Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

New edict on presidential chancellery

On April 9, President Yeltsin issued a new statute on the structure and duties of his Chancellery, which appears to complete the process of incorporating the once-independent position of First Adviser into the general presidential staff organization. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 17 Apr 97) According to the edict, the Chancellery is an "autonomous subdivision" of the president's staff with the right to establish its own administrations and departments as needed. The head of the Chancellery will have the status of deputy chief of staff and is appointed by the president upon the nomination of the chief of staff. Although the edict does not stipulate who will head the new Chancellery, the most likely candidate is First Deputy Chief of Staff Yuri Yarov, who coordinated the flow of paperwork to and from the president during his convalescence from heart surgery.

The primary task of the Chancellery is "to provide documentation services for the activity of the Russian Federation President." While this role puts the Chancellery at the heart of the decree writing and promulgation process, it does not appear to clarify the procedure for the instigation of decrees: In drafting presidential instructions, the Chancellery is to coordinate with "the leadership of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff and the Russian Federation president's aides, advisers, and consultants and the relevant autonomous subdivisions." While the head of the Chancellery is instructed to submit any draft statutes on the Chancellery or its subdivisions to the chief of staff for approval before they are confirmed by presidential edict, no mention is made of draft decrees on other issues. It remains unclear therefore, if the procedure established by Chubais,
whereby all decrees are reviewed by the chief of staff before sent to the president, remains in effect.

RF PRESIDENT
SECURITY SERVICES
Post-Korzhakov guard reforms?
Obshchaya gazeta (No. 15, 17-23 Apr 97) attempts to examine the status of the Presidential Security Service, which became a subdivision of the Federal Protective Service (FSO) following the ouster of Aleksandr Korzhakov. While details on the Services, under the direction of Anatoli Kuznetsov and Yuri Krapivin, are admittedly "scanty," we do learn that 120 people have been dismissed for "political reasons." (This number would include the President's "astrologer," General Rogozin.) Any significant new recruits to the service are scrutinized by Kremlin Deputy Chief of Staff (for personnel) Yevgeni Savostyanov. Savostyanov was previously head of the Moscow Federal Security Service Administration until a much-publicized run-in with Korzhakov's guards outside of the MOST Group headquarters.

As for the structure of the Presidential Security Service, there are currently five divisions led by adjutants: three are assigned to the president, two guard his wife. Despite changes in personnel and structure however, Obshchaya gazeta points out that there has been no diminution in the scope of authority of the Federal Protective Service, which can still conduct surveillances, wiretaps, and other intelligence-gathering functions. With these powers still intact, the FSO continues the duplication of security responsibilities with the MVD, FSB, FAPSI and Procuracy—all of which persist in a struggle for supremacy along various fronts within the intelligence and security services array.

RF GOVERNMENT
Nemtsov's memoirs barely scandalous
The publication of excerpts from First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov's memoirs, "The Provincial," reveal mainly positive impressions of leading political and cultural figures. (Obshchaya gazeta, No 14, 10-16 Apr 97) While Nemtsov does call President Yeltsin "a veritable Russian tsar," he qualifies it by adding that he is a "good" tsar. The description of Yeltsin's behavior during the August 1991 coup provides a fit characterization for his entire rule: "he would issue commands, insufficiently considered, at times, as to who should do what, then sink into a kind of melancholy, then come round once again and begin to direct the defenses." Likewise his depiction of the relationship between Yeltsin and Korzhakov proves acute: "Korzhakov, who was constantly by Yeltsin's side, was not chief of security. He was a 'way of life'."

Nemtsov views his new boss, Chernomyrdin, as more of a "business manager" than politician, but he credits him with an openness to new ideas and a strong devotion to Yeltsin. Nemtsov's remarks about his co-first deputy prime minister are unlikely to cause any workplace friction either. He finds Chubais "an honest and incorruptible person." "Chubais is one of the most gifted politicians of Russia." The memoirs likewise hold praise for Gaidar and Nemtsov's "comrade" Yavlinsky. Perhaps after his stint in the government a revised version will appear.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger

Talbott's 'pre-prenegotiations' again upstage Albright-Primakov talks...
Arriving in Moscow ahead of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, deputy secretary Strobe Talbott again made concessions prior to the pre-negotiations upon which his boss was about to embark.

Talbott and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov were meeting, the Russian minister said, to smooth the way to "a full-fledged binding document on
Russia-NATO relations (to be) drafted, as far as possible, before May 27," the scheduled date of a NATO meeting in Paris. Moscow seeks a presence at the Paris talks as evidence of its clout.

"The decisions of the Russian-U.S. Helsinki summit on the non-proliferation of the NATO infrastructure and the adaptation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) have to be put on a practical footing," a Russian Foreign Ministry report quoted Primakov as saying. (Interfax, 30 Apr 97)

... while Clinton foreign policy praised by Russian hard-liners
Meanwhile, U.S President Bill Clinton was praised by Moscow's hard-left newspaper Trud for announcing General Wesley Clark's candidacy for the post of NATO supreme allied commander in Europe. Clark, the paper claimed, had proved during his work on the (now-unraveling) Dayton accords for Bosnia that he "knows how to view international problems not only from a purely military perspective." Clark's candidacy showed that Clinton would take Russian concerns about NATO expansion seriously and that among American foreign policy elites "the President is currently a counterbalance to those forces which want to write Russia off as a great power and do whatever the United States wants in Europe with no regard for Russia's 'impotent growling.' " (Trud, 30 Apr 97)

We're all multipolarists now
President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin and Chairman of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zemin on April 23 signed a Joint Russian-Chinese Declaration about a "Multipolar World and the Formation of a New International Order."

"The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China" will cooperate "to develop relations of equitable and trustful partnership for the purpose of strategic interaction in the 21st century," the declaration said.
The declaration and comments surrounding Zemin's visit to Moscow were similar in spirit to complaints about the West's hegemony that were heard during last month's agreement between Russia and Iran. (See ISCIPI Editorial Digest: Russian Foreign Relations, Volume II, Number 7).

"A diversity of political, economic and cultural development of all countries is becoming a norm, the role played by the forces favoring peace and large-scale international cooperation is being enhanced," the declaration said. "An ever greater number of countries are coming to understand that what they need is mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit but not confrontation and conflicts."

(ITAL-R-TASS, 23 Apr 97)

Russia woos Slovakia

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, visiting Bratislava on April 28, signed an agreement on military and technical cooperation between Russia and the Slovak Republic. The agreement specifies that neither of the parties to the agreement will, without a written approval by the other party, sell or pass onto other countries arms, military hardware, or technical documentation for their manufacture.

The agreement would harm Slovakia's chances to enter NATO by binding the republic to Russian arms manufacturers, according to Igor Cibula, once the eminence grise behind Slovak premier Vladimir Meciar but now advising the opposition Democratic Union.

The Slovak foreign ministry said the agreement was routine and similar to deals Moscow had struck with Paris and Berlin. But unlike larger Western nations, Cibula said, Slovakia could not afford such close ties. "There is a fundamental difference in Germany and France being such strong partners for Russia that
agreements of this type do not have such an impact on their arms industry and, above all, their exports, as they do on Slovakia," Cibula said.

Jan Langos, leader of the opposition Democratic Party and former Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior, said the agreement "makes Slovakia an economic and military satellite of the RF." (Sme, 28 Apr 97)

Comment
The pre-empting Primakov
Give Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov this much credit—he is no snob. A less flexible apparatchik might find it beneath his dignity to start negotiations with counterparts beneath him in rank, then work his way up to his diplomatic equals and then, finally, foreign heads of state. But Primakov clearly finds the "personal chemistry" he enjoys with Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to be the catalyst he needs to erode positions taken at a higher level.

Somewhere between the Helsinki summit and last week's "closed door" meeting between Talbott and Primakov, the Russian "voice, but not a veto" over NATO expansion has, thanks to Primakov's tenacity, become both a linkage to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and a Russia-NATO agreement that will likely be "binding."

The Russian Foreign Ministry's tight-lipped report of the meeting did not account for why issues on which no formal agreement had been reached now needed a "practical footing." Nor did it explain why the United States seemed in such a hurry to get Russia to Paris by May 27, given that her attendance was thought to be a diplomatic prize to be earned, not hastily packaged and given away.

In an act of remarkable ingratitude, the Russian Foreign Ministry then impugned Talbott's reputation by implying that he had a loose tongue. In the closed-door meeting, the report said, Talbott "informed (Primakov) about the approaches
Washington is thinking of. Russian and U.S. experts were told to consider various options." (Interfax, 30 Apr 97)

**Russian Federation: Political Parties and Legislative Branch**

By Michael Thurman

**Duma claims that Russian agriculture is in critical condition**

The resolution says that the Nizhniy Novgorod method of agricultural reform, which was proposed by the government as a model, is not efficient. An increase of industrial prices has resulted in the bankruptcy of over 70 percent of agricultural organizations. The gross agricultural production, including meat, grain and milk, was halved. Some 18 million hectares of arable lands were withdrawn from circulation. More than 50 percent of food is imported.

It must be noted that although the change in Russian agriculture is considerable, the effects on the average person are unclear. As private sales fill in the holes of the state distribution system, the official numbers become increasingly irrelevant. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Mar 97)

**Federatsiya newspaper closes**

The proposal by the Russian State Committee for the Press agreed with the Russian State Committee for the Management of State Property and the Russian Ministry of the Economy to liquidate the state-run newspaper. The State Committee for the Management of State Property is to register the transfer of the property of the liquidated state enterprise to the balance sheet of the editorial board of the journal Rossiyskaya federatsiya. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 18 Mar 97)

**The Constitutional Court on the taxation powers of the regions**
The Russian Constitutional Court recently explained that the Federation's regions had no right to invent their own taxes. They are allowed to levy only the taxes that are stipulated by the federal legislation. No regional power of taxation exists. The decision was in response to the appeals of the Komi Republic, Altay Territory, Irkutsk, Volgograd and Vladimir regions, which argued that the Federal Assembly's "exhaustive list of taxes, which could be levied by the subjects of the Russian Federation on their respective territories" was unconstitutional.

The Constitutional Court noted that the regions could "independently decide" whether to put into effect a tax permitted by the Federal Assembly. Moreover, a regional tax, the verdict says, means only a detailed version of the general federal principles of taxation.

The issue of regional taxation and other sources of local revenue are of extreme importance in an era when the central authorities cannot, or will not, provide sufficient funding for the regions. This ruling sees the regions as administrators of the central will, however this 'logic' is increasingly unrealistic. The regions, partly through the indifference of the center, are becoming increasingly autonomous. Therefore, as the financial needs of the regions increase, or the source of federal funding decreases, the regions will inevitably find some way of acquiring the needed cash. (ITAR-TASS, 21 Mar 97).

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Lt. Col. Cathy Dreher and CDR John G. Steele

**53% of budget funding received**

The Russian Defense Ministry says it has received only about 53% of its budgeted funding in the first quarter of 1997. The funds that were received were used for wages, food, and fuel—no money was left for training or equipment maintenance. (RFE/RL Newsline, 23 Apr 97)
General Petr Deinekin, commander of the Russian Air Force, has suggested that the separate Russian services (Air Defense Forces, Strategic Rocket Forces, and Military Space Forces) be unified under the Air Force.

Comment
In times of downsizing these proposals are fairly routine. Arguments in favor have to do with economies of scale and bureaucratic efficiency. Arguments against would cite the obvious attempt to increase the power and prestige of the "gaining" service. These reorganizations are often perceived as "zero-sum" games where the loss of one organization is necessarily the loss of another. The proposal is unlikely to go anywhere—particularly since the Strategic Rocket Forces are arguably in a far more powerful bureaucratic position, and are reportedly actually being paid on a regular basis—a sure sign of governmental favor in the Russia of today.

Treaty support uneven
The Chief of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces, General Igor Sergeyev, publicly supported the START II accord (as yet unrated by the Duma), and called for a follow-on START III agreement. The Duma "postponed" ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention until autumn of 1997. (Monitor, 24 Apr 97)

Comment
It appears from press reports that the military and the Yel'tsin government support on-going arms control efforts, but the Duma is attempting to lever cooperation in this arena to influence NATO expansion and other initiatives. The Duma rhetoric concerning these topics has been reactionary, nationalistic and anti-West/U.S. It is small consolation that the Duma wields so little real day-to-day power. Here, at least, they can dig in their heels and make it stick—it also provides a convenient excuse for governmental inaction.

Russian military continues to decline
The general disrepair and turmoil within the ranks of the Russian military continue. The situation seems to be spiraling out of control with little hope of stopping. Russian troops are not being paid for months on end, foodstuffs are inadequate and they are starving. Officers are resigning because they have nowhere to live, no money and no food to feed their families. Simultaneously weapons are being stolen and sold on the black market and military facilities are falling into greater states of dilapidation, even some facilities which house chemical and nuclear weapons. Despite the terrible plight of Russia's military, however, elite forces are in better shape, her R & D expenditures continue and rates of crime and graft in the upper ranks of the military grow. (Sovetskaya rossiya, 15 Apr 97)

**Chemical weapons a critical problem**

In a 1993 convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, it became known that Russia had the largest arsenal in the world, some 40,000 agents. These arsenals of agents have been stockpiled for decades with documents attesting to their existence and testing as early as the 1930s. None of these weapons has been destroyed. Not only does Russia lack the facility to destroy them but, worse yet, the will to do so seems to be lacking. Sixty plus years of storing these chemical agents is too long for safety's sake and, given the deterioration of facilities in Russia, the prospect is terrifying. Washington D.C. is far too quiet on any of these issues and world-wide attention is certainly warranted. More and more, Russia begs the question "are we our brother's keeper?" If we want peace and safety in the world, the answer better be "yes, with offerings of gifts other than money." (NTV, 18 Apr 97).

**Community crime database created**

Interestingly enough the constantly escalating rate of crime in the former Soviet republics is forcing the special services to determine ways to work together. A joint crime data bank is being established with each of the participants—the 12 services—receiving equal terms. A trial run is already showing its effectiveness.
The data bank comprises "open information" available to all participants as well as "operational information" which precludes third party access. What information is collected? Data on organized crime, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and nonproliferation of nuclear components. (Moskovskiy komsomolets, 17 Apr 97).

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Mark Jones

The rift widens
Cracks continue to deepen in the foundation of the CIS. Ironically, those whose job it is to ensure cooperation are the very ones most responsible for the rift. Ivan Zayets, deputy chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Council Commission of Foreign Affairs and Ties with the CIS, told reporters from Khreshchatyk on 12 April that in his opinion, "Ukraine should secede from all the CIS structures in which it participates." He went on to say that his country was in essence not a member of the Commonwealth now, and claimed that "every new day and year proves than an organism like the [CIS] is useless and has no future." He attributed the organization's problems to the fundamental difference in interpretation of what the Commonwealth is supposed to be. In particular, according to Zayets, "Russia sees in this assembly a mechanism for reintegration, and a mechanism for reconstructing the Soviet Union, Ukraine regards the CIS as a mechanism for civilized separation."

Zayets' Russian counterpart, Aman Tuleyev, is similarly unhappy with the state of CIS cooperation. In a 15 April interview in Selskaya Zhizn, Tuleyev blasted many member states for trying to form new alliances within the CIS, for looking "more actively to the west," and for pushing ahead with programs designed to increase independence from Russia. He reserved special mention for Ukraine, which he claims is pursuing an "anti-Russian policy." He went on to insist that Ukraine repay its $2.5 billion "debt" to Russia and asserted that Kiev is "literally bursting
to join NATO." More ominously, Tuleyev remarked that "if present generations of Russians and Ukrainians ... are unable to reunite today, the rising generation, educated from the new textbooks and brought up to consider Russia an enemy, will never unite."

Additional evidence of the CIS split can be seen in the number of high-level meetings which don't include representatives from Moscow. On 22 April, Iprinda (Tbilisi) reported that Georgian President Shevardenadze and Kyrgyz President Akayev met and signed a total of 16 bilateral agreements. The accords dealt with economics, customs, transportation, investments, and one "On Friendship and Cooperation." Two days later, President Akayev signed 13 more documents on cooperation with his Azeri counterpart. Interfax (24 Apr 97) reports that many of the agreements dealt with oil production and refining, including one calling for Azerbaijan to supply one million tons of crude oil per year to a Kyrgyz refining plant. On April 28, Shevardnadze met with Ukrainian President Kuchma to discuss economic relations and cooperation.

**Yeltsin agrees with Lukashenka's view on CIS integration**

Russian President Yeltsin agreed with Belarusian President Lukashenka's idea that future CIS integration should be based on the Inter-State Council of Four treaty. At the same time, Yeltsin suggested that at the next meeting of the council a decision should be made to "step up the integration of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan." (Interfax, 20 Apr 97)

**Ukraine pushes for deported persons' rights**

Ukraine is pushing Russia, Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Moldova to ratify the October 1992 Bishkek agreements on the Rights of Deported Persons, National Minorities and Peoples. Ukraine is particularly interested in speedy ratification because it believes the accords will hasten the return of between 100,000 and 200,000 Crimean Tartars expelled by Stalin. This influx of Tartars to the
peninsula is expected to weaken the pro-Moscow element currently dominating Sevastopol. (Interfax, 24 Apr 97)

**CIS air-defense integration**
Noting that Azerbaijan and Ukraine have not joined the Unified Air Defense System, and that Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine rely solely on bilateral cooperation with Russia for their air defense needs, a report in Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye (12 Apr 97) claims that efforts are continuing to develop an integrated CIS air defense system. The article claims that unlike previous years, when Russia funded most of the air defense projects, in 1997 funding will be shared by "all Commonwealth states."

In a related story, ITAR-TASS (17 Apr 97) reported that General of the Army Victor Prudnikov, commander-in-chief of Russian air defense troops, announced that the huge inter-state financial and industrial group, Granit, will appropriate some funds to help develop, construct, and train future commanders of a Unified Air Defense System.

**New peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia**
According to ITAR-TASS (21 Apr 97), the rotation of CIS peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia has been completed. The old units, one motorized rifle battalion and one airborne assault battalion, have been replaced with two reinforced motorized rifle battalions—one from the 589th Guard Berlin Regiment, the other from the 433rd Red Banner Don Cossack Regiment.

**CIS border conference held**
The director of the Russian Federal Border Service attended a meeting in Dushanbe concerning the "protection of the CIS's southern border." According to ITAR-TASS (24 Apr 97), "[T]he FSB director will have a meeting with Tajikistan's president,...brief him on the [border] situation and on the Russian border troops' plans for strengthening it." So much for Tajik sovereignty.
Meetings and more meetings
On 24 April, a meeting of the "CIS Special Service Heads" was held in Tbilisi. According to NTV, the meeting was attended by several chief intelligence officers, including the director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. The proceedings, however, were shrouded in secrecy. One day later in Minsk, staffers from the CIS "power" departments, secret services, justice ministries, customs committees, and border troops met to discuss law enforcement issues. According to ITAR-TASS, the group recommended the creation of a "unified data bank on tax-payers."

China signs border agreement with four CIS members
Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China signed a border agreement on April 24 that calls for the reduction of troops stationed on the national boundaries, the creation of a 100-kilometer buffer zone, mutual inspections, and mutual notification of exercises or deployments in the border area. (ITAR-TASS)

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Alexandra S. Y. Kim

UKRAINE
Black Sea Fleet talks resume but Russia puts on pressure
Despite the official suspension of talks on 10 April, Russia and Ukraine held a joint naval exercise three days later. Some of these exercises have not been held since 1992. (Interfax, 15 Apr 97) No final agreement on dividing the assets of the fleet exists, despite the fact that Ukraine formally agreed in September 1993 to sell Russia a portion of its share of the fleet in order to offset part of Ukraine's energy debt.
Consequently, on 22 April, the negotiation process opened again and the delegations met to consider draft documents on the fleet's division and status. (Interfax, 22 Apr 97) However, the conflict continues over the summer Sea Breeze '97 exercise as Ukraine prepares to hold a joint naval exercise with NATO off the Crimean peninsula. This is part of Ukraine's "Partnership for Peace" program but Russia has been putting pressure on Ukraine to abandon the exercise. Several parliamentary deputies in Russia and Ukraine protested on 26 April against the Sea Breeze exercise. They state it "would undoubtedly undermine efforts by Russia and Ukraine to strengthen good-neighborly relations." (Interfax, 26 Apr 97) The protest might have been triggered by the event that happened two days prior. On 23 April, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Udovenko met Belgium's Premier Dehaene to sign a general cooperation agreement, but at the meeting Belgium's Foreign Minister Dereike confirmed his support of Ukraine's policy of integration into European structures, namely EU and NATO. (Interfax, 24 Apr 97)

Finally on 1 May, Ukrainian Defense Minister Kuzmuk visited the U.S. and met Lt. Gen. Sheehan, NATO's supreme allied commander. During Kuzmuk's official visit, they developed specific cooperation programs for the future.

**Eleven years since Chernobyl**

26 April was observed as the day of Chernobyl disaster in which, parliamentary chairman Oleksandr Moroz told a rally on the 11th anniversary, over 3 million people were affected by the accident and 74 districts of Ukraine were contaminated. Emergency Situations Minister Valeriy Kalchenko said the government plans to complete the evacuation of people from the radiation-affected areas this year. On 22 April, Ukraine received the approval from the representatives of the G-7 countries to enhance the safety of the sarcophagus constructed over the destroyed fourth reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Also the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development approved a
ECU118 million grant to be used for the preparations for the closure of the plant. (Intelnews, 24 Apr 97)

MOLDOVA

Normalization memorandum to be signed 8 May

The small breakthrough in the agreement for Moldova and the Dniester Republic has proven to be less of a political success for the countries' presidents who now face political opposition and criticism at home. They are accused of being compromisers, who acted as pawns under Russia and Ukraine because of their countries' large debts, i.e. energy debts. One opposing group in Dniester, the Party of Democratic Forces (PFDM), criticizes the "government's readiness to grant to Russia the controlling blocks of many large enterprises,...in exchange for clearing huge energy debts to Moscow. This is a grave strategic blunder which will influence negatively the political and economic independence..." (Infotag, 21 Apr 97)

On 19 April, the leaders of Moldova and the Dniester Republic reached agreement in Tiraspol to sign the memorandum in Moscow on 8 May. Although Moldovan President Lucinschi faces opposition from the Party of Democratic Forces (PFDM) and Dniester Republic's President Smirnov faces opposition from the local communist party, the radical leftists, and the Union of Dniester Defenders, both presidents firmly stated that they will sign the memorandum. On 8 May the CIS commission, including members of parliament from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, as well as the OSCE delegation, will be at the signing. (ITAR-TASS, 5 May 97)

President Lucinschi's first 100 days

President Petru Lucinschi entered the election race with the slogan, "Stability, Order, and Welfare." 24 April was his 100th day in office, and the president has been active in trying to strengthen economic ties around its borders. However, in the first quarter the GDP has decreased 8 percent, and external debts are over
50 percent of GDP. Perhaps the future may be brighter as he reaps some reward from these recent meetings. On 22 April, Azerbaijan stated it will join the Ukraine-Moldova-Georgia customs union, instead of the existing union between Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. (Turan, 22 Apr 97) Also, on 30 April, during the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Istanbul, there was a tripartite Moldovan-Romanian-Ukrainian meeting to consider creating a free economic zone in two months. (Infotag, 30 Apr 97)

BELARUS

President Lukashenka makes eight-day Asian tour
From 20-28 April, President Lukashenka visited South Korea, Vietnam and China. South Korean President Kim and Belarusian President Lukashenka signed a joint statement which emphasized the importance of regular consultations to encourage political and economic cooperation. (Interfax, 22 Apr 97) President Kim shared his concerns about NATO enlargement, fearing another Cold War situation, and praised President Lukashenka’s plan for a nuclear-free Europe. The two presidents signed a 10-year treaty on friendly relations and cooperation. (Interfax, 22 Apr 97) As a result of the meetings, Lukashenka declared on 2 May that Belarus will open an embassy in Seoul. (Belapan, 2 May 97) In China, Lukashenka announced that a business deal was made for over $200 million between China and Belarus. (Interfax, Apr 97) Lukashenka stated he supports China’s stance on human rights, and “that states’ opinions on human rights cannot bear a universal character.” (BTK Television Network, 21 Apr 97).

Draft union charter to be submitted to Supreme Council
The draft charter of the Belarusian-Russian union will be submitted on 24-25 May for consideration and signing, stated Mikhail Khvastow, the Belarusian deputy foreign minister. He said the nationwide public debates over the charter will continue until mid-May. (Belapan, 2 May 97)
Hush-up of gas pipeline explosion
On 30 April, there was an explosion in a section of the Torzhok-Minsk-Ivatsevichy gas pipeline. (Specific details on location were not mentioned; no injuries were reported.) The incident is thought to be an act or terrorism, criminal negligence or technical accident. However, the explosion was not covered by the Belarusian media. In fact, the event was covered by the Russian media, which informed the Belarusian citizens of what had happened. The Belarusian state radio and television stations were told to keep the incident a secret. This is yet another example of Lukashenka's successful attempts to control Belarus' media, having already suppressed free radio and television stations and expelled or jailed all journalists who did not echo the official viewpoint.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

TURKMENISTAN
State employees' and military salaries increased
In a television broadcast on 4 February President Niyazov announced that state employees' and military personnel's salaries would be doubled as of 1 March 1997. These salary increases are to be financed by fines for overdue gas payments which are to be levied on Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (OMRI Daily Digest, 6 Feb 97).

Turkmen statistics for 1996 economic growth released
The statistics for Turkmenistan's 1996 economic performance were published on 3 February in an Ashgabat newspaper. The inflation rate for 1996 was 100.1% and the country's GDP exceeded 6.6 trillion manats. The gas industry accounted for the largest share of GDP, at 30%. Over 90% of Turkmenistan's commercial goods were produced by state enterprises, but private manufacturers have begun to dominate the consumer goods market with a 66% share of retail trade
turnover. This is attributed to the government's privatization reforms (Ashgabat Turkmen Press, 3 Feb 97).

**President signs new oil, gas deals with Japanese and Dutch companies**
President Niyazov signed two new agreements with foreign companies to aid in the development of Turkmenistan's oil and gas resources. Under the terms of the first agreement, three Japanese companies (Itochu, JDC, and Nissho Iwai) will build a polypropylene plant in the town of Turkmenbashi, backed by $400 million in Japanese government funds (ITAR-TASS World Service, 18 Feb 97). The second agreement will allow the Dutch subsidiary of Israel's Bateman Company to invest $180 million in U.S. and South African funds to modernize Turkmenistan's pipeline system (OMRI Daily Digest, 19 Feb 97).

**Mobil and Monument to develop Turkmen oil and gas**
Mobil Exploration and Producing Turkmenistan, Inc. will team up with the UK-based Monument Oil and Gas Company in a production-sharing agreement with the Turkmen government to explore and develop oil and gas resources in the Nebit-Dag license area. These companies have also been granted the exclusive right to negotiate a production-sharing agreement with regard to most of Turkmenistan's on-shore oil resources (OMRI Daily Digest, 18 Feb 97).

**Turkmenistan calls for early ECO summit to discuss pipelines**
Turkmenistan has requested that the next ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization, consisting of the five Central Asian states, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey) summit to be held in Ashgabat be rescheduled from late 1998 to late 1997 instead. One of the main topics to be discussed at the next ECO meeting is the question of how to speed up pipeline construction (OMRI Daily Digest, 10 Feb 97).

**President Niyazov signs new cooperation agreements with Iran**
President Niyazov concluded a two-day visit to Tehran on 13 Feb. During his stay he held talks with President Hashemi-Rafsanjani and with Majles (parliament) Speaker Nateq-Nuri. The Turkmen president signed a number of agreements, including one on increasing the amount of commercial goods transport along the railway which links the two countries (apparently other Asian and European countries have also expressed interest in having access to this railway link); and an agreement on the construction of the Pol-e Khatun Dam on the Harir Rud River. The two presidents also signed trilateral cooperation agreements with Ukraine and Armenia (IRNA, 13 Feb 97; IRIB Television First Program Network, 13 Feb 97).

**Turkmenistan, India, and Iran plan joint undertakings**
A trilateral economic commission meeting between Turkmenistan, India, and Iran took place in Tehran in late February to discuss plans for a number of joint enterprises. Plans were announced to ship gas from Turkmenistan to India and to build a shipping repair installation on the Iranian-Turkmen Caspian border. The three countries also agreed to grant Georgia a seat on the commission (the commission was established in 1995) (OMRI Daily Digest, 24 Feb 97).

**Turkmen government Press Committee abolished by decree**
On 12 February President Niyazov issued a decree abolishing the government Press Committee and replacing it with a new, state-run publishing house, Turkmenpechat’, which will be directly subordinate to the Cabinet. The official reason for this change is that it will increase the efficiency and improve the quality of material published in Turkmenistan (Interfax, 12 Feb 97).

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

ARMENIA
Armenian parliament ratifies treaty on Russian base
On 29 April the Armenian parliament ratified the treaty extending the legal framework of the Russian military base for 25 years. The treaty passed the Armenian parliament with 188 versus four votes with one abstention. The Russian Duma ratified the treaty on 18 April. In presenting the treaty to the Duma, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov described Armenia as an important ally in the strategic Caucasus region and stressed that "Armenia supports Russia in its opposition to the NATO enlargement to the East." (Interfax, 29 Apr 97)

Draft of new Friendship and Cooperation Treaty nearly complete
The existing friendship treaty between Armenia and Moscow was concluded in 1991 but remains unratified in both countries. The head of the Russian delegation to the talks with Armenia, Vsevolod Oleandrov, stated that the new treaty needs to be finalized by the governments of both states before the signing can take place. Other economic accords are also in the works. (TASS, 23 Apr 97)

AZERBAIJAN
Former prime minister facing corruption charges
Surat Husseinov, who fled Azerbaijan following a September 1994 coup attempt against president Geyder Aliev, was extradited from Russia last month, following the disclosures of Russian military assistance to Armenia. According to his lawyer, Husseinov is being accused of misappropriating state property (630 tons of wool). That the Azeri government is not pursuing charges of treason for his surrender of the Kelabadzhar region to the Armenian side in April 1993 or for his activities in connection with the September 1994 coup attempt, after Aliev and many other high-level officials have accused him of these crimes, is puzzling. One possible explanation is that indictment for the lesser crime of misappropriating government property may have been a condition of his
extradition from Moscow. It is unlikely that Aliev wishes to rehabilitate his opponent. (Interfax, 25 Apr 97)

**Azerbaijan access to Russian waterways still impeded**

On 14 March the restrictions on air, rail, and road communications between Russia and Azerbaijan were lifted—but the resumption of access to Russian waterways was omitted from Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's decision. These restrictions, which deeply undermined the Azeri economy, were imposed by the Russian government in December 1994 in connection with the war in Chechnya. Azerbaijan relies on the Volga-Don canal for much of its shipping, including the oil rigs needed to develop oil wells in the Caspian Sea. Azeri access to the waterways will be governed by a separate agreement. According to a source in the Russian embassy, the Russian side will try to use the waterways issue to pressure Azerbaijan to accept Russian border guards on its external frontiers. (Azadlyg, 17 Apr 97)

**GEORGIA**

**Russian general refuses to enforce expanded CIS mandate**

On 29 April the Georgian president's press service announced that he would seek a replacement for the commander of the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia due to the general's refusal to enforce the provisions of the new CIS mandate. The revised mandate expands the area of the peacekeeping activities with the aim of ensuring the safe return of ethnic Georgian refugees. (Iprinda, 29 Apr 97) General Dolya Bebenkov, the commander of Russian "peacekeeping" forces in Abkhazia, told journalists that the CIS resolution, which expands the mandate of his forces, will likely never be implemented, because the "Abkhaz and Georgian side have failed to reach accord on the issue." (Radio Tbilisi Network, 27 Apr 97)

That the Russian military continues to resist efforts to repatriate refugees comes as no surprise given their history of supplying arms and weapons to the Abkhaz during the 1992-1993 war. Recently the Supreme Council of the Autonomous
Republic of Abkhazia, based in Tbilisi, responded to Russian Foreign Ministry denials of arms shipments and other support to the Abkhaz with a statement that contained the following list of arms and equipment:

"We possess ample evidence that the Russian military have provided Abkhaz separatists with a large amount of arms and combat equipment. Even before the war began, Abkhaz separatists had received over 1,000 automatic rifles, 267 handguns, 50 machine guns, and a large amount of ammunition from the 643rd Anti-Aircraft Regiment of the Russian Defense Ministry. Dolgopolov, battalion commander of the 345th Paratroop Regiment, handed over six armored vehicles, nine machine guns, and 357 hand grenades to the separatists. The separatists received a large amount of weapons and combat equipment from the Russian military units Nos. 75547, 10935, 5482, and 3687. In addition, during the fighting they received trainloads of ammunition, shells, tanks, cannons, and other military equipment." (Iprinda, 19 Apr 97)

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