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Russian Federation: Security Services

By Luba Schwartzman

Killing two birds with one stone

The Russian justice system has shown itself to be "stern" -- Edmund Pope was sentenced for the full twenty years -- and Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown himself to be "compassionate." On 8 December, the presidential commission on pardons advised Putin to pardon the American after the conclusion of the required waiting period of one week. (INTERFAX, 1050 GMT, 8 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis) Putin has said he plans to issue the pardon.

Perestroika lives on

The Russian power organs have been quite active of late, and a number of proposals have been made to render them more efficient. A bill on restoring a secret service superstructure, the State Security Ministry [which once had jurisdiction in fields other than army intelligence that are now covered by the Federal Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the General Staff Intelligence Branch (GRU), the Federal Agency for Governmental Communications and Information and the Federal Border Guards Service] failed in the Duma on 15 November. (IZVESTIA, 16 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) The Russian interior ministry, however, may become a stronger federal oversight agency since regional criminal police committees are being subordinated to the federal authorities. A further streamlining of the structure is underway as Federal Criminal Investigations Committee is being set up to replace the Main Directorate for Organized Crime, the Directorate of Security, the Directorate R (computer crimes) and the operational and detective departments. (ITAR-TASS, 27 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis; and KOMMERSANT-DAILY, 29 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis)

Some thoughts on crime

As the end of the year comes closer, some Russian officials are considering the latest data on crime. While the overall crime rate fell by 3% (as reported by the interior ministry, 2,215,000 crimes were committed in Russia in the first nine months of 2000, as compared to 2,281,400 during the same period in 1999), it was still far greater than in earlier years (1,900,000 in 1998, 1,800,000 in 1997). In Moscow the crime rate rose rapidly -- by 40% over the past year. There is some concern about the rate of crimes committed by police officers, which has risen by 3.5 percent over the last year. Lieutenant General Vyacheslav Brycheev, head of the interior ministry's personnel department, reported at a ministry seminar that about 100,000 police officers were dismissed for "discrediting reasons," and that 98 interior troop officers had committed crimes since the beginning of the year, 10 of whom were dismissed. (ITAR-TASS, 28 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis; ITAR-TASS, 1124 GMT, 20 Oct 98; via lexis-nexis; and ITAR-TASS, 6 Nov 97; via lexis-nexis) Increased drug use has been cited as a major threat to national security: If the current trend continues, there will be over 4 million drug users in Russia in the 21st century. The number of drug-related crimes has risen fourteen-fold over the last 10 years. (INTERFAX, 0852 GMT, 29 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) In addition to rising crime rates, the number of deaths from alcoholic poisoning, suicide and car accidents has increased significantly. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 5 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Sarah Miller

The Anti-terrorism Center: another dead CIS initiative?

In one more demonstration of its divisions, the CIS concluded its final summit of the year with little fanfare and many failures. This time, CIS cooperative efforts were stymied (once again) by a lack of motivation evidenced by the ostensible failure of its most touted cooperative measure, the Anti-terrorism Center (ATC).

Despite rosy rhetoric from many member states -- most notably Russia -- the latest meeting only confirmed the moribund nature of the grouping's initiatives. The ATC may have held top billing at the 1 December CIS summit in Minsk, but long before the summit, the ATC was already showing signs of neglect. (ECONOMIC NEWS, 1 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis) Promoted in fall 1999 by then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the concept for an ATC has enjoyed widespread support among commonwealth members. At the September CIS summit in fact, the CIS presidents almost unanimously voted in favor of the new initiative's immediate implementation. However, like most other CIS initiatives, thus far the ATC has remained dead in the water.

The frustration over this lack of motivation was evident in Minsk, especially as displayed by Central Asian states which currently are facing "terrorist" insurgencies on their southern borders. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazerbaev derided the lack of initiative among CIS members at the summit, pointing out that five months after their decision to implement the ATC, the members had not issued even a collective reaction to the "developments" in Central Asia. (ITAR-TASS, 1548 GMT, 1 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1201, via World News Connection) Likewise, Azeri President Heydar Aliev expressed frustration tempered by his apparent understanding of bureaucratic politics when he stressed that there "is a desire and a need for cooperation," but that initiatives take time to implement. (INTERFAX, 0707 GMT, 2 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1202, via World News Connection)

Putin, by contrast, painted the get-together as a success. Speaking for all participants, he claimed that they were "fully satisfied with the results of the summit which has produced important and positive results," in apparent reference to the ATC. (BBC SUMMARY OF WORLD BROADCASTS, 4 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis) However, the commonwealth's inability to make any headway belies Putin's attempt to inflate artificially the summit's results.

As it stands, even if the ATC is implemented in some limited form -- probably as a collective database of suspected and known "terrorist" organizations -- it will most likely join the ranks of other CIS-wide cooperative measures which have been largely ineffective. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma has chalked up some of CIS ineffectiveness to the chaotic nature of the commonwealth. In a recent public address, he commented that, "There are so many unions within the CIS that it's damn confusing!" (INTERFAX, 1426 GMT, 17 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1117, via World News Connection)

However, even those initiatives that have been implemented usually enjoy only partial participation from CIS member states, in large part due to the polarization in the CIS between the "Russia-6" (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) and GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova). The split highlights the divergent interests between GUUAM members, which generally resist Russian dominance in the CIS, and the more pro-Russian axis, whose members accept Russian dominance in exchange for mutually advantageous relationships based on military and economic benefits. Certain recent actions by GUUAM members have only exacerbated this split -- in particular, GUUAM members' steps to institutionalize the association in the past few months and efforts to establish GUUAM as an independent international organization at the recent OSCE meeting and within the auspices of the UN. With economic gains hanging in the balance -- mostly Caspian oil and a planned transport corridor to Western Europe -- relations within the CIS most likely will suffer only further as GUUAM pursues its own economic and strategic interests.

Yet another, perhaps less obvious, factor influencing the downturn in CIS momentum is reflected by its dominant member's relative preoccupation with matters outside the CIS. After Putin's rather bold moves to reassert Russian domination in the CIS over the first few months of 2000, Moscow's CIS initiative appears to have waned over the second half of 2000 as its attentions and energies turned elsewhere in the world. Thus, while Moscow has been pursuing

actively its foreign policy in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, it has done so at the expense of developing its relations with countries closer to home. This type of neglect only opens the door for groupings like GUUAM to seize the initiative.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

REGIONS

Future of interregional associations discussed

Since Putin created his federal regions, the continued existence of Russia's interregional associations is unclear. Originally established somewhat hurriedly in the face of the economic meltdown which followed Yel'tsin's devaluation of the ruble several years back, the interregional associations were seen by some as being potential counterweights to Moscow's centralizing tendencies. However, since Putin created his federal districts, headed by his appointees, it looks as if the role of the interregional associations to counter Moscow has lessened considerably.

At the 10 November Omsk session of the Siberian Federal District Council, Aleksandr Nazarchuk, chair of the Altay Kray Legislative Assembly, proposed disbanding the Siberian Accord because he felt it had become redundant due to the existence of the federal regions. (The accord is one of the seven regional economic organizations which became increasingly important during the country's devaluation crisis in the 1990s.) He pointed out that many issues with which the Siberian Accord had previously dealt are now being considered at the sessions of the district councils, containing the region's governors, which advise the president's representative. There was no vote on the motion; thus, the matter has been left unresolved, although Putin's representative to the Siberian Federal

Region, Leonid Drachevsky, claimed that the Siberian Accord complemented the work being undertaken by the federal region and thus should remain.

It seems somehow inevitable that the country's interregional associations either will be dissolved or will be merged into the federal regions. This probability is enhanced by the plan to hold joint sessions of the federal regions and interregional associations, at least in the Siberian area. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 18 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1121, via World News Connection)

The interregional associations' experiment in federalism seems to be coming to an end. Putin skillfully has placed a set of new organizations under his control within and among the regions which will allow him to manipulate Russian federalism in a way that suits him.

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Duma passes law on national symbols

Having fretted that Russian athletes at the Olympic games in Sydney, Australia, had no words to their new national anthem and so could not sing along when standing on the gold medal winners' stand, the Duma has returned to the past by legalizing the old Soviet-era anthem put into place by Joseph Stalin in 1944. (Of course, it is unclear why words could not have been written to go with the new anthem.) Also legalized was the continued use of the tsarist-era tricolor flag and double-headed eagle as national seal which former President Yel'tsin put into place by decree. The Duma also agreed with Putin's desire to return the red banner as the flag for the Russian army. (ITAR-TASS, 1009 GMT, 8 Dec 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

Putin argues that using both the Soviet and tsarist symbols represents a uniting of all of Russia's past. One wonders if personally he is not just a little nostalgic for a little taste of the past Soviet glory that he had a hand in propagating. But symbols are important, especially for those who suffered under them. A great red flag flying over Russian troops can serve only to antagonize those who were

once colonized and abused under it. The return of both the anthem and the army flag certainly do not suggest in and of itself the revival of the Soviet Union, anymore than the revival of the tricolor flag and the double-headed imperial eagle implies the resurrection of the Russian monarchy. But in both cases the new Russia, wobbly at the knees, is relying on past glory, either with crowns and cathedrals or workers triumphant, to legitimate its present existence. Perhaps this is to be expected. But Russia today needs to judge itself by its deeds rather than selective readings of its past. No number of Faberge eggs or busts of Lenin can justify the rape of Chechnya, abridgment of free speech, or the official flouting of inconvenient law. It is worth noting the degree of opposition Putin's move has created, from a newly vocal Yel'tsin, via Yabloko and SPS, to the brave democratic intelligentsia -- as always, Russia's conscience.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Richard Miller

Russian bomber training -- a hidden agenda?

According to a Russian Air Force statement, Russia recently deployed seven long-range strategic bombers to bases in the Arctic for pilot training exercises. The propeller-driven Tu-95 Bear bombers, and the four accompanying Il-78 tanker planes, have been sited at bases in Anadyr, Tiksi and Vorkuta. The Tu-95 are nuclear weapons-capable aircraft, albeit of an older design and technology; placed at these bases close to the Arctic Ocean, they are within range of Canadian territory and Alaska. Canada has responded by positioning three CF-18 fighters into the far northwestern territories to counter any Russian probing of the North American air defenses.

Russian military statements have explained that training exercises are being resumed because fuel is now available. The last decade of reduced budgets had a devastating impact on military readiness. Russian officials pointed to the fact

that their bomber pilots average only 10 hours of flight training per year, compared to their Western counterparts, who traditionally fly 200 on average. A Russian spokesman denied Pentagon claims of an attempt to test American air defenses. He stated that these recent deployments were "not some saber-rattling in the Cold War style ... [and] the bombers aren't going to approach Alaska or pose any threat to the United States. They will stay in Russian airspace." (Jamestown Federation MONITOR, 5 Dec 00)

With scarce funding vitally needed to help repair the decrepit state of the Russian armed forces, the question must be asked: Why train in this remote area when training at their permanent air bases would be less costly? The Russians have stated that their pilots needed additional experience in areas with "difficult meteorological conditions and strong geomagnetic fluctuations." (Jamestown Federation, MONITOR, 5 Dec 00) These conditions only exist in polar region flight. Confirming this new training focus, Colonel Aleksandr Drobyshevsky of the Russian Air Force's Main Staff told a correspondent that "Arctic flights will now become regular." (TURKISTAN BULLETIN, 0914 GMT, 7 Dec 00) Arctic flights to probe Western air defenses were common in the Cold War, and still are done periodically by both sides. But again, why in the post-Cold War world does this training need to become "regular"? The true answer probably lies in what Russia claims to be the biggest challenge to its strategic stability -- US fielding of a limited National Missile Defense (NMD) system.

In recent weeks, various senior Russian officials have reiterated in strong terms their unwillingness to negotiate amendments to the 1972 ABM treaty. Moscow claims that pending US construction of the first NMD land-based radar site -- in Alaska -- is a violation of the ABM Treaty. Coupled with the ongoing, very public debate in America over the wisdom of this system, and a new American administration facing major NMD decisions, it is quite possible the Russians are not-so-subtly signaling the vulnerability (and therefore futility) of the proposed NMD deployment. Caught between aging nuclear forces they cannot afford to

maintain over the long-term and a potential US missile shield, this may be one of the few military options the Kremlin leadership believes it can exercise in response.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

The good, the bad ... and Gongadze

Will December be a month of triumph for Ukraine? Or will it be a month consumed by suspicion, intrigue and the loss of respect? On 1 December it appeared almost certain that the answer would be the latter, as the country began to scrutinize Oleksandr Moroz's contention that President Leonid Kuchma's voice appeared on a tape ordering the murder of journalist Georgy Gongadze. For a few days -- perhaps a week -- it appeared that the Gongadze scandal might derail the budget process, interrupt negotiations to restructure the country's gas debt to Russia, have a negative impact on G8 talks, or slow reforms of the banking sector. But, instead, the mechanisms of government moved on unimpeded. In the face of this ugly crisis, important, necessary work was completed. In fact, in a span of only a few days, parliament moved the country closer both to a resumption of IMF loans and to the release of a World Bank financial sector tranche.

First, on 7 December, parliament passed a much-anticipated banking law expected to increase the transparency of banking procedures. The law also removes a major obstacle to the release of a \$100 million World Bank tranche to be used for financial sector restructuring. (REUTERS, 7 Dec 00; via America Online) While the country is by no means assured of receiving the tranche because of its unwillingness to comply with two World Bank conditions regarding

deposits and lending procedures, the new banking law drastically improves its chances.

Even more important, just one day later, the legislative body easily approved the FY-2001 budget. The passage of this budget was achieved, for the first time, before the new year and eliminates the biggest hurdle to the resumption of IMF lending. Although IMF representatives have questioned the use of 5.9 billion hryvnyas (\$1 billion) of anticipated privatization revenue to offset expenditures, they have called the budget relatively "realistic" and appear generally to approve of the document. Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, for his part, spoke glowingly of this achievement -- as well as of the success of the FY-2000 budget. The year 2000, Yushchenko announced, will mark the first year that the country had a deficit-free state budget. After 11 months, in fact, there was a slight budget surplus. "For the first time," he said, "we have a fully executed state budget and have no problem with the payment of wages." (INTERFAX, 1152 GMT, 2 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1202; via World News Connection)

These achievements took a good amount of pressure off the government, but President Kuchma's agreement to restructure the country's gas debt to Russia undoubtedly allowed everyone the biggest sigh of relief. The agreement will permit Ukraine to extend its payments over eight to eleven years. But most of all, it goes a long way toward limiting the creation of future debt to Russia by eliminating all purchases of Russian gas. Although Ukraine will be given 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year by Russia as payment for use of the country's transit network, the rest of its gas needs will be met internally and by an agreement with Turkmenistan. Since Turkmenistan is requiring cash payments in advance each month, Ukraine finally may be learning to live within its means, at least regarding energy consumption.

Add this to the government's reaffirmation to close Chernobyl on 15 December -- helped along by EBRD and EU approval of overdue loans to complete two new

reactors -- as well as the decision to tighten the ties between GUUAM countries, and December has been an excellent month for the Ukrainian government. This positive government activity came around the same time that President Kuchma appeared on television to suggest that individuals outside the country were behind Moroz's allegations regarding Gongadze. (REUTERS, 1328 GMT, 7 Dec 00; via America Online) At an earlier meeting of CIS leaders, Kuchma, not surprisingly, had received unfettered support from Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. Following his meeting with Shevardnadze, Kuchma suggested to reporters that "foreign special services" were pulling Moroz's strings. "We will have to find out which special services," Kuchma said. "Or guess," responded Shevardnadze. (INTERFAX, 0850 GMT, 1 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1201, via World News Connection)

There is, of course, only speculation of the involvement of Russian or other intelligence services in the production of the Gongadze tapes. And certainly, the actions of the Ukrainian authorities are not helping Kuchma's cause. While more than a month has passed since the discovery of a headless body speculated to be Gongadze, little progress has been made on positively identifying the remains. The Kyiv Post recently commented that "officials from the Central Bureau of Forensic Expertise... were unavailable for comment. All four of their phones went unanswered. It was a similar story at all the law enforcement agencies that have been charged with investigating some aspect of the case. All refused comment and directed reporters to another agency." (KYIV POST/KPNEWS.COM, 7 Dec 00)

So, while Kuchma claims foreign interference, he allows the internal investigation to appear at best bumbling and incompetent, and at worse, corrupt. Unfortunately, in a month when he should be ushering in a new era for Ukraine, touting the successful working relationship between the president and parliament, and earning praise for beginning to dig Ukraine out of the abyss into which it had fallen, his leadership on the Gongadze issue is questionable. It is

clear, then, that whether December is remembered as disastrous or triumphant will depend largely on Kuchma's actions.

In his televised address, he suggested, "It is obvious that not everyone wants a sovereign Ukraine, confident in itself, its strengths and opportunities. Those who do not like this... are hurrying and do not stop at measures that are unacceptable from the political point of view and immoral from the human point of view."

(UKRAINIAN TELEVISION, 1900 GMT, 6 Dec 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) Will Kuchma open up the Gongadze investigation for the world to see or proceed as if democracy and rule of law applied in other cases only? Will he live up to his own words and justify the faith placed in him and his country by others? It appears that we will know by the new year.

Newly Independent States: South Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

Georgia: 'A far off country, of which we know nothing'

In recent days Russian officials have demanded loudly that Georgia "invite" Russian troops to conduct operations in northern districts bordering Chechnya. So far Georgian officials have rejected categorically such overtures. These operations would ostensibly target Chechen "terrorists" and "foreign mercenaries" who, the Kremlin claims, have fallback positions and training sites in the Akhmeta district of Georgia. However, over the course of the present war and the last war, the Russian armed forces have not shown the least inclination to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. If Georgia allows Russian troops to operate in the Pankisi Gorge, that would expose the local population to brutal punitive operations of the kind that has been documented amply by Human Rights Watch in three recent reports. (www.hrw.org)

The area is populated by Chechen Kists, natives of Georgia since time immemorial, who bear no relation to the war in Chechnya and deserve every protection of Georgian and international law. The area also hosts roughly 5,000 refugees from Chechnya, to whom Georgian officials refer as "guests," as their tradition of hospitality dictates. According to humanitarian relief workers and UN Observer Mission in Georgia personnel, the overwhelming majority of these persons are refugees, although occasional criminal offenses, including abductions of foreign businessmen and international relief workers, have occurred. To his credit, President Eduard Shevardnadze has emphasized that Georgia has launched its own security operations in a limited way -- to bring about the release of hostages and the arrest of specific individuals -- and has sought to reassure persons of all ethnicities that they have nothing to fear from these actions. (IPRINDA, 0900 GMT, 6 DEC 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) Similarly, this August, when hostages were taken in the Pankisi Gorge, they were released by Georgian law enforcement officials with the help of the Chechen guests. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 23 Aug 00)

The timing of the Russian pressure for joint operations and border control is curious. Why did the mountain passes become such a pressing problem in December? Could the traffic between Georgia and Chechnya be more problematic now, when the passes are covered in snow, than it was during the summer? Russian spokesmen ranging from Putin to Yazstrezhembsky and Manilov have turned up the pressure and subjected Georgia to an increasing and unremitting barrage of rhetoric since the failure of the November OSCE ministerial conference. On that occasion Russia vetoed a resolution which would have required it to fulfill the obligations it had made at the OSCE summit in Istanbul last year -- removal of Russian military bases from Moldova and Georgia tops the list. The next round of Russian-Georgian talks on the removal of Russian bases is due to be held 21-23 December. In his comments Deputy Chief of the General Staff Valery Manilov suggested that Russian troops would move north from Russian bases in Georgia to conduct operations in Akhmeta. (ORT,

1800 GMT, 8 Dec 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) This would give them a pretense to remain in Georgia beyond the limits set at the Istanbul conference.

Similarly, on 5 December Russia imposed a visa regime on Georgia, making it the only CIS country subject to this treatment. The Russian-sponsored separatist regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, are exempted from this punitive arrangement. This telling fact was not lost on the US state department, which, on 7 December, in a very tepid and tentative way, managed to voice some concern about Russia's lack of evenhandedness. (FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, 5 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis) But the state department has kept mum on the much larger issue of Russian threats to extend the war beyond its confines into Georgia. The proposed visa arrangements imply that South Ossetia and Abkhazia effectively will be integrated into Russia and wrested away from Georgia.

Over a year ago, US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott identified US interests with the containment of the Chechen war and the continued independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan. (FDCH POLITICAL TRANSCRIPTS, 19 Oct 99; via lexis-nexis) It's high time to reiterate these ideas lest their omission be mistaken for their abrogation. Georgia may be "in Russia's backyard," but by the same token it is in Turkey's and NATO's garden. Aside from the strategic importance of Georgia and its potential as a base for destabilizing Turkey, there is another practical reason to let the Kremlin understand that incursions into neighboring states will precipitate severe penalties in relations with the US. Officials in the regional states are watching very carefully. If the US wishes to enjoy influence, or respect, in Baku, Tashkent, or Kyiv in the future, it has to speak up for Georgia now.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Lt. Col. James DeTemple

Iran and Turkmenistan: common position on Caspian Sea

In a last-ditch effort to avert an agreement between Azerbaijan and Russia on the division of the Caspian Sea, Iran and Turkmenistan agreed to a common position on the Caspian's legal status. It is expected that, during his upcoming visit to Baku, President Putin and President Aliyev will sign a bilateral agreement delimiting their sectors of the Caspian Sea. To thwart this possibility, government officials from Iran and Turkmenistan called for a summit of the littoral states to resolve the Caspian problem.

Iran's special envoy on Caspian Sea affairs, Ali Ahani, met with Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat, on 27 November to discuss the Caspian issue, as well as regional cooperation. Ahani emphasized that Iran and Turkmenistan share a common position on issues relating to the Caspian Sea. The Turkmen president agreed with Iran's position to divide the Caspian equally between the five littoral states (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan) and expressed support for holding a summit. (IRNA, 1619 GMT, 27 Nov 00; FBIS-NES-2000-1127, via World News Connection)

The existing Caspian Sea legal regime is based, in part, on the 1921 Treaty of Friendship between the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic and Iran, and the 1940 Soviet-Iranian Trade and Navigation Agreement, which do not reflect the new geopolitical realities in the region. Nor do they reflect, necessarily, subsequent developments in international law concerning bodies of water encompassed by several littoral states. The 1921 and 1940 treaties uphold joint ownership of the Caspian Sea by Iran and the former Soviet Union. Some countries, particularly Azerbaijan, argue the Caspian should be considered as a sea and divided into national sectors. In the past Russia has joined Iran in maintaining that the Caspian Sea should be treated as a lake (on the ground that it has no outlet to another sea or ocean) and therefore should not come under the 1982 United

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. If considered as a sea, all the international laws of the sea apply and the oil-rich Caspian would be split into national sectors. If treated as a lake, however, the Caspian must be shared jointly by the bordering states.

Azerbaijan, partner in the US-backed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to Turkey, takes a negative view of the consolidated Iranian-Turkmen position on the Caspian Sea legal regime. Baku has claimed that, under international law, the Caspian Sea must be divided into national sectors and has a lot to gain from exploiting its energy resources. (IRNA, 0800 GMT, 18 Oct 00; FBIS-NES-2000-1018, via World News Connection) Iran, however, penetrated Azerbaijan's territorial waters and airspace in August after Azerbaijani border troops had set up two signal buoys along the maritime border between Azerbaijan and Iran, demonstrating Iran's response to the idea of "dividing the Caspian into national sectors." (VREMYA NOVOSTI, 3 Aug 00; via The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press) Azerbaijan has been concerned about an adversarial "triangle" consisting of Iran, Russia and Armenia. Russia provides security guarantees to Armenia by treaty, as well as supplying it with a billion dollars worth of Russian arms, while Tehran has given extensive political, military and economic support to Yerevan and continues to expand its relations with Armenia. (JANE'S INTELLIGENCE REVIEW, 1 Apr 98) By making concessions to Russia on the regime governing the water surface, i.e., navigation, Azerbaijan might be able to obtain the more important division of the sea bed. This would put to rest doubts about Azerbaijan's right to develop energy reserves in its sector of the Caspian Sea. Since Russia already has a bilateral treaty with Kazakhstan, a similar agreement with Azerbaijan would go a long way towards defining the de facto status of the sea -- without the participation of Turkmenistan and Iran.

However, even in this case there are contradictions between the Turkmen and the Iranian positions. The Turkmen president recently called for the United Nations to broker a settlement if the littoral states were unable to reach an

agreement on how to divide possession in the Caspian Sea, stating, "The UN can set up a commission composed of its own specialists." Turkmenistan has laid claim to putative energy sources on the demarcation line between the Azerbaijani and Turkmen sectors, as well as having made specious claims on several oil wells that are well within the Azerbaijani sector. Turkmenistan hopes that the international mediation would postpone the development of the wells, if not actually grant Turkmenistan rights to the disputed areas. While the proposal for UN mediation met with limited interest on the part of some countries, Iran strongly opposed UN intervention in what it considers to be a "purely regional issue." (IRAN NEWS, 1135 GMT, 7 Mar 00; FBIS-NES-2000-1001, via World News Connection) Russia and Iran are opposed to third-party intervention in the Caspian Basin, an area Russia still claims to be part of its "sphere of influence." At the same time Russia and Iran seek to block Western influence and development of energy reserves in the Caspian region. Neither country wishes to see Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan emerge as an independent energy supplier.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

Baltic 'unity' dissolves over NATO assembly resolution

The grouping of the three Baltic states in all NATO enlargement discussions ended with a bang (and a few whimpers) at the alliance's Berlin meeting on 21 November. A resolution submitted by US Senator William Roth (R-Delaware) specifically recommended one Baltic country -- Lithuania -- along with Slovenia and Slovakia for admission to NATO in 2002. The surprise move caused an unsurprising reaction: uproar from the other two Baltic countries, with a little help from their friends. Turkey and Norway each proposed amendments to the resolution. Turkey suggested including mention of all the countries that were named as potential candidates in 1999, thereby including Estonia and Latvia.

Norway proposed replacing "Lithuania" with "the Baltics." (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 21 Nov 00; via lexis-nexis) Neither amendment passed.

The resolution that was accepted by the assembly did not name specific countries. Meanwhile, the fallout in Baltic relations continues. Lithuanian politicians have blamed the Estonian delegation for involvement in the move to remove Lithuania's name from the resolution. "Mentioning Lithuania in the document would have strengthened Estonia's position, as well," said Gediminas Kirkilas, a member of the Lithuanian delegation. While describing Estonia's position as "strange," Kirkilas lauded Latvia's "correct and constructive" position during the debates that mention of one Baltic state was better than none. (BNS, 1324 GMT, 22 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1122, via World News Connection)

Latvian delegation member Aleksandras Kirsteins, however, cast a shadow over Lithuania's sunny assumption of wholehearted Latvian support for the resolution. While explaining that he understood the attractiveness of mentioning only one state in order to weaken Russia's objections over NATO enlargement, Kirsteins told reporters that Latvia believes depicting one Baltic state as more ready than the others is groundless, given the military cooperation ventures the three countries are pursuing. (BNS, 1028 GMT, 23 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1123, via World News Connection)

Meanwhile, Peeter Olesk, who headed the Estonian delegation to the assembly, rejected Lithuania's accusation of complicity. "The initiator of the amendment was Turkey and no member of the Estonian delegation helped Turkey in making the amendment," Olesk said. "Turkey proceeded in its proposal from the words of NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, according to which it is still too early now to bring out any separate candidate at the expense of others." (BNS, 0954 GMT, 23 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1123, via World News Connection)

This is not the first time that the somewhat artificial grouping of the three Baltic states has shown weaknesses. Similar squabbling was seen three years ago when Estonia was listed on the fast track for EU membership, as a result of

Estonia's clear lead in stabilizing its post-Soviet economy. At that time, Lithuania and Latvia reacted negatively. Yet that action by the EU has acted to spur the other two countries to pursue more actively economic stability and to align their policies with EU standards, thereby making them more attractive applicants for membership.

In the military/security sphere, however, there are no clear leaders among the three states, and the results of the NATO parliamentary assembly meeting highlight a potential problem facing the Baltic countries. Despite extreme differences in outlook, domestic situations and foreign relations, the very small Baltic states will continue to be considered as a unit by much of the international community. When that unit shows substantial cracks in its foundation, it undermines perceptions of stability in a self-defeating cycle that can then diminish its attractiveness to external security structures and, so, diminish its own security. Such sibling rivalry as was evident during the parliamentary assembly meeting demonstrates that the three countries, unwisely, are ignoring the very real issue that the Baltic states are in this together -- whether they like it or not. Meanwhile, in a move no doubt designed to assuage Estonian and Latvian concerns (and, perhaps, dampen Russia's hopes) that they are to be left on NATO's sidelines, alliance officials spent some time in the Baltic states, offering soothing words and promises. Lt. Gen. David S. Weisman, the US military representative in NATO, met with Estonian Foreign Minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves in Tallinn on 29 November, and promised to support Estonia's bid for membership in the alliance. The general acknowledged the progress Estonia has made toward meeting NATO requirements. (BNS, 0836 GMT, 30 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1130, via World News Connection) NATO Secretary-General George Robertson visited Riga during the same week, and praised Latvia's membership action plan for NATO. (BNS, 1226 GMT, 28 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1128, via World News Connection)

And, in a move that startled absolutely no one, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov warned that "Russia thinks that NATO's enlargement is a mistake, as it leads to the creation of several security spheres and undermines the foundations of European security and stability." In case that was too subtle, he added his hope that "common sense will triumph in the Baltic countries and in Brussels, and events will not develop according to a dangerous scenario." (INTERFAX, 1126 GMT, 22 Nov 00; FBIS-EEU-2000-1122, via World News Connection)

LATVIA

Are the National Bolsheviks still coming?

Officials apparently have stopped the threat of an "invasion" of Russian extremists, despite a claim by group member Aijo Beness that 20 more National Bolsheviks have entered the country and are "angry and ready to do anything." In an interview with the newspaper Chas, Beness threatened possible occupation of municipal buildings in Riga or the abduction of Latvians in Russia (for exchanges of his detained comrades). Beness was unconcerned about the potential repercussions of such statements: "I have already been in prison for delinquency." (LETA, 0748 GMT, 21 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1121, via World News Connection) What a surprise.

Alas, one thing Beness clearly did not learn during his time in jail was the all-important how-to-stay-out-of-prison lesson. Security police have detained him due to the threats he made, and Vladimir Moskovtsev, the leader of the group's Latvian branch, for involvement in the National Bolsheviks' recent claim to fame. (BNS, 0855 GMT, 24 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1124, via World News Connection) Their fellow Bolsheviks face criminal prosecution over the "capture" of St. Peter's church in Riga. Dmitri Gafarov, Maksim Shurkin and Sergei Solovev were charged with terrorism and illegal border crossing, and could be sentenced up to life imprisonment. (BNS, 1407 GMT, 29 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1129, via World News Connection) And that's not all, if some members of parliament have their way. Although considered to be relatively powerless, the organization

should be legally liquidated, according to Andrejs Pantelejevs, chairman of the Saeima National Security commission. (LETA, 1441 GMT, 22 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1122, via World News Connection)

The National Bolsheviks group isn't the only haven for disaffected young men with violent tendencies, either. A group calling itself Latvia's Young Communists has claimed responsibility for the blasting of a railway branch in Riga. The group's demands include the release of Mikhail Farbtukh and former Soviet partisan Vasily Kononov, the cessation of criminal prosecution against anti-fascists and former Soviet employees, the legalization of activities of the communist party, and the institution of Russian as a state language. "Our blasts will have no victims but the world's community should know we are fighting for democratic freedoms which are banned for us in Latvia," the group said in a letter to the newspaper Diena. Clearly unable to see the irony in demanding "democratic freedom," the Young Communists may indeed represent the same group that called itself Fighters of Democratic Latvia, which had claimed responsibility for a similar blast on a railway branch line in June and had issued a similar set of demands. (BNS, 1106 GMT, 25 Nov 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1125, via World News Connection)

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