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## Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock

### **Alternate center of gravity**

In Russian politics, President Vladimir Putin appears to remain untouchable; in a recent poll Putin's popularity (in terms of support for his actions) compared with the American president's at 75%. (INTERFAX, 28 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0228, via World News Connection) Meanwhile, the prosecutor-general's office, under Vladimir Ustinov, has proven to be Putin's expertly wielded political weapon. Many of the president's political opponents, mostly members of the Yel'tsin-era government (such as Boris Berezovsky and Nikolai Aksenenko) have been subjected to Ustinov-led prosecutions.

While Berezovsky is by far the most prominent of Putin's nemeses, an alternate center of gravity has been forming in opposition to Putin's previously unchallenged progress. The members of this group, like Berezovsky, belong to the old-new "apparat," but they are much more subtle than he. Two of the leaders are Yevgeny Primakov and Arkady Volsky. Primakov, former prime minister, head of the SVR, and failed presidential contender, recently was chosen to head the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), while Volsky leads a lobbyist group, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE). (RUSSIAN TV, 1100 GMT 14 Dec 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Both groups represent interests that favor heavy industry and resource-exporting business, such as oil, wood, aluminum and steel. The CCI tends to cater more to the mid- to small-sized businesses, while the RUIE consists of larger entities, such as the oil giant LUKoil. In the Yel'tsin years, these interests would have operated from within the executive branch. Now, some businessmen have been relegated to the periphery of Putin's orbit, and in some

cases have been prosecuted for their previous excesses. Recent evidence suggests that they have begun to consolidate in preparation for the upcoming elections with the aim of achieving greater influence in the legislative branch.

To demonstrate the common denominations of these two organizations, one need look only as far as their respective leaders. Primakov was elected to the board of the RUIE shortly after his ascent to the leadership post of the CCI. Two months later, the favor was returned when Arkady Volsky was elected to the executive board of the CCI. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 21 Dec 01, and VEDOMOSTI, 1 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) These two additions to the RUIE and CCI, respectively, greatly increased the powers of the industrialists and their resource-exporting allies. Both organizations support Russia's entry into the WTO, and both endorse the explicit goal of protecting Russian business interests, regardless of whether that protection is from American anti-dumping laws or the prosecutor-general's office under Ustinov. (KOMMERSANT, 24 Jan 02; INTERFAX NEWS, 6 Sep 01, and RUSSIAN TV, 1100 GMT, 14 Dec 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

In fact, Volsky met with Putin recently at the Kremlin, and it is widely believed that the purpose of the meeting was to influence Putin to rein in Ustinov and his office, following the arrest of (Gazprom subsidiary) Sibur's president and vice president, Yakov Goldovsky and Yevgeny Koshchits. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 29 Jan 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Recent statements by Putin regarding a war on crime and the renewed attacks on and by Berezovsky suggest that there will be no real truce with some of the oligarchs, although it is unclear how far RUIE and CCI will be affected. It may be significant that other remnants of the Yel'tsin legacy are under attack. Tatiana Dyachenko's recent marriage to Valentin Yumashev, for instance, ties Yel'tsin's family to the RUIE. Yumashev's son-in-law is none other than the aluminum tycoon Oleg Deripaska, a member of the RUIE and vocal defender of Nikolai Aksenenko, the ousted

railroads minister. (MOSKOVSKY KOMSOMOLETS, 19 Oct 01, and VEDOMOSTI, 23 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Primakov's predecessor at the CCI, Stanislov Smirnov, was ousted due to charges that under his leadership the organization had "lost its position in the business and political world of Russia," a situation Primakov will attempt to change. (KOMMERSANT, 4 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In the days following his election as the head of the CCI, Primakov outlined his primary goal to be the transfer to his conglomerate of licensing powers for small- and medium-sized businesses controlled until now by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: "We don't need an unbroken hierarchy. There should be gaps in it. We should not have a situation where the centre gives orders to everyone at local level, imposes on officials at the local level and, generally, interferes with life at the local level, etc.," he said. (RUSSIAN TV, 1100 GMT, 14 Dec 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This effort to decentralize is unlikely to endear itself to Putin.

Still, some aspects of business policy may be agreeable to the Kremlin. In late January, the RUIE took an additional step to increase its involvement with the executive by creating a Committee for International Affairs that will accompany President Putin abroad and coordinate foreign economic policy. This will reinforce a situation in which most business-oriented approaches already circumvent the foreign ministry and the economic development ministry. In this capacity, the RUIE is not posing a direct challenge to Putin's domestic powers, but increases its ability to influence Putin's foreign policy in a way that benefits businesses.

However, the leaders of the RUIE and the CCI also are beginning to take steps potentially challenging Putin's domestic power. Among the candidates for ownership of the successor to TV-6, Berezovsky's former mouthpiece, a union of Volsky and Primakov seemed probable. On 7 March, the union was confirmed by

Yevgeny Kiselev. (INTERFAX, 7 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0307, via World News Connection) This media alliance is most likely taking place with an eye to the coming elections and the opposition's need for a non-hostile news channel. The founders of this new Sixth Channel include Oleg Deripaska, Roman Abramovich, Oleg Kiselev, Alexander Mamut, Kakha Bendukidze, Anatoly Chubais and Dmitry Zimin, nearly all considered to be tycoons of the business community with ties to the Yel'tsin era. "The next presidential election is approaching -- so it's clear why twelve Russian tycoons need a TV network. They can afford to invest several million each," said one newspaper analyst. (GAZETA, 5 Mar 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Currently, this group has the potential to become a very well-funded opposition to Putin. Its members seem to be biding their time, and although they support policies that Putin probably does not, they have not confronted him directly yet. Instead, they have created a power base to champion their own interests, and with their financial resources and recently acquired media outlet it is highly likely that we will hear more of and from these individuals.

## Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

### **Berezovsky vs. FSB: Round Two**

Several weeks ago, the FSB and exiled media mogul Boris Berezovsky renewed their war of words. In an effort to achieve Berezovsky's extradition from the United Kingdom, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev linked Berezovsky to the United States' "war on terrorism," describing him as Russia's "Osama bin Laden." (INTERFAX, 5 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0205, via World News Connection)

Berezovsky, meanwhile, insisted that TV-6, a station which he owns, was closed by the authorities because it planned to air a documentary linking the FSB to the

1999 apartment bombings in Ryazan and Moscow. In the last few weeks, the battle between the FSB and Berezovsky has intensified, with both sides claiming to possess new evidence against their opponents.

On 5 March, Berezovsky held a long-awaited press conference in London, asking the question "Putin's Russia: Is this state terror?" At the center of the conference was a nine-minute segment from a documentary produced by French journalists, "Assault on Russia," which is soon to be aired in its entirety by the French production company Transparences Productions. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 6 Mar 02) The piece shown was an interview with a Ryazan telephone operator who allegedly overheard a conversation between FSB headquarters and local agents in which the placement of explosive devices was discussed. The documentary clip was not the only evidence laid out by Berezovsky at the press conference.

Attending the meeting with him was former FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko, who was granted asylum in the United Kingdom last year, and historian Yuri Felshtinsky, who together penned a book which purportedly substantiates Berezovsky's allegations. The book also was discussed at the press conference. The English-language version, "Blowing Up Russia," was published in New York in February 2002.

The new evidence in Berezovsky's case was a statement by Nikolai Chekulin, a former director of the Roskonversvzryvtsestr Research Institute, which is linked to the education ministry. Chekulin said that he had been recruited by the FSB in 2000, and that his institute had been used as a cover for the purchase of the explosive material Hexogen, which was used in the bombings. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 6 Mar 02) Moreover, Chekulin claimed that he possesses evidence of thefts of explosives from military warehouses by the FSB.

At the same time, the FSB has continued to press its attacks on Berezovsky, saying that it would not comment on statements made by a "private person suspected of financing terrorist groups." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 6 Mar 02)

Moreover, the FSB has levied new accusations against Berezovsky. Previously, the FSB "only" alleged that he had directly financed Chechen fighters. Now, however, the security service is attempting to link him to the kidnapping of Russian officials in Chechnya, including Major General Gennady Shpigun, who subsequently was murdered, and to the Chechen incursion into Dagestan in the summer of 1999. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 5 Mar 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In support of its allegations, the prosecutor-general's office invited a group of Moscow journalists to view the testimony of a witness who claimed that the kidnapping had been carried out on Berezovsky's orders. However, Pavel Barkovsky, deputy head of the investigation directorate in the prosecutor-general's office, stated that an official warrant for Berezovsky's arrest would be issued only when all the relevant evidence had been gathered. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 6 Mar 02)

There is a growing consensus that Berezovsky's allegations have become more than simply an attack on the FSB, and a struggle for transparency, and that Berezovsky is now engaged in a campaign to settle political accounts. Two Duma deputies appeared with Berezovsky to renew calls for comprehensive hearings into the case. Motions to hold independent investigations, however, have been rejected by deputies from Unity and other pro-government parties.

The continuing fight between the two protagonists leads to a greater question: Why have President Putin and the FSB not addressed seriously the question of the bombs in Moscow and Ryazan? If they possess evidence that Chechens were indeed responsible for the bombs, it would seem obvious that by sharing that evidence, Berezovsky might be silenced quickly.

# Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Luba Schwartzman

## **FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Warmer weather but colder temperature**

As if to make up for the months of relatively amicable feelings toward the US, since the Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games Russian politicians have begun expressing anti-American sentiments with renewed intensity.

The latest opportunity for certain Duma deputies to join in the chorus was the announcement that 200 US military specialists would be arriving in Georgia. The politicians claim to be concerned that former Cold War rivals might be located on Russia's border and to be aggrieved that Georgia turned to the US for help.

In a statement "On the situation in Georgia in connection with the US military presence on its territory" accepted by 385 votes with no objections, the State Duma expressed regret that the Georgian leadership had rejected Russia's "offers" of military aid "and had preferred to turn, instead, to the USA for assistance in solving [their] problem." Furthermore, the Duma claimed that the Russian leadership was not kept informed by Georgia and "did not receive all the necessary information at the required level from the USA about the plans for sending a large group of military advisors, small arms, army communications and transport equipment to Georgia." The document also alleged that the "presence of US military personnel in Georgia to a large extent further aggravates the already complex situation in Georgia and the Caucasus region as whole," and warned that, "should there be an unfavorable development in the negotiations [of the disputes between Georgia and two of its territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia], the State Duma is ready to discuss another approach to the creation of the statehood of the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the basis of a

democratic expression of the people's will, and in accordance with the international community's practice in the application of the standards of international law." (INTERFAX, 1115 GMT, 6 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0306, via World News Connection)

This was a transparent reference to the Duma's previous "offer" to accept regions that belong to other countries (like Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestr) as members of the Russian Federation, a euphemism for annexation. Missing in all of the Duma's statement was acknowledgement that Georgia is a sovereign country, not Russia's satellite, and that the Duma, in effect, was infringing upon its territorial integrity.

At the same time, Russian politicians realize that Moscow is not in a position to demand "independence" for Abkhazia. Federation Council Security and Defense Committee Chairman Viktor Ozerov suggested that this would qualify as "a policy of double dealing, and that opponents might retort with a question of independence for Chechnya." (ITAR-TASS, 2039 GMT, 28 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0228, via World News Connection)

The deputies also criticized the US for raising customs duties on imported steel. People's Deputy group leader Gennady Raykov suggested that the American move was not only "a bad decision," but also "an act of discrimination" against Russia's metallurgical industry, and complained, despite Russian support of the US authorities in their fight against terrorism, that the US had been committing "acts of discrimination against Russia -- from sport to metallurgy," (referring to the Olympic Games, in which, in fact, the real transgression concerned indications of collusion between French and Russian judges).. As a measure of retaliation, Raykov recommended increasing customs duties on imported machinery. (ITAR-TASS, 1103 GMT, 6 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0306, via World News Connection)

## **MEDIA**

### **Playing by the rules**

Former TV-6 director Yevgeny Kiselev once again has demonstrated his bargaining skills. The Shestoi Telekanal consortium he headed -- consisting of 12 businessmen and the TV-6 journalists -- had entered its bid for the channel's frequency in time for the 6 March deadline, but withdrew its application two days later to join with Yevgeny Primakov and Alexander Volsky's Media-Socium. TV-6's press service reported that Kiselev and his team continued talks with Primakov and Volsky until they were assured that the team of journalists and original investors would be one of the three equal partners. Volsky and Primakov are said to have the approval of the Kremlin and of Media Minister Mikhail Lesin, while one of the other 13 bidders, Sergei Moskvina of the Independent TV-VI Broadcasting Corporation, has accused Kiselev of wanting to work for the Kremlin. (NTRU, 7 Mar 02; via [www.ntvru.com](http://www.ntvru.com))

Ekho Moskvy's Aleksandr Venediktov is also playing it safe. His newly created Arsenal Radio recently won a bid for the 87.5 FM frequency and a number of Ekho Moskvy's leading journalists have expressed their desire to work for him; however, Venediktov expressed his intention to keep the 18% stake he has in Ekho Moskvy and his willingness to cooperate with that radio station if the ownership issue is resolved. (IZVESTIYA, 1 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0301, via World News Connection) Venediktov said that it is possible to avoid conflict between Arsenal and Ekho Moskvy because they would differ in programming. Arsenal would be geared towards talk-radio programs and run music for at least 30 percent of the airtime, while Ekho Moskvy would remain a news station. (NTRU, 5 Mar 02; via [www.ntvru.com](http://www.ntvru.com))

## **Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

By Scott Bethel

## **Impact of US troops in Georgia**

The US presence in Central Asia and Transcaucasia is about to be expanded. President George W. Bush has offered up to 200 advisors to train the Georgian military to bring the situation in the Pankisi Gorge under control. (AP NEWS SERVICE, 1 Mar 02; via yahoo.com) This new deployment and the reactions of the Russian and US foreign policy teams show indicate significant changes in East-West relations.

In brief, Georgia has a long-standing policy of trying to obtain US military support and, perhaps, NATO membership. Now, Georgia has requested US assistance to deal with the lawless situation in the Pankisi Gorge (Georgia's northwestern region). (AP, 27 Feb 02; via yahoo.com) The Russians have been alleging that high-profile Chechens are hiding there (adding, for good measure, Osama bin Laden and other terrorists). (REUTERS, 1 Mar 02; via yahoo.com) Russia has "offered" its troops to subdue the area, but Georgia knows that such operations would undermine its sovereignty.

Initial responses to the US move by Putin, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov showed some disconnect. "I would approach reports of this kind with very great care media reports often contain unverified information," Sergey Ivanov warned initially. (RUSSIAN PUBLIC TV (ORT), 1200 GMT, 27 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This was followed, however, by a statement from Igor Ivanov that "[the deployment of US troops] could still further complicate the already complex situation in the region." (Ibid.)

Putin then toned down the reaction to US efforts in Georgia, presenting an almost-cavalier attitude toward the dispatch of US forces. Noting that the US already has deployed personnel in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, while Kazakhstan has offered its airspace and expressed its willingness to increase support to the US, Putin asked "Why should [the US forces] be in Central Asia

and not in Georgia?" (REUTERS, 1 Mar 02; via yahoo.com, and ITAR-TASS, 1412 GMT, 1 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Databases) He further said that it was "no tragedy" that the US was planning to deploy forces to assist the Georgians. (AP, 1 Mar 02; via yahoo.com)

In fact, the states of the CIS, particularly Georgia, have long sought US military assistance and cooperation. The US shrewdly used Russia's own complaints about the Pankisi region to expand cooperation with Georgia and bolster its government. Russia was in no position to oppose US assistance since it had identified the Pankisi area as a hotbed of "terrorism" that supported "terrorists" in Chechnya. Meanwhile, Tbilisi and Washington are interested in expanding their security relationship. US advisors have assisted Georgia in setting up more effective border controls and America provides 20 to 30 military advisors in various ongoing programs. (REUTERS, 1 Mar 02; via yahoo.com). Still, there were immediate recriminations from the more belligerent factions in the Duma. (ITAR-TASS, 1412 GMT, 27 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The new cooperation includes actual and possible advantages: (1) The government of Shevardnadze, a staunch US ally beset by separatist and pro-Russian opposition movements, is bolstered; (2) The Pansiki region could be stabilized - without subjecting the civilians to a Russian-style cleansing; (3) The effectiveness of the Georgian military is likely to be improved; and (4) The US gains allies in the region and ensures that al Qaeda does not penetrate the area.

### **Staying relevant in NATO**

After a flurry of activity late in 2001 and early in 2002, inertia has set into Russia's relationship with NATO. The Russians recently expressed some dissatisfaction concerning their involvement in cooperative NATO peacekeeping efforts, but did evince interest in another meeting of the Russia-NATO council, possibly in Italy.

(ITAR-TASS, 1403 GMT, 28 Feb 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The Russians have long claimed that they are viewed as a junior partner in terms of the international missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. In neither place do the Russians have their own sector to command (in Bosnia they share charge of the US sector and in Kosovo they are partners with the UK) and all activities must be fully coordinated through a NATO command structure. The Russians receive extensive monetary and logistical support through the NATO coffers to ensure they meet payroll and other needs. (NATO, 2 Oct 01; via NATO.int)

NATO always has viewed the Russian presence in both the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) as an acceptable nuisance, and as a gesture of appreciation for Russia's role in the peace negotiations in both conflicts. This was particularly true when Boris Yel'tsin personally participated in bringing Operation Allied Force to a close. However, the Russian Army cannot compare even with the least capable NATO force, and so requires significant support to maintain forces in the region. In addition, the Russians wanted access to NATO military planning (usually at the NATO Secret level) and a hand in decisions made regarding the area. NATO routinely has balked at the notion of making Russia an equal partner in the regional decision-making process either in Bosnia or Kosovo and is not likely to give Moscow access to NATO Secret plans any time in the near future.

As a result, Russia's inflated expectations have not been met. Discussions with alliance military staff members confirm that Russia's contribution to SFOR and KFOR has diminished while its "wish list" of desired monetary and materiel support has grown. As a result, until the Russians can become a full contributing member of the SFOR/KFOR team, they can expect to be treated as increasingly irrelevant.

Russia is interested in continuing the positive trend in relations with NATO. During a recent visit to Italy, Foreign Minister Ivanov noted the proposal that the agenda of the next meeting of the NATO-Russia cooperation council include furthering "the collaboration in the international coalition against terrorism and beyond." (ANSA, 1714 GMT, 4 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

After a rapid acceleration at the end of 2001, the Russia-NATO relationship has cooled. Several major proposals, including the initiation of the Russia-NATO Cooperation Council, were made without a clear indication of how to implement them. Most radical was the proposal of NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, in concert with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, for near-full membership in NATO for the Russians. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 28 Nov 01) This raises the specter of Russian veto power over all initiatives. Russian diplomats continue to try to downplay that aspect, but despite their efforts they have been unsuccessful in reducing fears in Western capitals. (ITAR-TASS, 1305 GMT, 1 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Ultimately the Russians are angling for increased visibility at the European table. They are seeking concurrently a larger role in the European Union and NATO. The good news for Moscow is that Secretary-General Robertson was very aggressive in pursuing the Russians with promises of greater inclusion following Moscow's highly publicized efforts to assist in the war against terrorism. Russians have long memories and will press NATO to follow through. Just how much Brussels is prepared to give the Russians will be seen over the next several months.

### **Another major deal collapsing?**

Several major arms and co-production deals between the Russians and other countries have collapsed during the last two months. Some major deals with India have been put on hold because it appears Russia will not be able to make

timely delivery of goods as promised. (ITAR-TASS, 1305 GMT, 1 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

There are reports that an important cooperative agreement with Iran to construct a nuclear power plant in the coastal town of Bushehr is in jeopardy. An official government statement claims that all is well and that the project will continue on as scheduled. (IRNA, 4 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Yet, it is clear the project has been shelved. Some statements from Iran indicate that Tehran has been dissatisfied with the quality of Russian work and with some delays in the schedule of bringing the first unit online. (ITAR-TASS, 1633 GMT, 26 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) From Russia's perspective, the problem is that many scientists and skilled workers are leaving the worksite because of non-payment by the Iranians. (EKHO MOSKVY, 0830 GMT, 3 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

If this story proves to be true, it is significant because of the negative pall it might cast over Russo-Iranian business dealings. The two states concluded a major arms purchase agreement valuing more than \$225 million in the fall of 2001. Russia has been counting on cash deals with states such as Iran, seeking to expand trade with as many countries as possible. Though this one problem does not represent the end to the Iran-Russia relationship, it does constitute a foreign policy challenge to both states. It's important for the Russians to prove that they can ensure satisfaction for clients. Moscow has a deal with Myanmar (Burma) to begin work on a major experimental power plant and the Russians are hoping to expand the trade in nuclear technology.

Moreover, the Iranians need to keep Russia happy. Moscow is the first major world power to re-establish overt trading ties with Tehran. In addition, the Russians have assisted the Iranians in their first major weapons upgrade in nearly 20 years. Since Iran is still struggling with its status as an international

pariah, keeping the Russians in their corner for as long as possible will continue to be important. For those reasons, it is highly likely that the two countries will work out any problems and the power plant construction will continue, despite fears by the US that Iran is being aided in its progress of developing weapons of mass destruction.

## Russian Federation: Armed Forces and Military-Industrial Complex

By Walter Jackson

### **The buck stops where?**

Who is really to blame for the Russian military's current state of readiness? Is it Russian President Vladimir Putin, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov or the die-hard generals still clinging to visions of former Soviet greatness? They all agree on what the problems are: not enough money for the defense budget, poor morale, inadequate training and aging equipment. The question is who is in charge, or who should step up to the plate and take charge?

### **Does size matter?**

Those most directly responsible for readiness are the military leaders themselves. Although some issues like the size of the defense budget are beyond their control, most of the current problems are well within their purview. In a recent interview, Russia's military manpower head, General Valery Astanin, said that he (like most military leaders) still sees a need for a large (million plus) military. He stated that only 12 percent (400,000 total) of the eligible conscripts are actually drafted each year, while the rest obtain exemptions as students or due to poor health. He also stated that tens of thousands prefer to risk arrest by evading the draft and many pay bribes to avoid service. And of those drafted each year, over one-half are unfit to serve. "That means that we can't send them

to be trained as specialists because they won't be able to cope with the program. So that is the state of the 12 percent we get," he said. But Astanin and other senior military leaders can't seem to do the math. They know they must create a well-paid, well-equipped and well-trained professional all-volunteer army. Unfortunately, given the cost of these reforms, a professional force closer to 400,000 is more realistically affordable.

State Duma Deputy Boris Nemtsov, head of the Union of Right Forces (SPS), is a leading proponent of cutting the armed forces from the existing 1.2 million members to an all-volunteer force of 400,000 over a five-year period beginning in January 2003. The Kremlin has included Nemtsov and other politicians in recent key discussions on military reform, suggesting that President Putin is becoming more frustrated with the slow pace of reform by the military. (MOSCOW TIMES, 27 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) It is no wonder that senior Russian military officers such as General Astanin feel the need to maintain a large military. If they are correct (and they probably are in the best position to know) that over half the military personnel is unfit to serve, then over a million recruits would be required to obtain 400,000 professionals.

### **Flight time is one measure**

It is not only the cost of heating oil and auto fuel that the military cannot afford to pay, but also the cost of jet fuel. This translates directly into decreased pilot training and readiness. One recent article likens Russian military pilots to "endangered species." Reportedly, annual flight time average is down to only 10-15 hours per pilot, less than one-tenth that of Western military pilots. Soviet pilots were designated First Class pilots by age 27-29, while the Russian Federation figure today is between the ages of 35-37. Since statistically most Russian Air Force pilots retire between ages 40 and 42, the majority of military pilots "on the books" are not truly proficient. (ZAVTRA, 27 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

### **Readiness at issue**

Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Military District Colonel General Yuri Yakubov held a press conference to discuss the results of a two-month readiness study, which focused on combat readiness, discipline, desertion and social issues. While no specifics were given, Yakubov noted that many problems discussed were to a large extent due to dereliction of duties (leadership accountability) and must be corrected immediately. (SUVOROVSKY NATISK, 4 Mar 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Meanwhile, the Russian Navy's top admiral, Vladimir Kuroedov, published an assessment of the combat readiness of Northern, Pacific, Baltic and Black Sea fleets and the Caspian Sea Flotilla. "I am certain that the personal passiveness of captains and echelon commanders in regard to maintaining the prescribed level of combat readiness was the reason for 90% of flaws we have revealed," he said. Poor organization and low levels of practical experience by the command staff also were to blame. (EZHEDNEVNYE NOVOSTI, 11 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

### **Accountability**

Last December Russian Navy Northern Fleet Commander Admiral Popov and many of his staff were held accountable not only for the "Kursk incident" but also for an overall poor assessment of Northern Fleet readiness. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 17 Dec 01) Now the axe has fallen on a group of senior airborne troop commanders. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov recently issued a stern reprimand to 31st Detached Airborne Brigade Commander Colonel Nikolay Nikulnikov, and transferred Artillery Division Headquarters Major Yuri Onishchuk to the reserves ahead of schedule. This action followed the murder of ten people at the hands of two deserting paratroopers. Nikulnikov and Onishchuk, Ivanov said, were responsible "for serious omissions in arranging the work with the personnel and maintaining order." (INTERFAX, 4 Mar 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) This type of accountability must be

established by the military itself, not by the defense minister. Many generals are lining up in hopes that Ivanov will take the blame for reform setbacks.

### **Will the defense minister take the fall?**

Will Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov be the military reform scapegoat? Given the Kremlin's control over the media, articles circulating that Ivanov's days at the defense ministry are numbered may be well-founded. Ivanov is being criticized for everything from the failure to develop a reform plan acceptable to the military, to electrical outages in every military region in Russia, to failed arms export deals. Ivanov is in charge, and thus is accountable. The question is: Will a "purge" fix these problems? Or is President Putin submitting to pressures from senior military leaders in order to maintain power? Or is Putin using FSB cadres to bully the generals?

The defense ministry's inability to manage the military effectively is no surprise, as the military itself has provided many obstacles. Ivanov is a Putin appointee who comes from the KGB. He is represented by the military and faces stern competition from the ambitious Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin (NEZAVISIMOE VOENNOE OBOZRENIE, 4 Mar 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

### **Moving the Pacific Fleet**

Another reason for Admiral Vladimir Kuroedov's Pacific Fleet visit was to decide upon a permanent and affordable homeport change. Apparently the strategic importance of the Kamchatka peninsula is not high in today's less US-hostile climate. Moreover, renovation or new construction in Kamchatka is cost-prohibitive while the day-to-day logistic support is far too expensive. Thus it is cheaper to move. This spring most active ships and submarines will be relocated to Sovetskaya Gavan. (EZHDNEVNYE NOVOSTI, 11 Feb 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) What about the nuclear submarine junkyard left behind?

## **Nuclear submarine junkyard**

In a recent interview Russian Duma Deputy Boris Reznik shared the results of his own investigation into nuclear submarines scheduled for dismantling, referring to confidential documents he obtained from his own sources in the nuclear energy ministry.

According to Reznik's investigation, presently "there are around 75 decommissioned nuclear submarines in the Pacific Fleet [at Sovetskaya Harbor in the Khabarovsk territory, on the Kamchatka Peninsula and the Primorye territory] and 45 of them still have nuclear fuel on board. Over half of the submarines are in an emergency condition. The situation at the temporary 'submarine graveyard' at the Pavlovskaya Harbor in the Primorye territory is the most difficult. Three damaged submarines, which sustained nuclear accidents during their time in service, have been stored in the restricted areas. They have nuclear fuel on board which cannot be unloaded in normal mode. The radiation level on these submarines is considerably higher than permissible." Moreover, a vessel is used often as temporary storage for nuclear waste and "has 126 defective channels through which radiation is constantly leaking into the open sea." Nor is the nuclear vulnerability new. Five years ago, Reznik reports, a loss of buoyancy sank a nuclear submarine with a functioning reactor at its berth in the Krashennikov Harbor on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The vessel was not raised for four months. Political leaders had ordered the military to take appropriate measures to prevent further nuclear accidents from happening, Reznik said, however, the military evidently took that to mean keep the lid on (and the media away from) the ecological disasters in Kamchatka. Reznik also accused both the defense ministry and the naval headquarters of hiding the truth about the decaying submarines. (IZVESTIA, 1 Mar 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Maybe the real reason that the Pacific Fleet is moving this spring is that it will be impossible to clean up the radiation hazards left in Kamchatka. How is it that Reznik can blow the whistle on the nuclear waste leaking into the ocean, and avoid prosecution for divulging state secrets (unlike the often-prosecuted Grigory Pasko)? Maybe they are not state secrets any longer. We may never really know the extent of the ecological damage done to the Northern Pacific environment. And it doesn't appear as though the Russian military intends to stick around and find out either.

## Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

### **UKRAINE**

#### **Marchuk exonerated?**

For the past four months, Yevhen Marchuk, the head of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC), has been battling accusations that he oversaw a large weapons-smuggling ring in the early 1990s. Today, he is claiming vindication, and threatening to sue those who accused him.

Marchuk's alleged involvement in the arms-smuggling network first received attention last December. Then, the Kyiv Telegraph published a series of articles suggesting Marchuk was the leader of an operation supplying weapons to the Balkans between 1992 and 1993. During those years, Marchuk was head of the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU) and charged with monitoring the country's new, growing arms sales program. Consequently, he advised the president as to whether a company should be granted a license to trade Ukrainian arms. One of the companies granted this license was led by Dmytro Streshynsky, enabling him to purchase Ukrainian arms legally and resell them to approved third parties. According to an Italian court, however, Streshynsky used his license to buy

armaments and then resell them in the Balkans -- a violation of the UN embargo in place at that time.

During the Italian investigation of his activities, Streshynsky suggested that Marchuk was aware of the arms network and even encouraged it. His statements were seized upon by Marchuk's political rivals, and the former SBU chief has been on the defensive, and claiming his innocence, since. In fact, Marchuk not only has denied involvement in the smuggling activities, he has claimed credit for stopping them. He has repeatedly suggested that, upon discovering problems with Streshynsky's company, he informed then-President Leonid Kravchuk, and action was taken quickly to stop the smuggling. In a 17 December interview, Kravchuk supported Marchuk's statements. "We found out that the company had problems," Kravchuk said. "With my approval, via Marchuk, Ukraine started cooperating with the secret service of a NATO country. This secret service caught Streshynsky and the ship that was carrying arms." (ICTV, 1945 GMT, 17 Dec 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

It is worth noting, however, that despite Kravchuk's statement that the "secret service caught Streshynsky," he quickly disappeared and only recently was recaptured by Italian authorities. It is also worth noting that, while it is almost impossible to confirm Kravchuk's statement about the captured ship, the Ukrainian authorities in fact did have some success during the embargo years at stopping smuggling operations. For example, in 1994, the SBU captured a group of men attempting to arrange an arms shipment to Croatia. (RADIO 1, 1700 GMT, 12 Aug 94; BBC Monitoring, via lexis-nexis) It is generally accepted, however, that this minimal success was dwarfed by the number of weapons that were smuggled successfully from, or through, Ukraine to the Balkans. (For background, see THE TIMES, 27 Jan 93, and THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 4 Oct 94)

Regardless, Marchuk's accusers apparently were unable to present legally sufficient evidence implicating him in the Streshynsky weapons scheme. On 4 March in Turin, Streshynsky was convicted of illegal arms trading and sentenced to two years in prison. Four days later, Italian prosecutor Marcello Maddalena released a letter confirming that no charges will be brought against Marchuk. The letter is unclear on whether this is due to lack of evidence or because the prosecutor sees no wrongdoing. Marchuk, naturally, chooses the latter explanation. "What does it mean?" he asked. "It means that a purposeful campaign has been organized to discredit me by accusing me of a grave international crime. Today we have received documented proof that all this was a lie." (ONE PLUS ONE, 8 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Who does Marchuk suggest is behind this "purposeful campaign?" He quickly names former SBU head Leonid Derkach and his media-mogul son Andriy. Andriy Derkach, interestingly, owns the television company -- Era TV -- that loudly called for Marchuk's resignation. Additionally, Andriy is a leader of Labor Ukraine, a party included in the pro-presidential For a United Ukraine election bloc. Marchuk, meanwhile, is associated with the Social Democratic Party - United (SDPU-u), the deposed "party of power," which apparently became a little too powerful for its own good. During the last year, President Leonid Kuchma and his allies (including Labor Ukraine) have worked diligently to rid the administration of SDPU-u members. Marchuk's removal would go a long way toward emasculating the formerly untouchable party.

It is telling, however, that Marchuk is being targeted in this manner. In a country that has become known as a "blackmail state" -- with the administration collecting "kompromat" on friends and enemies to use if necessary at a later date -- it would appear that Yevhen Marchuk has provided limited material. (Regarding the "blackmail state," see Keith Darden, EAST EUROPEAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW, Vol. 10, nos. 2/3 and Taras Kuzio, The Jamestown Foundation PRISM,

Vol. VIII, Issue I, Part 4) In a state where tax audits, car crashes and arrests on corruption charges are the norm when dealing with former members of the "in crowd," the attack against Marchuk has been comparatively benign. Indeed, it has turned into little more than echoes from Italy that failed to resonate. It would seem, therefore, that Marchuk will survive this arms-smuggling storm and remain well situated to continue collecting plenty of "kompromat" for himself.

### **Back and forth in the Crimea**

It's official, at least for now. After 31 March, Leonid Hrach will be stepping down as the speaker of the Crimean parliament. No, it's not by choice, of course. Hrach never has presented himself as the type of man who would give up power voluntarily. So, the Crimean courts have decided to help him along.

Hrach has been refused registration in the upcoming election to the Crimean parliament. His registration papers were improper, the district court said after an appeal by his rival. Specifically, the court suggested that Hrach's papers were not filled out by him as required by law, he failed to declare income (approximately \$6,600) from the sale of an apartment, and he understated the value of his home. The registration, which had been approved by the Hrach-controlled Crimean Election Commission, therefore, was annulled. Curiously, Hrach's registration to run as a candidate on the Communist ticket for the Ukrainian national parliament was approved with no problem. So, whatever happens in Crimea, Hrach has the opportunity to remain a legislator; he will be a relatively small fish in a very big pond, however.

Hrach responded to his Crimean disqualification with his normal energy and vigor, charging that the decision had been arranged from Kyiv based on "anti-Russian" feelings. He quickly organized a tent camp protest in the center of Simferopol and suggested at a rally that it may be time to hold a referendum on joining the Russian Federation. "If Kyiv and its vassals continue what they are doing by bringing unprecedented political and legal pressure to bear on us," he

said, "we will reserve the right, in particular, to speak of a referendum."  
(INTERFAX, 27 Feb 02; BBC Monitoring, via lexis-nexis) Despite a warm reception to his statement by Yevgeny Seleznev and Gennady Zyuganov, the rest of Russia did not respond quite as Hrach had expected. In fact, the silence surrounding his statement about a referendum was almost deafening. The most meaningful statement was actually one in opposition; Russian Ambassador Viktor Chernomyrdin suggested that Hrach "is not right trying to get Russia involved." (ROSBUSINESS, 5 Mar 02; via lexis-nexis) Within days, Hrach was suggesting that, although at least six media outlets quoted him identically and simultaneously when he discussed the referendum idea at a rally, they were all incorrect. He was misquoted, you see. He never really thought the referendum was a good idea.

Regardless, he is doing everything he can to disrupt the election. He is calling for a boycott of the polls on 13 March -- something that could also affect the Ukrainian national parliamentary election. The Central Election Commission, which is staffed with a majority of Hrach's fellow Communists, has ceased to function. It seems that five out of thirteen members are ill and unable to report to work for election preparations. It did make one decision, though. Chairman Ivan Polyakov announced that former prime minister and Hrach archrival, Serhiy Kunitsyn -- and 29 of his bloc members -- were found suddenly to be ineligible to run in the election. One day later, following a backlash (and possibly intervention by Kunitsyn ally, President Kuchma), Polyakov swore he never said anything about disqualifying anyone. He, too, was misquoted, no doubt. At the same time, the chairman announced that all electoral registration documents had been taken from the safe and had gone missing for a while. But, they're back now. What condition they're in, no one seems to know.

What is certain is that whatever the results of the Crimean parliamentary elections, they will be questioned. And following the election, there will be a power shift in the territory. Whether this will destabilize the shaky region is the

question on everyone's lips -- except for Hrach. He seems to want to do everything in his power to make sure that it does just that.

## Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

### **GEORGIA**

#### **Putin upbeat on US role**

Commenting on US plans to deploy roughly 200 special forces to train Georgian troops over the next three months, during a 1 March summit in Almaty Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "There is not, and cannot be any tragedy in the US presence in Georgia. If it is possible in the Central Asian states, then why should it not be allowed in Georgia?. Every state has the right to carry out its policy in the sphere of security as it considers right. Russia recognizes this right."

However, he noted, "The issue is that in this case we did not know anything about it." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1 Mar 02; via lexis-nexis) According to US Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, the US has been informing the Russian side. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 28 Feb 02).

The US has provided six Iroquois helicopters that the Georgians already are flying over the Pankisi Gorge. US personnel deployment, so far, has been limited to 18 senior officers who have arrived to study the situation. This number is expected to increase to 200 as the training gets underway. (GEORGIAN TELEVISION, 8 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) However, Georgian television reports that US pilots are training Georgian pilots over the mountainous areas at or near the trouble spots. (1 Mar 02; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Should such flights draw fire, the difference between "training" and "conducting" operations may become rather blurry.

Georgian officials have dismissed out of hand a flurry of rumors that Georgia will be used as a staging ground against Iraq and a whole blizzard suggesting that a swap of Pankisi for Abkhazia is underway. Despite the "versions" and "scenarios," all that has been confirmed is that the US has undertaken to train and equip roughly 1,000-2,000 Georgian soldiers to carry out operations in the Pankisi Gorge.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

### **Kalyuzhny muddies the water**

In recent years the Russian Federation had signed treaties with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan recognizing their respective sectors of the Caspian seabed. A serious departure from this principle occurred when Viktor Kalyuzhny, the Russian president's advisor for the Caspian Sea, told journalists "there are no Russian or Iranian or Azeri zones on the Caspian because there [is] no fixed status of the Caspian Sea. [I]t is only after the problem of delimitation of the resources on the seabed is solved and after the boundaries of these resources are determined that it will be possible to work in the zones that will be determined for each state. Let me repeat again that today there are no zones belonging to this or that Caspian country. I believe that the Caspian Sea rightfully belongs to the Russian market." With those words Russian policy reverted to 1994, the year when these concerns first surfaced. (FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, 22 Feb 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

## **CHECHNYA**

### **Khasbulatov: War 'not a simple mistake, but a crime'**

In the second of a series of interviews with Novaya gazeta, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the former speaker of the Russian parliament, became perhaps the first from among the Russian political elite to come out with scathing criticism of Putin's leadership and the Chechen war. The most surprising of his comments was his praise of Yel'tsin, his arch nemesis in 1993, whom Khasbulatov now regards as "powerful political figure Yel'tsin knew how to make political decisions. And fast!

Decisions can be wrong (it's politics!), but they have no right to be late. Putin is late. And I think he is a simple person. He has entrusted the war to the generals. Besides the war he [Yel'tsin] accomplished a great deal that will go down in history." (NOVAYA GAZETA, 28 Feb 02)

Khasbulatov drew comparisons with the trial of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic now underway in The Hague and raised serious doubt that Chechens were responsible for setting the bombs in Russian cities. "I was told how the fighters left Dagestan. No one was giving them chase, no aviation was used. They left like a parade. Prime Minister Stepashin said at the time that the aggressor must be punished but there will be no war. Then he was removed. It seems, I can presume, that the war was programmed. Only public opinion stood in the way. And then the explosions: Buinaksk, Volgodonsk, Moscow," he said.

To find a way out of the war, Khasbulatov suggests full-scale political dialogue which would involve Chechen society along with the representatives of the Chechen government. "People hate them both. I think that in Chechnya there needs to be an anti-terrorist coalition of authoritative, informal representatives who would become the main participants in the talks," he said. Chechnya's status would have to be defined in a way that would provide international security guarantees against another "total war aimed at the destruction of the entire nation."

### **Hunger strike for Chechnya**

Nearly 500 persons worldwide will participate in a two-day hunger strike for Chechnya on 12 and 13 March. Interestingly, almost all the participants are in Europe, many in Russia, a few in the United States and none in the Middle East. (radicalparty.org) Elena Bonner, among other human rights activists, is participating.

The effort began when Olivier Dupuis, a member of the European Parliament (EP) from the Transnational Radical Party, went on a hunger strike on 21 February. Andrei Rodionov of the Anti-Militarist Radical Association in Russia (since 25 February) and Umar Khanbiev (since 5 March) joined him. Dupuis is demanding that the EP replace the commissioner for humanitarian aid who has not carried out his responsibilities; receive representatives of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov; and invite Chechen and Russian representatives to give testimony on the state of the negotiations. The EP has agreed to receive Deputy Prime Minister Akhmed Zakaev, Foreign Minister Ilyas Akhmadov and Health Minister Umar Khanbiev this week. In view of this concession and several messages of gratitude and concern from Chechen representatives, Dupuis decided to end his hunger strike.

In another important development, Zakaev met with Carla Del Ponte, the Swiss judge prosecuting Milosovic. Zakaev voiced hopes that the perpetrators of crimes against the Chechens also would be brought to justice. (EKHO MOSKVY, 7 Mar 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

### **US and Germany far behind**

While public activism is growing, Western governments have been slow to respond. The US State Department's newly released Country Report on Human Rights Policies raised howls in Moscow but the sections on Chechnya represent a much weakened rehash of information documented and made available earlier by Human Rights Watch and Memorial. Robbing the story of detail and narrative elements that usually accompany human rights reporting, the US State Department has managed to turn it into boring reading. With regard to political detail, the most significant error (repeated twice in the text) is the claim that federal forces killed Arbi Baraev in May 2001. According to Aslanbek Aslakhonov, the Chechen Duma deputy, federal forces did not kill Arbi Baraev. Rather, the notorious Chechen warlord responsible for the gruesome beheadings of English and New Zealander telecom workers was killed in June 2001 by

krovniki, that is, Chechens who had a blood feud against him. (See NOVAYA GAZETA, 27 Aug 01)

Germany's planned deportation of 20 Chechen refugees prompted protests from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The German government reasoned that Chechens in Russia can move to another part of Russia to avoid the repressions of the Chechen war. Germany grants asylum to only one-third of the Chechen refugees who apply. (AP, 5 Mar 02; via chechnya-sl) Germany's argument reveals a profound ignorance of Russian life. The system of propiska requires persons to live at the location where they are registered - if this happens to be in Chechnya, then so be it. A Chechen cannot legally obtain a dwelling, send his children to school or register to vote in any location other than where his propiska puts him. Moreover, there is ample documentation that Chechens are subject to official harrassment and discrimination throughout Russia.

A report by the Union of Council for Soviet Jews found that abuses against ethnic Chechens in Russian regions ranged from administrative discrimination to deportations, beatings, pogroms and murder. The report found "official grass-roots discrimination and mistreatment of Chechens (and others from the Caucasus) occur throughout the country." There is widespread and frequent official tolerance of discrimination, harassment and violence against Chechens and in some cases incitement of ethnic hatred by government officials.  
([www.fsmonitor.com/stories/chechen\\_report.htm](http://www.fsmonitor.com/stories/chechen_report.htm))

## Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Michael Donahue

### **KAZAKHSTAN**

**The time for binding ties with the West is now**

If America is the proverbial "city on a hill," then according to the United States State Department, Kazakhstan -- at least as far as the rest of Central Asia is concerned -- is at the summit of Mt. Everest. Last week the US State Department released its annual report on Human Rights, and noticeably absent from the region's usual list of abusers was President Nazarbaev's regime. While somewhat less earth-shattering than an endorsement for the Nobel Peace Prize, the report's stinging criticism of other Central Asian states upon which the United States is relying heavily for logistical and basing support for the "war on terror" makes this more than simply a tacit endorsement of Nazarbaev. Indeed, it can and should be interpreted as setting the conditions for a long-term bilateral relationship between Washington and Astana.

Unlike Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Russia and China, which seem to have reserved places on the annual reports, Kazakhstan was not singled out for criticism for major human rights violations last year. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 3 Mar 02; via Eurasianet) While the report acknowledges abuses within both the Kazakh military and law enforcement system, there were an equal number of references to reforms or attempted reforms and punishments of offenders. (INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS, "Kazakhstan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," 4 Mar 02; via US State Department Online)

To many human rights watchdog groups, however, the report amounts to little more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. The argument is that the United States wants to build a stronger relationship with Kazakhstan, for the future exploitation of its vast energy reserves and its critical location for intelligence and strike operations in the "war on terror," and therefore the State Department gave Astana a pass on major violations of human rights. According to the International Helsinki Federation, 2001 assessment, these violations include a resurrection of Stalinist governance, religious intolerance and political persecution, as well as judicial corruption. In a similar report, Human Rights Watch further accused Nazarbaev's regime of election rigging, elimination of opposition press and tolerating (if not

condoning) torture. If one accepts such accusations as fact, then their argument is not without merit.

However, it is not difficult for NGOs, which in general have the luxury of geopolitical insignificance, to find fault with Central Asian states or Western tolerance of their regimes. Unlike the aforementioned human rights organizations, the United States is burdened with international leadership, even if it is a largely self-imposed burden. In light of the ongoing "war on terror," a determining factor in whether America can maintain its position of global dominance is to be found in Central Asia. Given its size, location, relative (regional) economic stability and vast potential, and coupled with its vast untapped oil and natural gas reserves, Kazakhstan is the logical choice for anchoring American interests in the region. Finally, Kazakhstan might not be tolerant or democratic by Western standards, but it does seem to be less oppressive than some of its neighbors.

Since 11 September, Central Asia has experienced a diplomatic Renaissance with the West that has resulted in increased development aid and international scrutiny. Among the countries least concerned with what was happening previously in the region, the United States has been the most aggressive in pursuing bilateral agreements with each authoritarian regime in pursuit of its short-term military objectives. This seeming dismissal of past abuses troubled even allies, but as the five-month war has progressed it is apparent that the initial carte-blanche diplomacy has evolved into a more thoughtful, selective program designed to establish lasting ties between the United States and Central Asia. US denunciation of regional allies such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and simultaneous exacerbation of their domestic instability by the very presence of American troops, emboldens the opposition to both the government and the United States and does little to develop the appropriate conditions for long-term relations. However, by concentrating efforts on Kazakhstan and maintaining a low-profile dialogue regarding human rights abuses, the United States can

secure a lasting and mutually beneficial, relationship with the region's largest and most important state. Many remedies for human rights abuses can be found through private diplomacy.

The most unexpected development in Kazakhstan since it began developing closer ties to the West was the sudden resignation of Prime Minister Tokaev on 28 January. In choosing Imangaliy Tasmagambetov as Tokaev's replacement, President Nazarbaev has begun what many interpret as a gradual movement toward coalition government following his own administration. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 30 Jan 02; via Eurasianet) However, the developing political reform within Kazakhstan seems hardly the product of an internal change of heart. Rather, growing American influence in Astana, as evidenced by the December Bush-Nazarbaev joint affirmation of international standards of governance, seems to have played a significant role.

The United States has long been accused of fast-food diplomacy, that is, of being impatient and shortsighted. In selecting Kazakhstan, however, America has pinned its hopes for regional influence not on the most militarily important ally, but on the state with the greatest potential (and potential utility). By not attacking Kazakhstan in the recent State Department report, the US has established the conditions for a lasting relationship in which discrete progress can be made to assuage the human rights problems while at the same time enhancing America's position globally. While such a policy may offend agenda-driven NGOs, any progress is progress, and progress has already been made.

## Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Michael Varuolo

**States return to defensive posture**

A recent article appearing in the London-based Financial Times newspaper has set the Baltic states on the defensive once again as they attempt to explain their desires to join NATO. On 25 February the Financial Times claimed that NATO members have reached consensus on a proposal that would offer Russia decision-making powers on certain security-related topics. The article, which states that NATO is furthering its goal of trying to convert itself from an alliance of collective defense to a more regional alliance of collective security, drew a reserved response from the Baltic states. "Lithuania is joining the alliance which guarantees security and stability. All steps by the alliance towards that goal are beneficial to us and can only be evaluated positively," Petras Zapolskas, director of information and culture in Lithuania, said. (BNS, 1600 GMT, 25 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0225, via World News Connection)

The US tried almost immediately to mitigate Baltic concerns over the perception of a possible Russian veto to NATO endeavors, including that of expansion. On the day after the article appeared, US Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns explained that, although the North Atlantic Council would continue to meet with Russia four or five times a week, the Russian would have no veto power over any NATO operations and NATO would maintain its ability to operate independently. (BNS, 1659 GMT, 26 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002, via World News Connection) However, the timing of the article's release added to existing tensions caused by Burns earlier that day when he told Estonian Prime Minister Siim Kallas that NATO's decision-making process concerning expansion is different than that of the European Union's and that any expansion would be made based upon an aspirant country's commitment to democratic ideals as well as whether or not a new member would enhance the overall military strength of the alliance. (ETA, 1036 GMT, 25 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0225, via World News Connection) Such statements had been made by other NATO members in the past, but not by the US. Whether this is meant to indicate a subtle shift in NATO's attitude toward expansion efforts remains to be seen, but the implication was not lost on the Baltic states as they quickly took steps to reenergize recent

negotiations in order to ensure that they are perceived as military assets to the alliance.

During a meeting with Burns, subsequently, Lithuanian Defense Minister Linas Linkevičius discussed the possibility of purchasing more technologically advanced weapons. Lithuania is seeking to obtain ground-to-air Stinger missiles to join the complement of Javelin anti-tank missiles it purchased last year. (BNS, 1055 GMT, 27 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0227, via World News Connection) This would give the Lithuanian Army technologically advanced capabilities not present in some NATO members' militaries, and would constitute a substantial upgrade of the army's capabilities as well as demonstrate a further degree to their resolve. As Linkevičius stated, "We will not create new problems and, though modestly, we will participate in the alliance's efforts." (LETA, 1304 GMT, 3 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0303, via World News Connection)

Furthermore, the defense ministers of the three Baltic states met on 3 March to discuss their joint commitment to the alliance and how this could be impressed upon US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Germany's Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping when they meet later this spring. (LETA, 1304 GMT, 3 Mar 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0303, via World News Connection) Most likely the Baltic ministers will echo the sentiments made by Kallas to the British Minister of Defense, Geoffrey Hoon, last month. Kallas pointed out that warfare has evolved and that threats to security are no longer met by large armies on the field of battle, but rather by small, specialized units. (ETA, 1520 GMT, 25 Feb 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0225, via World News Connection) This is an obvious reference to the current "war on terrorism" and operations within Bosnia and Kosovo. It highlights the cooperation that the Baltic states have shown the alliance during these crises and hints that NATO should take notice of those activities and recognize that the Baltic states not only support NATO but also have been participating alongside NATO units.

Since participation by the Baltic states within these NATO operations as well as the modernization programs of the Baltic militaries are well known by NATO officials, Burns' comments to Kallas concerning the criteria for expansion seem out of place. In fact, his statements only become understandable if the Financial Times is correct in its reporting about the growing cooperation between Russia and NATO.

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