Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Autocracy, orthodoxy and ... ?

President Yel'tsin, on tours of the provinces last week, twice referred to himself as "Boris the First." On one occasion the president compared his decision to send students abroad for education and training to the actions of Peter the Great: "The situation was such under Peter the First, and it will be such under Boris the First." (Russian Public TV, 18 Sep 97, BBC, 19 Sep 97; NEXIS) This open jesting with tsarism, coupled with the recent passage of the Law on Religion (the amended draft of which was composed by a presidential council), suggests some rather intriguing historical comparisons.

APPARAT

Structural and personnel changes

A recent presidential decree (1 September 97) amends the Statute on the president's Territorial Administration. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-252) The Russian Federation President's Administration for the Coordination of the Activity of the Russian Federation President's Plenipotentiary Representatives in the Russian Federation Components has been renamed as the Russian Federation President's Administration for the Coordination of the Activity of the Russian Federation President's Plenipotentiary in the Russian Federation Regions. The purpose of the name change (from Components to Regions) is unclear, as the Constitution refers to the parts of the Russian Federation as "components."
The text of the decree maintains the administration's previous stature within the presidential staff, but expands the scope of its authority in line with the president's July decree, which increased the role of the president's representatives in the regions.

President Yel'tsin also dismissed two longtime advisers last week. Georgi Satarov, who most recently was noted for his assistance in drafting the president's March speech to the Federal Assembly, was dismissed in connection with another assignment. While there is some debate over whether he was fired or resigned, Satarov himself claims he had planned to resign for some time and had informed Chief of Staff Yumashev of his intentions. Lev Sukhanov, the president's liaison with public organizations, was also let go and apparently intends to retire. (ITAR-TASS, 16 Sep 97)

**Borodin appraises presidential property, Nemtsov**

Pavel Borodin, the economic manager or administrator of affairs for the presidential administration, discussed the scope of his administration's oversight in an interview with Komsomolskaya pravda (30 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-247). Borodin's staff, which numbers 350, disburses housing, cars, medical treatment and travel expenses, among other state benefits, for all the executive power structures, with a total of approximately 50,000 personnel.

Asked to value all of the property under his jurisdiction, which includes the Kremlin, Borodin responded: "The Americans estimate it at $13 trillion. But we ourselves adhere to a more modest figure of $6-8 trillion."

Borodin also allowed himself a swipe at First Deputy Premier Boris Nemtsov, with whom he publicly disagreed over the switch from foreign-made cars to Volgas for administration officials. Noting that Nemtsov (along with Deputy Premier Syusev) is "responsible for Russia," Borodin noted they must be
"outstanding people," if they "still have time left to tackle the problems of foreign cars."

GOVERNMENT
Bankers and auctions and mud -- oh my!
The continuing struggle among members of the financial-investment groups and government officials apparently took a more serious turn through reports of an assassination plot against First Deputy Premier Anatoli Chubais. (Interfax, 14 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-259) The report was initiated by an unnamed FSB staffer and has led to an increase in security surrounding Chubais.

While allegations of wrongdoing persist in the headlines of media outlets representing the various bankers and officials involved in the privatization auctions, President Yel'tsin has intervened through a meeting with the bankers at which he asked them not "to sling mud" at Chubais and Nemtsov. (ITAR-TASS, 16 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-259) Yel'tsin, at least, was pleased with the results of the meeting, claiming that bankers had agreed to "back the policy of the President and the Government."

While the mud continues to flow, the result of this latest Kompromat war may be an increased level of presidential involvement in the next stage of privatization.

Justice minister outlines needed reforms
Newly-appointed Justice Minister Sergei Stepashin has provided a general blueprint for reform of the ministry, which would greatly increase its coordinating role in law enforcement, the courts and legislation. Under Stepashin's scheme, the Justice Ministry would take over some of the functions of the president's Main State-Legal Administration, pick up servicemen being dismissed from the security services and Ministry of Defense to serve as court officers, and expand its registration authority over public associations and property transactions. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 20 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246)
The Main State-Legal Administration is primarily responsible for the drafting and reviewing of presidential decrees to ensure their consonance with the constitution. Stepashin's singling out of this agency suggests he sees a need for the ministry to have a greater role in the decree-writing process. He also finds current ministry structures inadequate to provide court support, and envisages the creation of an "Institute of Bailiffs and Executors." This agency would be responsible for "protection of the courts; maintenance of order during court proceedings; and...execution of court decisions." Staffing for these "judicial police" would theoretically comprise officers from "down-sized" security and military agencies.

According to Stepashin, a new law signed by the president tasks the Justice Ministry with the "registration of real estate and deals involving it." Property laws are not only an extremely contentious issue within Russia, but the problems of ownership and taxation represent a complex tangle of conflicting interests. Stepashin's evolving role in this matter will bear further investigation.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger

Fear of Russian-Iranian cooperation on missiles grows

Israeli intelligence has reported that Russia is helping Iran to build long-range missiles that could be fielded within three years, according to The Washington Times.

Iran, according to the report, is constructing two systems, based on a North Korean model, that have a range of 1,200 miles; the missiles could therefore threaten both the state of Israel and US troops based in Saudi Arabia. The
missiles could deliver chemical or biological weapons, or a nuclear warhead, should Tehran succeed in developing one.

Among the Russian firms accused of helping the Iranians are Rosvooruzhenie, the Russian arms-export agency; the Bauman Institute, a leading Russian technological institute; and NPO Trud, a rocket-motor builder. (The Washington Times, 10 Sep 97).

The Russian Foreign Ministry and Rosvooruzhenie both strongly denied the reports. "Information on alleged infringements by Russian entities and officials said to be working for Iran have been thoroughly checked by Russia's relevant bodies and proved false," Vladimir Andreev, a foreign ministry spokesman, said. (Reuters, 10 Sep 97; Johnson's Russia List #1190)

Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov said that Russia would continue to develop strong economic ties with Iran, and would not postpone its planned cooperation on the construction of a nuclear power plant at Bushehr.

"Nothing will change this stance as it has nothing to do with the existing suspicions," Primakov said. (Interfax, 1217 GMT, 15 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-258)

**While Israel decries pact, Iran welcomes Russian involvement in region**

In the wake of accusations of Russia's military aid to Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu suspended all joint Israeli-Russian economic projects, and said the threat was "a tangible existential danger for Israel, the like of which we only experienced in 1948."

The Israeli government was also considering withdrawing its ambassador to Moscow, and Netanyahu hinted at possible military action. "Imagine what would have happened," he told US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, "had Israel
not intervened in the Iraqi nuclear reactor issue." (Ma'ariv, 12 Sep 97, p 2; FBIS-TAC-97-255)

Journalists and diplomats in Tehran meanwhile urged Moscow to strengthen ties to Iran. The English-language Tehran Times urged Moscow to provide a counterbalance to US support of Israel (IRNA, 0651 GMT, 13 Sep 97; FBIS-NES-97-256), while Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said Russian-Iranian cooperation to resolve the crisis in Tajikistan (sic) was a good model for future joint efforts in the region. (IRIB Television First Program Network, 1630 GMT, 16 Sep 97; FBIS-NES-97-259)

**Russia objects to Turkey's plans to search merchant ships in Black Sea**

Russian diplomats told Turkish counterparts visiting Moscow that Ankara's plans to search merchant ships in the Black Sea would violate the Montreux Convention of 1936. Russia said it was "confident breaching this internationally recognized principle was illegal," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Valeri Nesterushkin said at a briefing following the 16 September meeting.

Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Tuygan had promised not to search all vessels, but claimed that Russia's sale of C-300 anti-aircraft systems to the Cypriot Greeks had inspired Ankara's wariness of Russian deliveries to the Mediterranean, Nesterushkin said. (Interfax, 1308 GMT, 16 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-259)

**Primakov meets Belgians, French in run-up to first NATO-Russia Council**

In a series of precedent-setting meetings, Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov discussed both bilateral ties to Belgium and the agenda for the first ministerial meeting of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, to take place on 26 September in New York.
Belgium is the NATO member that now holds the rotating seat at the joint chairmanship of the Joint Permanent Council. The council's other two positions are filled by permanent seats for the NATO secretary-general and a representative of Russia.

Belgian Foreign Minister Eric Derycke met Primakov in Moscow on 9 September. At the top of the agenda, according to Primakov, was elaboration of "an OSCE Charter as a document able to modify relations between various organizations and serve as a basis for building a European security architecture." (ITAR-TASS, 1700 GMT, 9 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-252)

But Primakov and Derycke also discussed issues unique to the Russian-Belgian relationship. Derycke pressed Primakov and Duma speaker Gennadi Seleznev to return archives, including those of the prewar Belgian Socialist Party, that had been captured by the occupying Nazis, then taken Moscow by Soviet troops after the end of the war.

Seleznev told Derycke that negotiations on the return of the Belgian archives were already under way. He expressed confidence that "the positive dynamism of Russian-Belgian relations will continue gaining impetus." (ITAR-TASS, 1139 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251)

Less than a week later, Primakov met with French Foreign Minister H. Vedrine and again discussed both bilateral issues, such as the upcoming visit of President Jacques Chirac, and the agenda of the NATO-Russia session. Primakov continued to stress the importance of transforming the OSCE into a pan-European security structure. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 13 Sep 97, p 3; FBIS-SOV-97-258)
There was no reported reaction of the US government to the meetings, although Washington has traditionally resisted efforts to strengthen the OSCE at the expense of NATO.

**Kremlin, Duma at odds over START II ratification**

While both President Boris Yel'tsin and Defense Minister Igor Sergeev have urged the Duma to ratify the START II nuclear weapons accord, leaders of the Duma's dominant parties called for open debate in the legislature's two houses.

"We would like the issue of START II to be debated in the light of the country's socioeconomic situation, maintaining and consolidating its defense potential and the outlook for the operation of its defense industrial complex with the factor of NATO's eastward expansion and the development of the country's military doctrine for the 21st century taken into account," Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov said. (Interfax, 1419 GMT, 16 Sep 97; FBIS-TAC-97-259)

**US Air Force study supports Russian denial of August nuclear test**

New and secret investigations conducted by the US Air Force indicate that a seismic tremor originally thought to have occurred above ground last month instead happened beneath the Arctic Ocean.

The tests give weight to Russian denials that it had exploded a nuclear bomb at its test site on the island of Novaya Zemlya, in violation of its self-imposed ban on testing nuclear weapons. (Associated Press, 13 Sep 97; Johnson's Russia List #1195)

**Clinton and Yel'tsin may have shared a backer with interests in Caucasus**

Roger Tamraz, a major contributor to the Democratic Party, in 1995 promised aides of Boris Yel'tsin that he would channel up to $100 million to the Russian president's election campaign in exchange for Russian support of a Trans-Caucasian oil pipeline, according to the CIA and congressional depositions.
Tamraz then told the CIA that he planned to use meetings with President Clinton to inform him of his Russian connection, according to CIA documents. White House officials warned the Clinton campaign to avoid Tamraz, who is wanted for embezzlement in Lebanon, but was overruled by then-Democratic National Chairman Donald Fowler. (Los Angeles Times, 10 Sep 97; Johnson's Russia List #1190)

**Russia criticizes NATO's peacekeeping mission in Bosnia**

Vitali Churkin, Russian ambassador in charge of relations with NATO, sharply criticized the alliance's efforts against the former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic. The campaign, particularly efforts to support the Bosnian Serb government in Banja Luka against Karadzic's shadow government in Pale, may "instigate violence," Churkin said. (Interfax, 1214 GMT, 12 Sep 97; FBIS-EEU-97-255) Churkin was formerly the Russian representative to peace talks in Bosnia.

Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov said that Russia would bring its complaints with the mission to the table at the first ministerial meeting of the Permanent Joint Council. (Interfax, 1628 GMT, 9 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-252)

**Head of Slovak Intelligence Service travels to Moscow**

Ivan Lexa, director of the Slovak Intelligence Service, left on 8 September for Moscow to discuss increased cooperation with the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (FSB), the successor to the Soviet Union's KGB.

Sme, a daily Slovak newspaper opposed to the current Slovak government, reported that the visit had been prepared both by the FSB's official attache at the Slovak embassy and a second Russian intelligence official working in Bratislava under the cover of a diplomatic portfolio. (Sme, 9 Sep 97, p 1; FBIS-EEU-97-252)
Comment

Divide and discuss

Russia goes into the upcoming ministerial-level meeting of the Russian-NATO Permanent Joint Council with the ground extremely well-prepared. As had been feared, Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov managed to lure the nation representing the alliance (now Belgium) into a bear hug of bilateral talks before the council's session. As an added assurance, Primakov also met with the foreign minister of France, the NATO member most amenable to Russia's plans to turn the OSCE into a stronger security alliance.

It is now up to Belgium to demonstrate that it can effectively represent all 16 nations of the NATO alliance, and ignore goodies, such as the return of potentially-embarrassing prewar Socialist Party archives, that Moscow has dangled before it.

It is particularly important that the United States reassert itself before the talks begin, since Russia would like to discuss "out-of-area" issues such as the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. Belgium must be encouraged to press Russia on other "out-of-area" issues, such as accusations that Moscow has been aiding Iran's efforts to develop a medium-to-long-range missile. Turkey, a nation with much at stake in such a scenario, is, after all, a NATO member. Ankara will depend on Brussels to do the right thing.

Russian Federation: Political Parties and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

A new poll on the leading presidential candidates
1,600 Russians were polled on 1-4 August by the National Public Opinion Center on the popularity of various presidential candidates. First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov came in first with 18% of the vote with Communist Party chief Gennadi Zyuganov coming in second with 11%.

Former Security Council chief Aleksandr Lebed placed third with 9%, followed by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov with 5%. The fifth and sixth places were shared by the leaders of the Yabloko movement and the Liberal Democratic Party, Grigori Yavlinsky and Vladimir Zhirinovsky, with 4% each.

Some 36% of those polled said it would be best if the future president had experience of working on the Cabinet, while 33% wanted him to be a former local leader (Interfax, 0622 GMT, 12 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-224).

If Nemtsov faced off against Zyuganov -- conceivably in a second round of elections -- the first deputy prime minister would score 44% of the vote in August, compared to 49% in April, while Zyuganov's figure remained unchanged at 28%.

Nemtsov would beat Lebed with a vote of 38% versus 26%, the figures for April being 52% and 25% respectively.

A contest with Luzhkov would bring Nemtsov 37% of the vote in August, compared to 47% in April, while the mayor's result would have stayed at 24% since April (Interfax, 1210 GMT, 14 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-226).

*"Working Russia" claims Yeltsin is a CIA agent*

Working Russia movement leader Viktor Anpilov made the startling claim at a rally for Lenin. Anpilov called Yeltsin a "ram of counter-revolution." Incidentally, Aleksandr N. Yakovlev was similarly labelled. It is doubtful if Langley, VA is aware of their progeny, but it would explain where some of their budget ends up (Interfax, 1646 GMT, 19 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-231)
REGIONS

Relationship between center and regions continues to develop

The Russian president and Konstantin Titov, the governor of Samara Region, signed an agreement on the division of powers between the federal authorities and the regional government of Samara Region. President Yeltsin has developed the view that not all solutions to national problems need stem from Moscow (Mayak Radio Network, 1500 GMT, 1 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-213).

Indeed, the president has called on the Federal Assembly to draft appropriate legislation to clarify the responsibilities between the federal and regional or local authorities. If, and when, such legislation emerges -- and is passed -- the implications for the judicial system are significant. It is the experience of most if not all successful federal systems that the line delineating central and regional authority is often in dispute. A neutral and legitimate authority is needed to adjudicate such conflicts. Presidential fiat may fill in gaps in judicial competence for a while, but ultimately the solution must come from a de-personalized mechanism if the rule of law is to be constructed. This may take some time -- after all, legitimacy is built, not imposed (ITAR-TASS, 1738 GMT, 2 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-214).

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Dwyer Dennis and CDR Curtis Stevens

Defense ministry struggling to pay troops, defense plants

After months of military wage arrears, Defense Minister Igor Sergeev announced on 1 September that the 8.1 trillion ruble ($1.4 billion) debt to soldiers had been paid. "The president's decree has been completely carried out in regard to the payment of debts to the soldiers and ministry employees," he said. (Agence France-Presse, 1 Sep 97, 1030 PDT; clari.net) President Yeltsin had decreed in
July that military salaries be paid by 1 September. Sergeev's announcement comes only days after other defense and finance ministry officials expressed pessimism that the 1 September promise to make payments could be met. Other payments for another 5.5 trillion rubles ($944 million) for outstanding child assistance, food subsidies and similar pay has not yet been paid according to Defense Ministry spokesman Vyacheslav Serov. These other payments make up a large portion of military pay. Serov said money to make these other payments should come from the sale of state businesses.

Although the government may have caught up on payments to the troops, debts to many defense plants and their workers still have not been met. The defense ministry was still paying off its 1996 debt as of the beginning of September. One trade union official warned of a social explosion if defense debts are not paid. Staff at two of Russia's leading nuclear weapons design centers launched protest actions on 16 September in response to not being paid since May. All of these complaints of money woes coincide with the unveiling of the Russian military's newest tank, the Black Eagle, on 6 September during an arms show in Omsk, Siberia. (Monitor, 9 Sep 97; Agence France-Presse, 6, 16 Sep 97; clari.net)

**Military reform comes under fire from retired and active duty officers**

Many prominent retired officers have strongly denounced President Yel'tsin's plans to reform the military. Both Aleksandr Lebed, former national security advisor, and General Lev Rokhlin, chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee, have spoken out against Yel'tsin's planned reforms.

Speaking to the German paper Die Zeit, Lebed called for the restoration of wounded national honor, saying "since the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans know only too well where this wound can lead. The issue in Russia is the defeat of the Soviet Union in the cold war." (Die Zeit, 22 Aug 97, p 9; FBIS-SOV-97-252) General Rokhlin has been more active and is forming the Movement to Protect the Army, primarily an officer's movement comprised of active duty officers,
retired officers and workers in the defense industry. Rokhlin believes both the Duma and Yel'tsin have been inattentive to the military's pressing needs. Rokhlin says President Yel'tsin's policies are destroying the military. "With complete confidence I say that the Army, the defense industry, and military technology are hurtling to destruction and in the present circumstances there is no possibility of changing the situation." (NTV, 0800 GMT, 11 Sep 97 FBIS-SOV-97-254)

Rokhlin's actions came as the defense ministry decided to cut the financing of the military-industrial complex by 30% and to attempt the conversion of some defense plants to civilian production. Rokhlin's actions and Lebed's remarks have raised speculation of a military coup in some parts of the Russian media.

**Charges against officers publicized**

The Main Military Prosecutor's Office announced the names of 29 senior officers being investigated for allegations ranging from unlawful possession of real estate to embezzlement, bribery and the general category of abuse. (Komsomolskaya pravda, 6 Sep 97, p 1; FBIS-UMA-97-251)

**Plans for aviation group remain up in the air**

A plan to establish a Sukhoi Aviation Concern, blessed in May 1996 by President Yel'tsin, still has not taken root as the RF defense industry continues to creep along the road to reform. The concept consisted of creating a financial-industrial group (FIG) led by Sukhoi KB (Design Bureau) that would have the status as head executor of the defense order and would operate on a contract basis with the Su aircraft production plants. Running counter to the FIG approach is the 18 July directive of Boris Y. Nemtsov, first vice premier, to complete the creation by 1 September 1997 of the Sukhoi Aviation Military-Industrial Complex (AVPK). The result of the complex approach would be a loss of economic independence both on the foreign and domestic markets for each of the Su production facilities.

Both the Khabarovsk and Novosibirsk governors and Moscow Mayor Luzhkov, along with a group of aviation enterprises, have signed an appeal to Yel'tsin
supporting the creation of the FIG concern on grounds that it would "permit the fullest support of the combination of advantages of centralized management by the FIG Management Council and the initiative of each enterprise that is part of the association..."(Rabochaya tribuna, 13 Aug 97, p 2; FBIS-SOV-97-174-S)

**Arms exports on the increase**

In coverage concerning the recent dismissal of General Manager A. Kotelkin as head of the GK Rosvooruzheniye (State Company Russian Armaments), the significant increase in arms export earnings under his tenure was noteworthy. In 1994, the GK earned $1.7 billion. In 1995 and 1996, Rosvooruzheniye brought in around $2.8 billion and $3.4 billion respectively and current estimates for orders this year are nearly $8 billion. The company conducts approximately 95 percent of Russia's weapons exporting. The official reason for Kotelkin's dismissal is stated as organizational restructuring. (Delovoy mir, 22-25 Aug 97; FBIS-SOV-97-174-S)

As arms exports increase, the government is decreasing its projected defense spending. According to Economic Minister Urinson, the plan is to reduce the defense order at individual enterprises to 20-60 percent of their current portfolio with the target of making overall military spending 3.5 percent of the gross domestic product. (ITAR-TASS, 1910 GMT, 3 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246)

Defense Minister Sergeev announced that military hardware orders would be made optimal, stopping all purchases of outdated arms. "In Europe and America, only one type of a fighter is developed, simultaneously six (are developed) in Russia," Sergeev stated. Another reform effort is to make factories in the military industrial sector joint-stock companies. (ITAR-TASS, 1952 GMT, 3 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246)

Colonel-General Sitnov, chief of armaments of Russia's armed forces, gave further details at a meeting with the heads of defense enterprises of St.
Petersburg. After this year's budget reductions, only 18 trillion roubles, or enough "to really feed" one-third of the 2.7 million people working on defense orders, is available by his estimates. The reductions will result in removing 550 enterprises from direct defense production orders and releasing 600,000 workers to civilian production. The approximately 1670 defense industrial research and development sectors and the related 2700 manufacturing enterprises will also be reduced to around 230 and 300 respectively. (ITAR-TASS, 1627 GMT, 4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248)

Such significant reductions in military spending will undoubtedly increase the reliance on arms export of both older weapons and of the latest technologies, the latter to insure that the Russian defense industry maintains a modern production capability and that products remain marketable in the highly competitive arms sale arena. Because older weapons usually mean lower prices, we can expect to see a major push in volume sales, thus flooding the market with cheap, low-tech but still effective, conventional arms.

**Plans for border troops include housing, reorganization**

The border guards' housing problems are being alleviated partially through local financial aid. Andrey Nikolaev, director of the Federal Border Service (FBS), announced that the Moscow mayor's office has provided the FBS 10 billion roubles to provide housing for 98 percent of the border troops serving in Moscow. Approximately 100-120 apartments will be built next year. (ITAR-TASS, 1341 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251)

Yel'tsin's approval of the FBS reorganization plan to establish eight regional directorates controlling six border districts and three border groups was revealed by Nikolaev at a press conference on 13 September 1997. The zones of each directorate are to mirror the territories of the military districts of the Russian armed forces. Nikolaev also said that the transition of the FBS bodies and troops to a professional basis would continue with the goal of having 60 percent of FBS
servicemen as "soldiers on contract" by the year 2000. (ITAR-TASS, 1021 GMT, 13 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-256)

Nikolaev calls for extension of mandate in Tajikistan

The mandate for CIS joint peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan should be extended according to an Interfax interview with Nikolaev. The Council of Commanders of Border Troops of CIS member states, after meeting on 5 September, decided to request the presidents of CIS member countries to extend the peacekeeping forces until the end of 1998. Nikolaev said the council noted that the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border remained difficult, yet credited the CIS joint peacekeeping force for bringing it under control. (Interfax, 0813 GMT, 6 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-249)

Russian border troops killed two intruders at 00:30 on 14 September in one of the sectors of the Kalaikhum border detachment on the Tajik-Afghan border. The forced border-crossing attempt was supported by small arms fire from the Afghan side. Border guards returned fire and silenced the weapon emplacements. No losses among the border troops were reported. (ITAR-TASS, 0537 GMT, 14 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-257)

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

New Russian CIS cooperation minister discusses objectives

Anatoli Adamishin, Russia's new minister for cooperation among CIS states, made it clear that his top priority will be to "stand up for Russian national rights" in CIS affairs and councils. This is not a change in practice for the ministry, formerly headed by nationalist Amman Tuleev, but it is a change in stated policy. Previously, Moscow publicly advocated a more cooperative and pluralistic approach to commonwealth relations. Adamishin also indicated that he will direct
the ministry to "work on the Baltic states." Apparently, the new minister feels these nations should be part of the Commonwealth (ITAR-TASS, 2 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-245).

**Border guard commanders meet**

Russian Federal Border Guard Service Director Nikolaev chaired a meeting of the CIS Council of Commanders of Border Troops on 6 September (ITAR-TASS; FBIS-UMA-97-249). Only the Azeri and Turkmen commanders did not attend. The council forged several draft agreements and signed 33 separate documents which will be forwarded to the Council of Heads of State for approval. Included in the work was a draft agreement on cooperation in border control at checkpoints with non-CIS countries, a draft agreement on financing the creation of an interstate system for information exchange, and a draft agreement on information interaction between the Council of CIS Border Guard Commanders and the Council of CIS Interior Ministries. The council also recommended the creation of a special border guard reserve unit to be used in the case of crises and recommended that the Heads of State extend the implementation of "stabilization measures" on the Tajik-Afghan Border until the end of 1998. General Nikolaev also supported the extension of the CIS peacekeepers' mandate in Tajikistan through 1998 (Interfax, 6 September, 1997; FBIS-SOV-97-249).

If these recommendations are approved by the Heads of State, they will add to the ever increasing power Nikolaev and his border guards have accumulated. The addition of a mobile reserve force and the expanded command and control provided by an improved, linked information exchange system will help transform a defensive guard unit into a much more capable military force (on par with many defense ministry forces). The more the Border Guards integrate with the CIS Interior Ministers, the more both resemble their pre-1992 Soviet precursors.

**CIS interior ministers gather**
The Council of CIS Interior Ministers held a meeting in Azerbaijan on 10-12 September. The main subject of the session was a discussion of how to better fight against organized crime. The Russian chairman of the council summed up the results by commenting that the establishment of a new joint bureau will "simplify the system of seeking out wanted persons" in the CIS (Turan, 12 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-255).

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Mark Jones

BELARUS

New Belarusian minister for CIS affairs named
President Lukashenka appointed Valyantsin Vyalichka, the former ambassador extraordinaire and plenipotentiary to Latvia and Finland, as the new minister for CIS affairs (Belapan, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-254). It is interesting to note that now both Russia and Belarus -- the two countries pushing hardest for further CIS integration -- have CIS cooperation ministers who are somehow connected to the Baltic states.

Belarusian Soros foundation closes
The Soros foundation announced that it has ceased operations in Belarus because of the negative political environment there. Belarus is the only ex-communist country where the organization has closed its doors. The foundation made the decision after the government froze its bank accounts, levied three million dollars in "politically motivated" fines, expelled its American director, Peter Byrne, and after a presidential decree undercut the foundation's tax exempt status. (Belapan, 3 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246).

Relations with NATO soften
Foreign Minister Ivan Antanovich seemed to be whistling a new political tune with respect to NATO recently. After weeks of espousing the idea that Belarusian defense is inextricably linked to Russia, characterizing NATO as the enemy of the Slavic people, and threatening to redeploy nuclear weapons if NATO goes forward with plans to enlarge, Antanovich declared that Belarus' defense policy "will depend on the country's relations with NATO." The foreign minister indicated that he wants to sign a document with the alliance similar to those signed by Ukraine and Russia. In exchange for non-aggression guarantees, Antanovich said Belarus "will reaffirm its nuclear-free status, [pursue] constructive interaction under the Partnership for Peace program, [and] assist NATO in evolving into a universal European security structure" (Belapan, 9 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-252). These remarks came shortly after President Lukashenka also adopted a somewhat softer stance on NATO. Well, if you can't beat them at least make them think you are joining them.

UKRAINE

Command-post exercise a success

Ukraine conducted a command and staff exercise code named "Clear Skies" recently. The defense ministry noted that this was the first such exercise conducted by the Ukrainian armed forces since their creation. More than 33,000 servicemen and 100 aircraft from the Air Defense Force, Air Force, Navy, Ground Forces, military districts, and Border Protection Committee participated in the maneuvers. One of the objectives of the exercise was to study the possibility of creating a national integrated air defense system. As of yet, there has been no comment from the commander of the Russian and CIS Integrated Air Defense Forces. Ukraine has signed agreements which obligate it to participate in the CIS Integrated Air Defense System, but this exercise seems to indicate that Ukraine intends to forge ahead with developing an independent force, possibly to protect it one day from westbound aircraft (Interfax, 3 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246).

Joint military operations completed
In other military news, paratroopers from Ukraine, Poland, and Great Britain participated in joint exercises in an area 400 km south of Kiev. The operations revolved around a scenario where the troops were called on to establish control in an area of ethnic conflicts (PAP, 15 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-258). This, of course, was the original concept of the Sea Breeze '97 exercise, but this time no pressure was applied from Moscow or Sevastopol to change the scenario. Apparently, Russia and Ukrainian communists feel the need to protest against such exercises only when the United States is involved.

**EU offers assistance for Chernobyl**

In two separate actions, the European Union took steps to help Ukraine solve the Chernobyl dilemma. First, the EU announced a plan to help construct additional nuclear power generating units at two existing reactors so that Chernobyl may be shut down completely by 2000 (Interfax, 6 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-249). Second, the EU granted $100 million to clean up and strengthen the concrete sarcophagus built around reactor number 4 after the accident (4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248).

**Rumors of impeachment surface**

The Ukrainian Parliamentary Committee on Legal Issues voted to suggest that impeachment proceedings be started against President Leonid Kuchma. The committee charged the president abused his power by refusing to sign a law on local administrations even though the parliament twice voted to override his veto (Intelnews, 14 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-257). President Kuchma and his supporters in parliament are calling the proposal laughable.

**MOLDOVA**

**Ministry expresses concern over Dniester celebration**

The Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the official representatives of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine for participating in the Tiraspol-organized celebrations of the seventh anniversary of the unrecognized Dniester Republic.
The ministry complained that "such actions complicate the situation in the region [and will] allow the Tiraspol leadership to create illusions among local residents concerning a possible recognition of the statehood of that self-proclaimed region" (Infotag, 3 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-246).

Dniester leader meets Russian officials in Moscow
Igor Smirnov, leader of the breakaway Dniester Republic, met with some of Russia's top-ranking officials while visiting Moscow for the city's 850th anniversary celebration. Smirnov met Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Deputy Premier Valeri Serov, Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov, and Belarus President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. According to Basapress (12 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-255), Smirnov said he discussed political and economic issues, "particularly, the credit Russia reportedly promised to give Dniester." If these reports are true, it would mean that Moscow is not following its stated policy of treating Moldova as a single country. Favoring Tiraspol with special economic deals and treating Smirnov like a head of state amounts to a declaration of sovereignty for the breakaway region.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy

ARMENIA
Renewed stress over Karabakh in the aftermath of Russian alliance
The conclusion of the Russian-Armenian military alliance (See Editorial Digest No. 16), which formalized the transfer of Russian military equipment to Armenia and bound Russia to defend Armenia, has emboldened the Armenian side to seek greater gains in Karabakh. The most belligerent comments came on 11 September when Samvel Babayan, the defense minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, told an interviewer that "any renewal of fighting is completely possible" and since no solution has been found at the negotiating table "If there is war, then it will
resolve the problem." If Azerbaijan did not have allies in the OSCE who supported its territorial integrity, the Azeri leadership "might think about the possibility of losing another couple of districts tomorrow, then they might decide they have to make concessions." (Noyan Tapan, 1500 GMT, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-255)

The recent electoral success of Nagorno-Karabakh's new president and former foreign minister, Arkadi Ghukasian, has been interpreted in Yerevan as a mandate for an uncompromising stance in negotiations with Azerbaijan. According to the Yerevan paper, Respublika Armenia, Karabakh should not cede to Azerbaijan any of the Azeri districts it occupies, it should reject any type of "vertical ties" to Azerbaijan, and the OSCE should concentrate on facilitating direct Azerbaijani-Karabakh negotiations. (Respublika Armenia, 6 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251) This strategy constitutes a complete abandonment of the promising set of compromises that were developed during the last cycle of OSCE-sponsored talks. In May and June the OSCE mediators proposed a plan under which Karabakh would return the Azeri areas it occupies and would be formally part of Azerbaijan. By concluding the military alliance with Armenia, Russia has seriously undermined the mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk group, of which it is cochairman.

The speaker of the Lebanese parliament, Nabih Berri, told reporters in Yerevan that his country's parliament would recognize Nagorno-Karabakh if its people voted for independence in a UN-sponsored referendum. (Interfax, 1712 GMT, 14 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-257) Although the provision of UN involvement renders the actualization of this offer highly improbable, the suggestion that foreign states may recognize Nagorno-Karabakh puts even greater pressure on Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani leaders have protested the conclusion of the military alliance to the Russian leadership and have made their apprehensions about Moscow's participation as a mediator on the OSCE Minsk group known. When President
Aliev canceled his trip to Moscow for its 850th anniversary, he explained that "the military aspects of the Russian-Armenian treaty signed last week aroused doubts in Baku about the sincerity of the Kremlin's intentions as a neutral mediator in the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict." (Interfax, 0725 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248)

AZERBAIJAN

Russian plans for a bypass pipeline are not solely aimed at Chechnya

During the Russian-Chechen negotiations over the tariff for the Chechen portion of the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline, First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov threatened to build an alternative pipeline bypassing Chechnya. Even after the Chechen delegation agreed to the lower tariff rate, Russian officials continued to insist on building a pipeline that circumvents Chechnya. According to recent announcements, the Russians are planning to construct two pipelines over their territory to carry Caspian oil. (NTV, 1000 GMT, 15 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-258)

The stimulus for these announcements comes from the Azeri president, Geyder Aliev's statement that he would like to see the major pipeline go through Turkey. (ITAR-TASS, 1634 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251)

According to the established timetable the AIOC will start to export "early oil," or small amounts of oil (five million tons per year) in October along two routes, one through Russia and the other through Georgia. By the year 2000 the oil flow from the three Azeri oil wells in question (40 million tons per year) will exceed the capabilities of either pipeline and a new vastly larger pipeline, the "main" pipeline, will be required. By that time, the flow from the Azeri wells will be linked to flow from Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field, creating a single artery for the lion's share of Caspian oil wealth. (ITAR-TASS, 1650 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-248)

Although President Aliev has stated that he prefers the route through Turkey to Ceyhan, several other routes are also under consideration. Aliev appointed a committee to study the alternatives, negotiate with the governments in question, and make a proposal to the Azeri government. (Azerbaijan, 6 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-
It is estimated that the final decision will be made next year. Russia's statement that it intends to build a new, larger pipeline, circumventing Chechnya, constitutes an opening bid in the contest over the "main" pipeline route.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN
Mufti Negmatzoda and sons are released
Tajik law enforcement officials were able to secure the release of Mufti Amonullo Negmatzoda and his younger brother from Rezvon Sodirov on 2 September. Sodirov took the mufti's sons hostage last July and, at the end of August, he kidnapped the mufti and his younger brother (ITAR-TASS, 0424 GMT, 2 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-245), after luring them to a secret meeting outside Dushanbe (presumably for the purpose of discussing the liberation of the mufti's sons). Sodirov's goal is to force the government to release his brother, Bahrom Sodirov, from prison (Bahrom Sodirov was arrested last March -- see Editorial Digest for March 1997). Law enforcement officers began conducting a search for Rezvon Sodirov on 1 September, and were able to arrest a number of his supporters in an area 9 km east of Dushanbe. Sodirov subsequently decided to set the mufti and his brother free on the condition that the Tajik government release his brother Bahrom and those of his supporters who were arrested on 1 September. He continues to hold 18 people hostage (including the mufti's two sons). There are reports that Sodirov is protected by as many as 60 armed men (Interfax, 0630 GMT, 2 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-245).

UTO leader, NRC's opposition delegates finally arrive in Dushanbe
United Tajik Opposition (UTO) leader Said Abdullo Nuri arrived in Dushanbe on 11 September, accompanied by 25 bodyguards, other leading UTO personalities (with the exception of Haji Akbar Turajonzoda), and the UTO's delegates to the
National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) (Interfax, 1252 GMT, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-254). Mr. Nuri was appointed chairperson of the 26-member NRC during the inter-Tajik peace negotiations, which were concluded in June. This is his and the other UTO representatives’ first visit to Dushanbe since 1992 (the Tajik opposition was driven out of the capital in the winter of 1992 by supporters of the old Communist government), and the first time since 1993 that the opposition parties have been legally permitted on Tajik territory. In accordance with the inter-Tajik peace agreement, the government officially granted legal status to the Tajik opposition parties on 7 September, in time for the arrival of Mahmadsharif Himmatzoda, chairman of the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan (IMT) (Interfax, 1018 GMT, 7 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-250).

Mr. Nuri’s arrival in Dushanbe was delayed numerous times, most recently due to a disagreement with the Tajik government over the size of his accompanying entourage. Mr. Nuri had agreed to attend Tajikistan's Independence Day celebrations on 9 September (at President Rahmonov’s invitation) and was expected to arrive on 8 September with a delegation of top-ranking military and political UTO officials, as well as the 13 NRC representatives and 40 bodyguards (ITAR-TASS, 0646 GMT, 4 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-247). The first contingent of UTO troops (whose function is to provide security for Mr. Nuri and the 13 NRC delegates from the opposition) arrived in Dushanbe on 5 September from Chorsada (located approximately 145 km east of Dushanbe, near Tavildora). Boris Kuleshov, deputy chief of the CIS joint peacekeeping forces' staff, was in charge of ensuring that the 206 UTO troops were safely transported to Dushanbe (Interfax, 1235 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-248), and UN military observers were also present to supervise the operation (ITAR-TASS, 0932 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-248). The UTO battalion will be subordinate to the Tajik Defense Ministry and will soon be joined by an additional 254 troops still stationed in Afghanistan (Interfax, 1235 GMT, 5 Sep 97; FBIS-UMA-97-248).
However, on the day of Mr. Nuri’s scheduled arrival in Dushanbe, ITAR-TASS reported that due to a last-minute disagreement over the size of the UTO leader’s entourage, Mr. Nuri had once again delayed his departure for Dushanbe. The Tajik government and the UTO leadership blame each other for the delay. According to an anonymous high-ranking government official, Mr. Nuri had originally agreed to permit only NRC delegates to join his escort (ITAR-TASS, 1133 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251). Zafar Saidov, President Rahmonov’s press secretary, also stated that the size of the UTO leader’s accompanying delegation exceeded the previously established limit, and that Mr. Nuri’s demands for security were unreasonable and violated the spirit of the inter-Tajik peace process (Radio Tajikistan Network, 0800 GMT, 9 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-252).

According to IMT Chairman Mahmadsharif Himmatzoda, however, it was the Tajik government which suddenly decided that the size of Mr. Nuri’s delegation was unacceptable. Furthermore, Tajik government officials reportedly not only set new restrictions on the number of people to accompany Mr. Nuri, but refused to permit certain members of his delegation to enter Tajikistan at all, including Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, who although not a member of the NRC, is the deputy leader of the UTO (ITAR-TASS, 1133 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251).

These new tensions between the Tajik government and UTO leadership were further complicated by a number of bomb blasts in the center of Dushanbe, as well as at the hotel where Mr. Nuri and his companions were to be quartered (the Hotel Vakhsh), and along the route that their convoy had planned to follow on its way from the airport to the hotel. The government has blamed the explosions on an unidentified "third force," whose goal is to prevent the peace process from being implemented (NTV, 1000 GMT, 10 Sep 97; FBIS-TOT-97-253).

In spite of all these obstacles, however, Said Abdullo Nuri finally arrived in Dushanbe on 11 September with a 64-member escort, including the 13 NRC
delegates, 25 bodyguards, and a number of other UTO leaders. Haji Akbar Turajonzoda did not accompany Mr. Nuri, although the Tajik government had rescinded its ban on his presence (Interfax, 1252 GMT, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-254). Mr. Nuri and President Rahmonov held a closed-door meeting the following day and afterwards conducted a joint press conference, in order to emphasize their cooperation and mutual dedication to carrying out the terms of peace agreement (Interfax, 0926 GMT, 12 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-255).

The National Reconciliation Commission began its work in Dushanbe on 15 September, at which four sub-commissions were set up (two are headed by UTO delegates, and two by government delegates) to deal with the individual military, political, and legal aspects of the peace agreement, as well as the repatriation of Tajik refugees (ITAR-TASS, 1741 GMT, 15 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-258). The NRC's foremost tasks are to form a coalition government within the next one and one-half years, to prepare the way for new parliamentary and presidential elections, and to integrate the UTO's armed units into Tajikistan's national defense forces. The list of government ministries which the opposition hopes to be put in charge of includes: the Foreign Ministry, the Justice Ministry or Prosecutor General's Office, the Education Ministry, the Ministry for Economy or External Economic Relations, the national television ministry, and any of the three power ministries (ITAR-TASS, 1249 GMT, 16 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-259)

Comment
Although it is certainly a positive sign that the National Reconciliation Commission has finally convened in Dushanbe, its battles are far from over. The distribution of the ministries between the opposition and President Rahmonov's government has and will continue to raise a great deal of controversy. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the Tajik government has granted legal status to the opposition parties and President Rahmonov's proud statement that there is no longer an "opposition" in Tajikistan, there are still many indications that the government has not yet fully accepted the UTO as a legitimate actor in
Tajikistan's political arena. When crowds gathered at the airport and in front of the Hotel Vakhsh on 8 September in order to welcome Mr. Nuri's entourage, they were dispersed by law enforcement officers (ITAR-TASS, 1133 GMT, 8 Sep 97; FBIS-SOV-97-251). In our society, at least, it would seem only natural for the UTO leaders' supporters to turn out in order to welcome their return to Dushanbe after five years, but apparently Tajik officials viewed this phenomenon as a cause for alarm. This raises concerns about how the Tajik government will react to future gatherings and rallies in support of opposition leaders.

The recent spate of bombings is also very disturbing. The government has thus far insisted that the explosions are the work of some terrorist third force which is opposed to the inter-Tajik peace process, but there are many members of both the current administration and of the armed forces who are dissatisfied with the terms of the peace agreement and who do not wish to share power with the UTO. There have even been speculations that the bombings are being deliberately engineered by the Tajik government in order to prevent the NRC from meeting and doing its work.

**Taleban accuses Tajik government of military intervention in Afghanistan**

On 10 September, Taleban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar ordered the Tajik government to return five combat jet aircraft, which he said General Abdumalik (head of the anti-Taleban near Mazar-i-Sharif) had commanded pilots to fly to Tajikistan to protect them from the Taleban's forces, which began advancing toward Mazar-i-Sharif on 9 September. On 11 September, Taleban spokesman Syed Mohammad Haqqani further accused the Tajik government of intervening in Afghanistan's domestic affairs by permitting bombing raids to take place from Tajik territory against Taleban positions in the northern suburbs of Mazar-i-Sharif. Haqqani ordered the Tajik government to cease its interference immediately, warning of serious consequences if the bombing raids do not stop (AFP, 1040 GMT, 11 Sep 97; FBIS-NES-97-254, 11 Sep 97).