional aspects of the new center, a problem that the prime ministers were not able to resolve either. Regardless, the CIS prime ministers and the CIS foreign ministers reaffirmed their intent to combat international terrorism within the CIS.

Once again, the CIS has taken on reasonable tasks and had agreed on little more than their theoretical importance.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Electioneering 101

The next textbook written about how to hold a free, open, fair and effective election should undoubtedly begin by saying, "Don't do it like Ukraine."

While the country has succeeded in amusing international pundits with its Keystone Kop routines, its election process has descended into name-calling, mudslinging, media suppression, apathy and now, assassination attempts.

On 2 October, two hand grenades were thrown at candidate Natalya Vitrenko as she was stepping into her car after a speech to supporters in Krivoi Rog (eastern Ukraine). Vitrenko was only slightly injured, but over 30 others were more severely hurt, including a teenage girl who lost one of her legs. (ITAR-TASS, 1953 GMT, 3 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1003, via World News Connection) Immediately, the finger pointing began. Fellow presidential candidate Oleksandr Moroz was involved. No, it was President Kuchma. Or, maybe it was Vitrenko herself. Better yet, it could have been a NATO plot. Well, actually, no one in Ukraine has pointed at NATO -- yet.

The one thing that is certain is that two men were arrested at the scene and charged with a terrorist attack. There seems to be little doubt that these men threw the grenades; the real question is who ordered them to do it. As of press time, the person named as having ordered the attack is Sergei Ivanchenko, the head of Socialist Party leader Oleksandr Moroz's campaign staff in Krivoi Rog. Sergei Ivanchenko's brother, Vladimir, was arrested at the scene, along with Sergei Samilov. Both men arrested are reported to be residents of Rostov in Russia, and were seen by numerous people throwing the grenades at Vitrenko. Almost immediately after being arrested, the men reportedly gave police Sergei Ivanchenko's name as the person who planned the attack; he is currently on the run, and was last seen in Rostov.

It seems to have been very easy for police to solve this mystery, in a country with an abysmal record for solving crimes against well-known individuals. It is possible that the men involved simply do not possess the brightest criminal minds. Or, the answer could be found somewhere in the statements made by a number of presidential candidates following the attack.

Oleksandr Tkachenko was the most blunt in his response to the attack, calling it "the work of the incumbent president's staff." (ITAR-TASS, 0956 GMT, 4 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1004, via World News Connection) In response, President Kuchma ominously stated, "Remember that the thief always shouts, 'Catch the thief!'" (INTERFAX, 1611 GMT, 4 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1004, via World News Connection) Meanwhile, Moroz claimed that the attack was aimed at derailing the joint candidacies of the "Kaniv Four," four leftist candidates (including him) who had joined forces to campaign against Kuchma, and who, he said, had "confused all the plans of Kuchma." (UNIAN NEWS AGENCY, 0930 GMT, 4 Oct 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via nexis) However, candidate Oleksandr Bazilyuk noted that "every candidate would benefit from a failed assassination attempt." (ITAR-TASS, 0956 GMT, 4 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1004) Vitrenko, for her part, covered all of her bases by suggesting, "I will not blame or protect

anyone. I am aware that each of the presidential candidates wanted me removed from the political arena." (INTERFAX, 6 Oct 99; via nexis) That statement was undoubtedly the truest spoken.

Perhaps part of the answer to this mystery will come only when the world sees how strenuously the two men in custody are prosecuted, and if the police make a vigorous effort to catch both Sergei Ivanchenko and anyone to whom he may be reporting.

Meanwhile, the population of Ukraine has yet another reason to distrust its politicians, political system, police and justice system. "There is an overwhelming sense," stated an editorial in the Kyiv Post, "that the case simply won't be solved." Perhaps even more sadly, the editorial noted, "The circus-like atmosphere ... has led to the public not taking the assassination attempt on the nation's leading presidential challenger seriously." (KYIV POST, 14 Oct 99) The country's electoral and justice systems, and the teenage girl who now has one leg, are, it seems, the real casualties of this attack.

BELARUS

Bringing it to the people

This week, the residents of Belarus and Russia were able to see at last what all the fuss is about. They finally were able to read the draft treaty for the Russia-Belarus Union. As expected, the reaction of ordinary citizens was muted, to put it mildly.

On 8 October, the treaty was published in Russia's Rossiyskaya gazeta, and in certain un-named Belarusian press. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has become one of the loudest and most ebullient supporters of the treaty, called its publication the first step toward unification of the countries. "I think history," he said, "is giving the two nations a chance to be together and we should not lose it." (INTERFAX, 8 Oct 99; via nexis) Unfortunately, this excitement was not

matched by most others in the two countries, including Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Lukashenka said the treaty did not go far enough, and continued his calls for merging the two countries into one state with one government.

The governors of several Russian regions also voiced questions about the draft treaty document, which includes broad general calls for a "common economic space," "a single currency," and a "common market." (ITAR-TASS, 1838 GMT, 11 Oct 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via nexis) Khabarovsk Governor Viktor Ishaev said the treaty seems to be "simply an extension of our good-neighborly relations with a sovereign independent state." Not surprisingly, the president of Tatarstan was more blunt in his assessment of the draft: "What kind of state will this be, which will 'form a single economic space,' a 'single currency' and a 'single body of power,' while each member will preserve full sovereignty? What is this -- a wish to be a little pregnant?"

In reality, this much-heralded draft treaty seems to be almost identical in character to the simple outline for unity signed by Presidents Lukashenka and Yel'tsin in December 1998. For all their discussions and work on the document, no specifics were created, and the actual "union" seems just as far off as it did almost one year ago. There is one exception, however. The two countries have now signed nine documents on military cooperation. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev said the agreements "stipulate the creation of a single regional anti-aircraft defense system, [and] the drafting of a joint armaments program." (ITAR-TASS, 1329 GMT, 6 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1006, via World News Connection) It seems that Russia has achieved what must be its primary objective, without even creating the union. Lukashenka will undoubtedly be waiting for his single union state for quite a while longer.

MOLDOVA

Fingers on the triggers

The president and parliament edged closer to a showdown this week, as President Petru Lucinschi continued with his plans to hold a referendum soon that would substantially increase his power. Lucinschi has insisted that more presidential powers are needed in order to overcome the country's financial crisis. At present, the president has little ability to issue decrees or executive orders, and has limited say in the formation of his cabinet.

Lucinschi had signaled that he would accept a compromise with parliament, in lieu of a referendum, but no progress appears to have been made on that compromise. Therefore, it seems -- at least for now -- that a referendum will be held before the end of the year, asking Moldovans to amend the constitution and make their country a presidential republic. With the exception of the rights to appoint his own prosecutor-general and his own cabinet and to issue more decrees, Lucinschi has not elaborated what other powers he would be granted in this referendum. It is also entirely unclear, in a country where a majority of citizens did not vote in the last regional elections, whether the people will support him.

However, it is no secret that the president and parliament have been locked in a struggle that has resulted in three cabinets in the last year, and a virtual stop to government activity. The government has been unable to deal with electricity and food shortages, and has been unable to unify its position on the situation in Transdnestr. Can a presidential republic be much worse? We may have the chance to find out before the start of the 21st century.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

CHECHNYA

You've come a long way, baby!

Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott addressed Russia's policies in the Caucasus during a talk he delivered on 1 October at The John F. Kennedy School of Government. The speech shows that, unlike the "see no evil" posture which the administration adopted in 1994, this time around, it has noted with disapproval the indiscriminate bombing of civilians in Chechnya and the discriminatory policies of the Moscow authorities which expel dark-skinned people from the capital. Talbott termed the latter "not just an ugly and atavistic development but an ominous one."

In closing his speech, Talbott advised the Russians to find a negotiated solution. Peace will only come to the North Caucasus when the population feels "as though they are invested in Russia's future." This long-term goal requires "opening a political dialogue with the more pragmatic leaders in the North Caucasus, not antagonizing them or their populations." (USIA, 1 Oct 99; via Johnson's List)

While outlining these admirable goals, Talbott failed to specify what policies the US will adopt to attain them. Clearly, by "pragmatic leaders" he means Aslan Maskhadov, the democratically elected president of Chechnya, recognized as such by President Yel'tsin. Will the American diplomats press this point as Prime Minister Putin cobbles together a puppet government under Malik Saidullaev? The members of this government were elected at gunpoint in 1996 and their term expired in 1998. All of them reside in Moscow and would be in grave danger if they actually tried to return to Chechnya. Clearly, negotiations with Saidullaev as the Chechen representative would be a farce. Still, there are indications that this is precisely the direction in which the wind is blowing. Will Secretary Talbott dare to call a spade a spade?

Will NATO insist that Russia honor its treaty commitments?

On 8 October US State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters that Russia complies with the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty in the

overall ceilings, but has exceeded the flank limitations. "We are talking about many, many hundreds of pieces of equipment over the limits in the armor-combat-vehicle category," Rubin said. (US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, PRESS BRIEFING #128, 8 Oct 8 99; via www.state.gov) He also pointed out that Russia has been exceeding the treaty limitations "for some time," which implies that the violations pre-date the war that started in September. Clearly, if Russia violates a part of the CFE treaty, IT VIOLATES THE TREATY, and it hardly matters that it is in compliance with its other provisions.

Moreover, Rubin's remarks betray a kind of great power arrogance that has persisted even as empires have crumbled: "The Russians have promised to provide us additional information about their military activities in Chechnya with regard to these treaty limitations." The sentiment echoed in Russia, as Col-Gen Leonid Ivashov said that Russia was notifying NATO, India and China about its treaty violations. As long as the "big boys" exchange information, the smaller states have nothing to fear. "We" are not the ones that require full disclosure; the treaty violations don't jeopardize the security of US borders. Russia owes explanations and assurances not just to the major world powers but to its southern neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The head of the main directorate of international military cooperation of the Russian defense ministry, Col-Gen Leonid Ivashov, discussed these matters at an 18 October press conference, saying essentially that the treaty violations should be treated "with understanding" because they are brought on by "extraordinary circumstances" and the signatories had been informed of the infractions. (INTERFAX NEWS AGENCY, 1036 GMT, 15 Oct 99; via nexis)

Under the terms of the treaty, given the extraordinary circumstances, Russia may notify other signatories that it is withdrawing from the agreement. Russia is unwilling to take that course because it would allow NATO to alter the ceilings on

the territories of its new members. Instead, according to Ivashov, Russia stands ready to convene "an extraordinary conference."

Clearly the Russian side would use a meeting of that sort to legitimate an even greater military presence in the Caucasus. In 1996 Russia convinced the other signatories to re-negotiate the 1990 treaty to increase the number of armaments it can deploy on its northwestern and southern flanks. On that occasion the West steamrolled over the vehement objections of Russia's neighbors -- Ukraine, the Baltic states and the Caucasian states -- the parties most directly threatened by increases of weaponry near their borders. There is the danger that the upcoming OSCE meeting in Istanbul, which was expected to finalize the treaty, could become yet another round of CFE revision.

Amnesty International issues appeal to Russian government

In a 1 October statement Amnesty International protested the loss of civilian lives, the unfolding crisis of internally displaced persons, and the "propiska" or residency permit system in the capital. The policies recommended by the human rights body would protect civilians and bring Russia in compliance with international human rights legislation. The following represents a partial and slightly edited list of the measures listed in the report. (EUR/46/34/99, 1 Oct 99)

- The Russian military should take sufficient precautions to protect civilians in selecting and vetting targets, in choosing the timing of its attacks, and in giving an advance warning to civilians.

- As a member of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, Russia should abide by its promises to honor international human rights legislation.

- The government should immediately take steps to recognize all civilians fleeing the conflict area as internally displaced persons and provide them with the necessary services.

- The government should take measures to stop the campaign of intimidation against Chechen civilians and other people from the Caucasus.
- The Russian authorities should hold a comprehensive and impartial investigation into the allegations of targeting civilians and civilian sites in the course of the bombing of Chechnya and bring all military and government officials responsible to justice.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

Kyrgyz, Uzbek planes bomb rebels in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

During the first few days of October unmarked planes dropped several bombs on rebel groups in southern Kyrgyzstan, as well as in the Garm, Tajikabad, and Jirgatal districts of eastern Tajikistan. Kyrgyz Presidential Press Secretary Kanybek Imanaliev told journalists on 4 October that the bombing raids were undertaken jointly by the Uzbek and Kyrgyz air forces. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 4 Oct 99) The same day, a spokesman for the Uzbek foreign ministry informed ITAR-TASS that his government had no knowledge about the bomb attacks on eastern Tajikistan, in which a number of people were killed. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 5 Oct 99) The Tajik foreign ministry sent an official letter of protest to the Uzbek government on 6 October, condemning the raids which may have dropped as many as 80 bombs on Tajikistan's eastern districts. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 7 Oct 99)

This is the second time in recent months that the Uzbek air force has attacked Tajik territory, apparently both times with the approval of the Kyrgyz government, and it does not bode well for the way in which future Central Asian conflicts will be resolved. The Uzbek government has already repeatedly demonstrated how

little respect it has for the sovereignty of its neighbors' territory, and although the Kyrgyz government has thus far succeeded in retaining control over its ground operation against the rebels, it may not be for much longer. In recent days, Uzbekistan's President Karimov once again openly criticized the tactics being used by the Kyrgyz military, in a televised address to his country's citizens. He expressed disdain for the Kyrgyz leadership's lack of resolve in neutralizing the rebel groups and stated that the insurgents should be destroyed, not simply forced back into Tajikistan. President Karimov made this statement shortly after announcing that he had canceled a planned 12 October trip to Bishkek. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 14 Oct 99)

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz government claims success against rebels on two fronts

Despite the fact that Kyrgyz government officials have steadfastly denied they would engage in any type of discussions with rebel group leaders in southern Kyrgyzstan, it seems that the "unofficial negotiations" which parliament representative Tursunbai Bakir Uulu and human rights activist Tursunbek Akunov have been conducting with the insurgents have finally borne fruit. Although news reports differ dramatically on precisely which hostages have been set free, as many as seven may now be able to rejoin their families, including a number of policemen and the commander of Kyrgyzstan's interior ministry troops. The fate of the four Japanese geologists is still unknown. A number of reports indicate that the kidnappers are demanding \$2 million in ransom in return for their release. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 18 Oct 99) However, an anonymous source in the Kyrgyz security services claimed that they had been set free on 16 October in a village close to the Tajik border. (INTERFAX, 1751 GMT, 16 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1016, via World News Connection) The rebels claim to have killed one hostage some time before 4 October, according to Mr. Bakir Uulu (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 15 Oct 99), perhaps as a reprisal for the bombing raids conducted against the insurgents by the Uzbek air force.

The Kyrgyz government has claimed complete victory over the rebels on the military front. On 16 October General Abdygul Chotbaev, who has been supervising the military operation against the insurgents, informed press agencies that the rebel groups had been pushed entirely out of Kyrgyz territory. (ITAR-TASS, 1259 GMT, 16 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1016, via World News Connection) However, if the rebels are continuing to hold the Japanese geologists hostage, a fact on which all news sources except the unnamed Kyrgyz security force official seem to agree, then it is too early to proclaim the rebels' defeat. Furthermore, for nearly the past two months the insurgents have been able to cross the Kyrgyz-Tajik border at will, despite the increased security measures which both the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments have allegedly taken in order to seal the border. This would indicate that the rebels' current retreat may be only temporary.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

Parliamentarians lend support to Chechnya

Members of the three Baltic parliaments have spoken out in defense of Chechens during the current bombing raids by Russia, much as the Balts had done during the Chechen war a few years ago. Vytautas Landsbergis, chairman of the Lithuanian Seimas, issued the strongest statement, condemning the Russian actions and voicing his suspicions of Moscow's stated goal -- to eradicate terrorism -- and of the bombings in the Russian capital that have been cited as precipitating the attack on Chechnya. "[I]f the Russian leaders had been planning such actions and an invasion, then the bombing of residential houses in Russia was simply needed to build up the public opinion for such actions not only in Russia but in the West as well," he said. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 27 Sep 99) Landsbergis rejected attempts by journalists and politicians to compare US and NATO air raids against Yugoslavia, Iraq and

militant Moslem groups in Afghanistan with Russian attacks on Chechnya. His colleagues in the Seimas, including the secretary-general of the International Parliamentary Group for Chechnya's Problems, also condemned Russia's actions, and have called on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly to participate actively in the initiation of peace talks. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 28 Sep 99)

Reflecting its neighbor's commitment to keep the Chechens' plight in the forefront of international attention, the Latvian Saeima also has a support group. According to MP Juris Vidins of the Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK party, the support group's main goals are to achieve Chechnya's de jure recognition and to speak out on behalf of Chechnya in the Council of Europe. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 7 Oct 99)

Concern for the plight of the civilians being bombed also came from Tallinn. A statement issued by the Estonia-Chechnya parliamentary caucus advises Moscow to heed calls by Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov to begin negotiations to end the crisis. "We don't want to see a sequel to the aggression committed against the Chechen people in 1994-1996 and to genocide....," the statement reads. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 27 Sep 99) Estonian President Lennart Meri reiterated his countrymen's hopes of a quick start to peace talks, and voiced the belief that the OSCE and the UN should take a public stand on the war. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 6 Oct 99)

The talk of the town

Language continues to be the subject of discussion, as reports are published about fluency levels. One of the saddest commentaries about such fluency comes from Estonia, where the Ministry of Education recently reported that less than one-third of the 110 headmasters in the country's Russian-medium schools

can speak Estonian at the level required for educators. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 20 Sep 99)

The international community continues to lend assistance with much-needed language classes. Estonian Education Minister Tonis Lukas announced a cooperative venture with Canada concerning the teaching of Estonian to non-Estonians. Four joint language teaching projects are planned for the coming year, Lukas said. In addition, Canada is sponsoring a school for Russian students, with Estonian as the language of instruction, in the predominantly Russian-speaking populated city of Narva. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 24 Sep 99) Moreover, the Denmark foreign ministry state secretary announced an additional grant of US\$100,000 to Latvia for a national language program. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 20 Sep 99) International interest remains quite apparent: During a meeting in New York, where she was attending the UN General Assembly, Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga met with several of her counterparts, as well as with UN Secretary-General Koffi Annan, to discuss the country's controversial language law, which she returned to parliament for revision this summer.

With the number of language programs now in existence or planned, however, it appears that an absence of will may be the largest stumbling block for those who do not speak the official language of their countries of residence. Many may believe (in defiance of reality) that the squeaky wheels will get not only grease but also, perhaps, a revocation of the language laws. Toward that end, Russian-speaking politicians plan to protest in court one aspect of Estonia's language law which prohibits election posters in Russian. The argument, according to the electoral alliance People's Trust, is that the Language Department is depriving non-Estonian citizens of the right to obtain information in a language they understand. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 20 Sep 99) The eagerness of Russian-speaking citizens to participate in the electoral

process is admirable, but that admiration is offset by concern about their apparent unwillingness to participate in the society in which they live.

Clearly, language is not the only obstacle that the Baltic countries must overcome to achieve integration of Russian speakers into society. And it is not simply a problem involving older, settled persons. A poll conducted by the Baltijas Datu Nams company noted feelings of estrangement on the part of students attending Russian-language schools in Latvia. Only one-third of the students polled considered themselves to be part of Latvia's community. Still, fluency levels apparently are higher in Latvia: Most headmasters are fluent in the state language and 74 percent of Russian-speaking schoolchildren also can speak the language quite well. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 21 Sep 99)

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