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Russian Federation: Executive Branch and Security Services

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Bungled Semenov dismissal highlights Kremlin confusion

In a move to dismiss the commander-in-chief of the ground forces, Defense Minister Igor Rodionov apparently attempted to circumvent Kremlin procedure, which resulted in confusion over General Vladimir Semenov's status. According to reports, Rodionov submitted a written request for Semenov's dismissal to the president, who approved the document. Rodionov then fired Semenov, showing him the request with the president's sanction. When the presidential administration was asked about the dismissal, the response was that there was no signed presidential decree on the General. What would appear to be a technical matter of completing appropriate paperwork became a public embarrassment as General Semenov appealed publicly for the justification of his dismissal. Although Semenov was allegedly accused of conduct besmirching the honor of a serviceman, rumors suggested that it was actually his wife's commercial activities which prompted the action.

President Yel'tsin refused to back up his Defense Minister's action, claiming that his approval of Rodionov's request to dismiss Semenov was intended to prompt a review of Semenov's case before the Defense Council's military commissions committee. Yel'tsin has now ordered a speedy resolution of this matter.

Shakhrai returns to the Kremlin
Sergei Shakhrai, whose long service to President Yeltsin includes drafting the decrees that dissolved the Soviet Union and established the Commonwealth of Independent States, returned to the Kremlin this month as presidential liaison to the Constitutional Court and deputy head of the presidential administration. While Shakhrai has not held a position in the executive since December 1995, he was quite active in the campaign to re-elect President Yeltsin and had evidently been disappointed at not receiving an appointment before this. A possible explanation of this oversight is suggested by Shakhrai's characterization of his relations with Chubais as "not great." His re-emergence now may signal Yeltsin's resumption of greater involvement in Kremlin affairs.

But Shumeiko still out in the cold
Another of the high-profile figures associated with the Yeltsin administration, Vladimir Shumeiko, was also apparently expecting an appointment to an important state post. Shumeiko, former head of the Federation Council and active supporter of Yeltsin's re-election, has been concentrating on the regional elections since July.

M.K. claims tape authenticated
Moskovsky Komsomolets published (11 December 96) a report claiming that the tape of a conversation among Yeltsin aides conspiring over campaign funds (see previous digests) has been authenticated by an American lab. What the lab has apparently confirmed is that the tape was not made through a bugging device, but with a portable cassette recorder, and that it was not edited, modified or fabricated.

Russian Federation: Legislative Branch and Political Parties
By Michael Thurman
POLITICAL PARTIES

Communists demonstrations on Revolution anniversary
About 6,000 people took part in a procession in St. Petersburg. The militia noted that the demonstrators included considerably more young people than previously. No more than 7,000, of the 20,000 expected, attended a rally in Novosibirsk. About 3,000 demonstrators in Vladikavkaz called for the restoration of the USSR. (Radio Rossii in Russian, 1600 GMT, 7 November 1996)

Social democratic parties meet in Moldova
Delegates from social-democratic parties of Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Poland, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, and other countries are taking part in the work of this conference. Their agenda includes models of social economy during the transitional period and prospects for further cooperation between left-wing parties. (Itar Tass in Russian, 1438 GMT, 7 November 1996)

REGIONS

ELECTIONS

National-patriotic forces win in Kaluga
Valeriy Sudarenkov, a candidate representing the national-patriotic forces, has emerged victorious from the runoff gubernatorial elections in Kaluga region. According to preliminary reports he has won 63.51% of the votes. His rival, current governor Oleg Savchenko, was supported by 30.48% of the voters. The turnout stood at 41%, the local electoral commission reports. In the first round, held on October 27, Sudarenkov won 45.76% of the votes and Savchenko 39.63%. (Interfax, 0847 GMT, 10 November 1996)

Sudarenko wins in Kaluga Oblast
In the second round of the gubernatorial elections 9 November Oleg Savchenko, head of the Kaluga Oblast administration, lost to Valeriy Sudarenkov, chairman of the oblast legislative assembly, who was supported by the left-wing opposition
at the concluding stage of the election struggle. (Rossiyskiye Vesti, 12 November 1996, p.2)

**Lebed's brother to run for Khakassia premier**
The republic's Supreme Court has adopted a decision ordering the electoral commission to register Aleksey Lebed -- Aleksandr Lebed's brother -- as candidate for the post of chairman of Khakassia's government. (Rabochaya Tribuna, 12 November 1996, p3)

**Yeltsin's daughter invited to run for Tula seat**
The Tula chapter of the Conversion and Women association has requested President Boris Yeltsin's daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko, to run for the post of Tula region governor. No response is as yet available. (Interfax, 1651 GMT, 13 November 1996)

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Duma declares Dniester of strategic interest**
The deputies proposed that the Russian President and the Federation Council examine the issue of permanently deploying a limited contingent of Russian armed forces on the territory of the Dniester region. (ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian, 1610 GMT, 13 November 1996)

**Duma proposes free economic zone for Chechnya**
Once a free economic zone is in existence, economic operations on Chechnya's territory will be placed under federal tax, customs, and banking control and conditions will be created for solving the republic's urgent economic problems. (Rabochaya Tribuna, 12 November 1996, p1)

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**
By Lt. Col. Cathy Dreher and CDR John G. Steele
Chernomyrdin visits with airborne troops
A continuing theme is the concern over the possible reorganization of the Airborne Troops. For several weeks now concern has been obvious over the status of these elite and highly trained forces. Not much detail is provided beyond promises that "they have existed, exist, and will continue to exist."

Building begins on new class of strategic nuclear submarine
For the first time in nearly ten years work has begun in Severodvinsk on a fourth-generation strategic nuclear missile submarine. This event marks the 300th anniversary of the Russian fleet. This issue leaves many questions. With so little in terms of a military budget, why build now? However, looking at the whole picture offers some possible answers. While the construction on this sub class begins without promise of numbers to follow; it serves as a highlight to a remarkable event, the 300th anniversary, where it reminds patriotic Russians of their long maritime history and serves as an object of hope for the future, for a continued and growing sea-presence and of jobs and funds to come.

Extra troops being brought into Moscow to cover the holidays
This very brief message is indicative of the situation in Moscow. Additional troops mean fear of trouble in the city during a holiday time. Now more than any time in recent Russian history is there cause for alarm due to inadequate military pay, poor availability of foodstuffs, high costs, etc. However, this build-up does coincide with Yeltsin's surgery. This report contradicts others which indicate no change in the duties of Interior Troops during Yeltsin's surgery. It is obvious that tensions are running high. Every effort is being made to ensure the smooth running of the country, transfer of nuclear weapons control before and after surgery, visits with US military officials, etc.

Yeltsin decree on troop withdrawal from Chechnya
Signing of this decree confirms Yeltsin's position that the Chechen issue cannot be resolved through military methods. His decree is a "gesture of goodwill made
at Moscow's own initiative. Also stressed is the idea that the withdrawal will occur before the elections on 27 Jan thereby "allowing the Chechen people to have a chance to vote with their choices not made at gunpoint."

**Yeltsin decree to reform armed forces**

Mr Yeltsin signed a decree “to bring reform of the armed forces in line with the actual social, economic, military and political situation in the country.” Defense Council Secretary Yuriy Baturin is to monitor implementation of this decree. The decree asks several things:

- guarantee a level of financing for defense, security and law enforcement until 2001
- transfer of social facilities from armed forces and other troops
- asked Defense Council to propose concept for army reform until 2005
- propose shape, structure, composition and cuts to state-funded agencies dealing with security
- abolished the reserve of the Defense Ministry
- ordered personnel of military units outside armed forces be reduced by 15% in 1997.

**Arms sales**

The Russians and Indians cut a deal for 50 SU-30MK jet fighters worth $1.5 billion.

**NATO expansion**

Russia won little support for its proposals to make the OSCE (of which Russia is a member) the paramount security organization in Europe. NATO, which Russia sees as directly threatening, appears likely to remain the centerpiece for European security.

**Russian military woes**
• The Russian Air Force is reported to be at less than 53 percent availability, meaning some 3,000 aircraft and helicopters are unflyable. Funds allocated for maintenance are said to be less than 10 percent of requirements, and the service did not purchase any new aircraft in 1996.

• A major political flap erupted over the dismissal of Army ground force commander, General Vladimir Semenov, apparently for ill-defined "misconduct."

• Pay shortfalls and endemic housing problems continue to haunt Russian military. Reports say Russian troops finishing terms of conscription are forced to sell their blood to earn enough money to return to their homes.

• Over 1,100 Russian troops are still missing from Chechnya war.

Black Sea Fleet

• Russia and the Ukraine are deadlocked on the Black Sea Fleet issue, and the future of Sevastopol. Russia has been increasingly demanding with regard to the status of the Black Sea port.

• Russian warships (stationed in Georgia) seized a Ukrainian merchant vessel in the Black Sea. The Ukrainians have denounced the act as piracy.

Defense Minister becomes a civilian

President Yeltsin ordered Defense Minister Rodionov to retire from the military and become a civilian. He will retain the position of Defense Minister however, and this has been seen as an important symbolic step in establishing explicit civilian control over the military. Rodionov is the first ever civilian Defense Minister.

Russia/China Deal Signed

Russia and China signed a defense-technical cooperation agreement, details of which were not released.
Satellite launched
Russia launched a Kosmos 2335 photo-intelligence satellite, restoring to some degree Russia's degraded high quality photo reconnaissance.

Nikitin released
The Russian security services have released Alexandr Nikitin, and dropped the treason charges against him.

Newly Independent States: Western Regions
By Chandler Rosenberger

BELARUS
Aftermath of Referendum: One President, Two Parliaments, Scattered Protests
Having won a referendum expanding his powers, President Alexander Lukashenka has tightened his grip on all three branches of government. Lukashenka has appointed the head of presidential security to lead the country's secret service and has accepted the resignations of four more Constitutional Court justices, reducing the number of pre-referendum judges on the 11-man court to six. He has also thrown out the results of by-elections held alongside the referendum, arguing that the new, smaller parliament endorsed in the referendum needs no new deputies.

Lukashenka's opponents from the former legislature have attempted to carry on as a deliberative body, meeting on their own at Minsk's House of Writers. But their campaign to continue in office has gathered only the support of a few thousand protesters. It is a measure of Lukashenka's confidence that he felt free to arrest Social Democrat leader Nikalai Statkevich and ten other protesters for "disturbing public order" following a December 8 rally (see Omri Daily Digest No. 237, Part II, 10 December 1996).
Comment
The Belarusian populace appears to have concluded that the enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend. Masses willing to protest President Lukashenka have not rallied to the defense of his rivals in the rump parliament. Given the predominance in the old legislature of former communists and its unfailing support for Lukashenka's plans to integrate Belarus into the Russian Federation, this is understandable. "The failure of a popular opposition to emerge in Belarus is the real, big story of the present crisis," writes Oxford's don Mark Almond in National Review (December 23, 1996).

UKRAINE
Arms to Libya?
Top officials in Kiev reacted angrily to reports in The Washington Times that Ukraine had sold Libya SS-21 short-range ballistic missiles and had agreed to service its Russian-made submarines.

Deputy Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Hryshchenko called on the U.S. government to "state clearly that Ukraine is in no way guilty of such accusations." The Times claimed its reports were based on leaked CIA documents.

Russian journalists were quick to pick up on the story, which calls into question Kiev's reliability just as Ukraine is seeking its own agreement with NATO on expansion and is seeking closer ties to the European Union. Ukrainian officials in turn pointed an accusing finger at Moscow. "It is very strange that such accusations have been picked up so quickly by Moscow," Hryshchenko said (Reuters, Tue, 10 Dec 1996).

Comment
Ukraine will have to do better than spin conspiracy theories about Moscow's role in leaking stories that are damaging to Kiev. If Ukraine hopes to have any separate role in shaping NATO expansion or wants U.S. support in its continuing
struggle with Russia over the Black Sea Fleet, President Leonid Kuchma will have to put his house in order. The firing of his longtime chief of staff Dmytro Tabachnyk, famous both for his influence and dubious business contacts (see Omri Daily Digest, No. 238, Part II, 11 December 1996), may be the beginning of such efforts.

MOLODOVA

Bipartisan calls for Russian troop withdrawals; partisan lines drawn
Both recently-defeated Moldovan president Mircea Snegur and newly-elected president Petru Lucinschi have demanded quick withdrawal of Russian troops from the separatist region of Trans-Dniestria. Snegur made his comments at a meeting of the OSCE in Lisbon on December 3; back home in Chisinau, Lucinschi echoed Snegur the next day.

Despite their apparent agreement on Russia, the presidential candidates continue to divide Moldovan politics between them. Snegur welcomed the founding of the Democratic Convention of Moldova, an umbrella organization of parties and organizations belonging to the Civic Movement, which had backed Snegur during the electoral campaign. Lucinschi on the other hand can now count on the support of "For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova," which brings together the Party of Social Progress, the Social Democratic Party, the Party of Economic Rebirth, the Socialist Action Party, and a series of youth and students' organizations.

Comment
Partisan politics in Moldova apparently ends at the Dniester's edge. On the west bank, however, tactics are as crude as ever. The pro-Snegur Civic Movement claims that its members have been fired from their jobs or received threats of physical violence since their side lost the December 1st presidential campaign (see Omri Daily Digest No. 239, Part II, 12 December 1996). The left in Moldova has used thugs against its opponents in every election since independence.
While Moldova's new president may have convinced Reuters that he is a "moderate," he will need to bring his minions to heel before he can hope to earn Western approval.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA
Presidential commission believes 1,300 servicemen missing in Chechnya
The commission based its findings on reports from commanders and families. As a result the list it has compiled is by far longer than those supplied by the power ministries. The Defense Ministry which is looking for 336 men, reportedly has 857 of its servicemen missing. Much of the same is true for missing civilians, whereas 112 people, sent to Chechnya by various companies, are missing according to the commission, only 50 are being sought. (Rossiyskiye Vesti, 21 November 1996)

Troop withdrawal complete, but Rybkin wants joint border control
In accordance with Yeltsin's November 23 decree the remaining two brigades began leaving Chechnya on December 1. Sergei Yastrzhembskiy, the presidential spokesman told Mayak Radio on November 24 that they would be stationed in "close proximity to the administrative borders of Chechnya." On December 3 the 205th detached brigade of Armed Forces left Chechnya for Buddenovsk. (TASS 3 December 1996) Ivan Rybkin, chairman of the Russian Security Council said that the Chechen-Georgian border,(Chechnya's only border external to the Russian Federation) should be patrolled jointly and asked the director of the Federal Border Service to negotiate this arrangement with the Chechen leadership. (Contact Information Agency, 26 November 1996)

Nineteen candidates registered for January elections
President Yanderbayev has come out in favor of postponing the elections and Sergei Kovalev renewed his call for taking a few weeks more to prepare for them, however despite many outstanding issues the electoral commission is proceeding with the registration process. Matters still under discussion include who will be eligible to vote and whether voting will take place only in Chechnya or also in those parts of Russia accommodating large refugee populations. Thus far nineteen candidates have been nominated and must now produce 10,000 signatures by midnight of 27 December.

ARMENIA
Armenia dissents from OSCE document on Nagorno-Karabakh
An annex to the document produced at the Lisbon summit contained the provision that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh would be defined by a future agreement and would confer the highest level of self-rule within Azerbaijan. Armenia and Azerbaijan were unable to come to an agreement on a set of principles despite several meetings on the eve of the summit and the principles declared at the summit were hardly different from ones Armenia has turned down in the past.

Constitutional Court rules treaty with Russia constitutional
Russian and Armenian legislatures have not yet ratified the March 1995 treaty which provides for the continued presence of Russian military bases in Armenia. The Armenian Constitutional Court found the treaty to be in accordance with the constitution. The term of the treaty is 25 years.

GEORGIA
New working group on border defense
Russian Border Service Director Gen. Andrei Nikolayev held talks with President Shevardnadze and Gen Valeriy Chkhaidze. It was decided that a working group would be formed to settle the disputes around the border guards. Among the issues discussed were the funding of the border guards and Georgian claims to
its share of the property of the border guards. (Interfax, 25 November 1996) The legal status of the Russian border guards is questionable since in recent weeks the parliament passed a law on the Georgian border which excluded the provision legalizing the presence of Russian border guards but also concluded that the President can authorize their stay. (Editorial Digest No 1) Nikolayev said that 40% of the Russian border guards in Georgia are Georgian nationals (Interfax 26 November 1996)