Russian Federation: Executive Branch
By Susan Cavan

St. Petersburg train back on track
Just when the idea of Putin employing another Petersburger seems the "shaggy
dog" story of Kremlinology — a long-winded metaphor of power without the
requisite payoff, Putin reaches back into the Neva and pulls out another old
chum. It seems Yevgeni Lisov, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration in
charge of the Monitoring Directorate, a Kremlin veteran from the 1990's, is
retiring (at the age of 63) and is being replaced by Valeri Nazarov. Nazarov
previously headed up the St. Petersburg Municipal Property Management
Committee and is said to be close to the Kremlin's First Deputy Head, Dmitri
Kozak. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 145 Jan 04; What the Papers Say, Part A via
Lexis-Nexis)

Lisov, who may well be intent on enjoying a hard-earned retirement, was closely
linked to the Yel'tsin Family; his departure, in the wake of Voloshin's, therefore, is
an anticipated move in the slow, but steady drain of Family friends from the
Kremlin inner circle.

If Putin possessed a deep attachment for the soil around the Neva, we could
expect a developing row among the Petersburgers as they vie to claim the purest
northern spirit, but the Petersburg connection is obviously one of political and
security services contacts soldered in the upheavals of the Gorbachev and early
Yel'tsin years. As siloviki and Petersburgers swell the ranks of the Moscow
political elite, a new test of loyalty will surely emerge. Just what it might be is the
interesting puzzle.
Looking for a campaign issue?
There’s nothing quite like rooting out corruption in the state bureaucracy to give a healthy boost to popularity. With a Presidential campaign hovering on the horizon, President Putin announced the creation of an anti-corruption council, which will occupy both the Government and the Kremlin apparat as they struggle with a familiar bugaboo.

At the first sitting of the Council, which consists of representatives of the Cabinet, Duma, Federation Council, as well as the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, President Putin outlined his proposed structure both for the Council and its work; two commissions will be established: one, led by Deputy Prime Minister Boris Alyoshin, will focus on "countering corruption" in general (theoretically at a macro-level, involving the taxation and judicial systems); while the other will deal primarily with issues of concern to state officials, such as their salaries, rights and duties. The second commission will be headed by Dmitri Kozak. (Vedomosti, No. 2; RusDataLine-Russian Press Digest via Lexis-Nexis)

There are some obvious mixed messages seeping from the meeting. Kozak, who has led the Kremlin charge in Judicial reform, spoke immediately to the need for further reform, although his anti-corruption council bailiwick presumably would not involve this aspect. While some speculate that the work of the commission will be to coordinate the drafting and passing of anti-corruption legislation, the big money is on the favorite: it will be another in a long line of "consultative" bodies.

Dated Dean, married Kerry
On the American presidential campaign trail, a new phrase has cropped up to explain the rapid deflation of Governor Howard Dean’s poll numbers and the surge for Senator John Kerry in the Iowa Caucus: "Dated Dean, married Kerry."
The Russian phrase to cover a similar political expediency is equally elegant: A betrothal is not yet a marriage. Many a political candidate has learned this in the aftermath of the parliamentary campaign, and many may yet learn it again after the presidential campaign. If the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky before the fall elections did not convince the "reformist" camp that Putin did not wish to share their democratic credentials, perhaps they will continue to harbor the delusion that Putin really wants to proceed down a more liberal, open aisle in the lead-up to the Presidential poll. Following the parliamentary elections, Putin made a series of overt gestures to the Russian political right wing — seeming to offer both jobs and other opportunities. In that spirit, while remnants of the Yel’tsin Family are ousted from their Kremlin positions, a few holdovers, namely Gleb Pavlovsky and Vladimir Surkov, struggle to convince skeptical voters that Putin is a dashingly democratic bridegroom. (Kontinent, 26 Dec 03; What the papers Say via Lexis-Nexis)

Obviously, some party leaders, still unable to put aside their personal differences and field an persuasive opposition candidate, may delude themselves with the notion that Putin can still be handled by the Family and guided down an authoritarian, but still democratic path. They’ve left a lot riding on Putin’s engagement.

**There goes "democracy for bureaucracy"**

Putin’s view on economics seems to "trickle down" this way: Privatization led to grotesque profits for a few individuals with little compensatory benefit to the state or the vast majority of Russian citizens. The tax system therefore, needs to be overhauled to ensure that the state reaps more of the benefit — not so much a renationalization as a redistribution. Previously, private individuals fought dirty, kompromat (and even violent) wars to control Russia’s assets, destroying or bribing (whichever worked) individual apparatchiki, legislators, ministers, or committees as necessary. These heady days of "democracy (or kleptocracy) for bureaucracy" are over.
Putin has an economic vision of a revised tax code designed to split oil profits more favorably between the owners and the state’s writ large. Rather than allowing individual bureaucrats to profit through the corruption of the system, the Putin regime intends, in fact, to steer the major oil players along the Gazprom route: put apparatchiki on the board of directors and make certain that the company tithes to the state. (Prime-Tass, 13 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis)

Some imagine that a tax policy that enforces stringent ‘coziness’ between private owners and state structures is that slip on the slope of fascism and the "dictatorship of national capital." (Ibid.) Perhaps it’s just another step along the path of "controllable democracy" first set out by President Yel’tsin, in which the government was cast in the starring role in both the path to the market and the transition to democracy. In any event, it serves as another reminder that democracy is a fragile, maddening system, often easier to circumvent than to trust. Rather than develop the term democracy into a fetish, we could spend more productive effort defining its parameters.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Fabian Adami

More evidence of FSB complicity
On 12 January, the Moscow Municipal Court convicted two men, Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov on multiple indictments relating to their alleged direct involvement in the 1999 Moscow and Volgodonsk apartment bombings, in which 243 persons were killed. The two men were not only convicted of terrorism and murder, but guilty verdicts were also handed down for charges of illegal entry into Russia, membership in illegal organizations, and the illegal production, storage and use of explosives. Both defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment, and were ordered by the court to pay 4.8 million
Rubles ($140,000) in damages to the families of the victims. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 13 January 2004, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The FSB and the Russian Prosecutor have pronounced themselves satisfied with the verdicts, and with the investigation leading to the convictions. FSB spokesman, Sergei Ignatchenko, however, has noted that the alleged mastermind of the attack, Achimez Gachiyayev is still at large, and that the case cannot be fully closed until he is captured. (BBC MONITORING, 12 January 2004, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Gachiyayev is believed to have been initially sponsored by Khattab, who was killed prior to the bombings. (WPS-DEFENCE and SECURITY, 5 May 03, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The arrest and conviction of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov, and events surrounding and directly relating to the trial deepen the suspicions voiced by some that the FSB was directly complicit in the bombings, which provided Putin with a convenient excuse to launch the current Chechen war. Furthermore, these same events add to concerns that President Putin, through the FSB, is returning Russia to the status of a police state.

The investigation of the bombings that led to the conviction of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov were began in late 1999. This inquiry, led by the FSB and the Prosecutor's office, established that Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov fled to Pankisi Gorge in Georgia immediately after the attacks. It was from there that the two were extradited and returned to Moscow for trial in 2002. In April 2003, the Prosecutor's office announced that the investigation was complete and that a trial would begin late in October. It is the events of early October in particular that are extremely suspicious.

Mikhail Trepashkin was to have been the lawyer representing one of the victims' families in the courtroom. For ten years before entering the legal profession, Trepashkin served as an intelligence officer in the FSB. During the summer of 2002, Trepashkin was tasked with leading an independent investigation into the
bombings for State Duma Deputies and Kovalev Commission members Yuli Rybakov, Sergei Yushenko, Sergei Kovalyov and Yuri Shchekochikhin. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 14 Jan 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) According to Nikolai Gorokhov, Trepashkin’s assistant, it was during his investigation that Trepashkin’s suspicions over the FSB’s involvement were first aroused. He planned at the trial of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov, to bring his evidence to the judges’ attention. (Ibid.)

On October 22 however, a week before the trial was due to open, Trepashkin was stopped by the police and arrested. After being held for several weeks, he was transferred on December 15 to Matrosskaya Tishina Prison, where he is awaiting trial on the charge of divulging state secrets. According to his lawyer, the FSB claims that a search of Trepashkin’s home yielded 30 classified documents from his time as an FSB officer. (Ibid) According to Aleksandr Goldfarb of the Civil Liberties Foundation in New York, Trepashkin has suffered torture at the hands of his FSB jailers, including food, sleep and water deprivation, being handcuffed in stress positions, and being incarcerated in sub-zero temperatures. (INFO PROD-Strategic Business Information, 29 Dec 03, via RFE/RL, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In the same interview, Goldfarb added that he believed that Trepashkin had been arrested because he "too deeply investigated the explosions of the apartment buildings in Moscow and Volgodonsk in 1999." (Ibid.) Trepashkin’s replacement was not permitted to study his files; thus, the evidence was not presented during the trial. Is it mere coincidence that, on top of Trepashkin’s arrest, several members of the Duma Commission were killed in 2003? Yushenko was murdered near his home in April 2003, while Shchekochikhin died from an apparent case of food poisoning later in the year. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 14 Jan 03, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

This is not the first time that allegations have been made about the FSB’s complicity. Exiled oligarch Boris Berezovsky and his ally, FSB Defector
Aleksandr Litvinenko have repeatedly claimed that the FSB planted the 1999 bombs. Indeed, Litvinenko recently published a book detailing his allegations, titled "FSB Blows up Russia". Both have spoken about the trial and the convictions. Berezovsky has stated that the trial was a "show" (BBC MONITORING 12 Jan 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database), while Litvinenko claimed that Trepashkin’s arrest proved the FSB’s involvement. (BBC MONITORING, 31 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Yet, even if their allegations are true, Berezovsky is tainted by his personal battle with Putin, as well as his alleged former dealings with Chechen terrorists. By extension, therefore, Litvinenko, because of his closeness to Berezovsky, is also tainted.

So far at least, there is no evidence to suggest that Trepashkin has ties to Berezovsky, and as such, his evidence need not be viewed through that particular prism. Trepashkin, without doubt showed great courage in his decision to remain in Russia, in order to try to bring to light what now must surely be seen as criminal actions by government agencies. His incarceration provides compelling evidence that the FSB was concerned enough to prevent him from making his case.

Finally, in a related anti-terror operation, the FSB has begun to seize copies of Litvinenko’s book claiming that it constitutes "anti-government propaganda". (BBC NEWS, 30 Dec 03; www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/33757705.htm) The confiscation occurred on 29 December, when a truck was stopped en-route to Moscow from Pskov, with 4,400 copies on board. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 30 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The news agency which ordered the books, Prima, has stated that there was nothing illegal about the shipment, and that all "customs formalities" had been properly observed. (Ibid) As yet, there have been no other reported incidents of Litvinenko’s book being seized: But the fact that this has occurred at all, marks yet another example of Putin’s tendency to authoritarianism. It is the first time that this has occurred in almost 12 years, and according to an unnamed human rights activist
interviewed on Ekho Moscow Radio on 13 January, it marks a return to the
darker aspects of Soviet rule. (BBC MONITORING, 13 January 04, via ISI
Emerging Markets Database) At this point in time, it seems difficult to disagree
with this conclusion.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Scott Dullea

Japan wants peace, Russia talks fish
Moscow refuses to take more than baby steps in its relationship with Tokyo.
Although common interests and current diplomatic, economic and security
conditions may be presenting the best chance yet to conclude the unresolved
issues of World War II between Russia and Japan, (ASIA TIMES, 15 Dec 03 via
Johnson's Russia List (JRL) #7469, 16 Dec 03) the Kremlin seems unwilling
seriously to engage in the topic. Moreover, an opportunity to partner with Japan
in order to counterbalance Chinese power in Asia does not yet appear to be part
of Moscow's strategy. A phone call between Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov
and his Japanese counterpart Yoriko Kawaguchi in November 2003, in which
Ivanov reportedly invited Kawaguchi to Moscow to discuss the Kurile Islands
issue, sparked hope in Japan that the visits of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail
Kasianov in December 2003 and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the spring
of 2004 to Tokyo would provide the venues for a peace treaty or at least some
mutually acceptable agreement on control of the Kurile Islands. But Kasianov's
15-17 December stay in Japan provided no such occasion.

The visit, which marked Kasianov's first to Japan as prime minister and the first
of any Russian prime minister in the past five years, was promoted as primarily
devoted to economic issues. Tokyo again called on Russia to build the oil
pipeline to Nakhodka for which oil-hungry Japan has been pushing, but Kasianov
deflated any expectations of a peace treaty or pipeline decision when he
announced that his trip would not untie any knots. (RIA, 15 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Rather, Kasianov proclaimed the fight against illegal seafood fishing is one of the most important topics for discussion, during his visit to Japan. (ITAR-TASS, 15 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Kasianov consoled the Japanese by explaining that the Angarsk-Nakhodka pipeline was not an alternative to the Angarsk-Daqing pipeline [the pipeline project desired by Beijing], but rather was an impetus to develop the resources of Eastern Siberia. (ITAR-TASS, 15 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Following his trip, the prime minister explained to journalists that significant foreign investment was necessary to expedite the development of the Eastern Siberian oilfields designated for the Angarsk-Nakhodka pipeline (ITAR-TASS, 25 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) a hint that Russia may be waiting for such foreign investment before committing to the Nakhodka pipeline project.

Despite the incremental progress in the peace treaty and pipeline issues, the Russo-Japanese economic relationship remains strong and was given a boost during Kasnianov’s visit through a joint automobile venture paving the way for the manufacture of Japanese cars in Russia, the creation of a bilateral body to promote trade, the discussions of a joint venture for the production of a new kind of fuel which is an improvement on condensed gas, (RIA, 15 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) and an agreement on bilateral steps to combat illegal seafood fishing. Japan immediately took action in accordance with the seafood agreement when, for the first time ever, on 25 December, it expelled a Russian fishing vessel with suspicious documents from a Japanese port. (ITAR-TASS, 25 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Kasianov left Japan with words that may keep Japan's hopes alive for an eventual peace treaty and for the realization of the Angarsk-Nakhodka pipeline as he agreed with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the importance of [the] Japanese-proposed pipeline and also agreed to accelerate efforts for a bilateral peace treaty in line with an action plan signed by Koizumi and [Putin] in January [2003]. (KYODO, 16 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

On 3 January, the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced that talks between Moscow and Tokyo over the Kurile Islands would be held in the Russian capital in February 2004 at the director-general level. (KYODO, 3 Jan 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Russian media made no mention of any such talks, which, if they do materialize, may serve as a precursor to Putin's planned spring 2004 visit to Japan. It remains to be seen, however, if that scheduled post-presidential election trip will be more fruitful for Japan than past engagements or if the historical significance to Moscow of the Kurile Islands (together with Kaliningrad, Russia's last remaining acquisition from World War II) and its unwillingness to compromise its position vis-à-vis Japan outweigh the practical benefits of advancing the Tokyo-Moscow relationship.

**Russian foreign minister in South America**

Throughout 2003, Russia tried to remain a key player in global affairs by extending the reach of its influence through participation in regional organizations such as the creation of the Single Economic Space, expressing interest in signing onto the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and making a bid to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The year ended on a similar note with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's attendance as special guest at a December summit of Mercosur, the South American regional organization which comprises Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and has Bolivia, Chile and Peru as associate members. His attendance at that summit in Montevideo, Uruguay was part of an 11-day trip
to Latin America during which he also visited Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba.

The unspectacular substance of his meetings with his hosts comprised discussions of increased trade cooperation in the fields of space research, oil and gas, agriculture and others. The visit, however, was also an exchange of support as Ivanov extended Moscow's backing to Brazil as a potential permanent member of a reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (GAZETA MERCANTIL, 22 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Databases) and sought out allies among the visited countries by comparing positions on the situation in Iraq, the need to restructure the UNSC, and the fight against terrorism.

Ivanov explained Russia's intentions in Latin America in an interview with El Mercurio: "Latin America is no longer an arena for competition between Russia and the USA, as it was in 'cold war' years. Unlike Soviet times, when cooperation was built sometimes on an ideological basis, Russia is now acting strictly on the economic basis [sic]." (14 Dec 04 via RIA, 14 Dec 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Indeed, although Russia's trade turnover with Latin America totals only four percent of Russian foreign trade, Moscow, evidently, does have hopes of an improved economic relationship there, as demonstrated by the recent creation of bilateral trade commissions between Russia and Argentina, Brazil and Chile and by Ivanov's sales pitch during his visit on behalf of various Russian industrial sectors. Additionally, his discussions in Venezuela resulted in the announcement that Venezuelan owned oil company PDVSA will sell its 50% share of Ruhr Oil Refinery in Germany to the Russian Alfa Group (BUSINESS NEWS AMERICAS, 24 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

However, clearly Moscow's economic activities are only the practical and more visible side of its interests in Latin America. Less tangible is Russia's desire to regain global power status, illustrated by its attempts to extend its influence worldwide through bilateral and regional relations. With the United States (U.S.)
preoccupied in Iraq and in the war on terrorism in general, and considering the current diminished level of Western loyalty to Washington, Ivanov's visit to Latin America, traditionally the domain of U.S. economic and political leadership, has seized upon an opportunity to make trade and foreign relations inroads there.

**Success according to Moscow**
The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has patted itself on the back for its 2003 accomplishments. Not surprisingly, Moscow has taken credit (sometimes justifiably, sometimes less so) for some key international events of the past year. Following is an abridged version of Russia's most important foreign policy events of 2003 as listed by MFA spokesman Aleksandr Yakovenk in an interview last month. (RIA NOVOSTI, 27 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

1. "...UN Security Council Resolutions 1483 and 1511 were adopted, providing a way out of the very acute Iraqi crisis and at the same restoring the unity of the international community."

2. "Russia (...) [helped] avoid the erosion of the nonproliferation regime and [reduced] tension surrounding the issue of transparency for Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs." "It was precisely in Moscow that a representative of the senior Iranian leadership announced that it would fulfill the demands of the International Atomic Energy agency."

3. "New steps were taken to develop CIS integration, [including] the signing of the agreement on a single economic space incorporating Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan [and the establishment of] an international regional body, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)...."

4. "A peaceful settlement of the acute political crisis in Georgia [was reached]."
5. "The adoption of UN Security Resolution 1815, which unanimously supported the "road map" to a Middle East settlement...."

6. "Participation in the Islamic Conference Organization (OIC) summit....."

7. "The decisions made at the Russia-E.U. summits in St. Petersburg and Rome enabled [Russia] to raise the level of its strategic partnership with the European Union."

8. "[The] lifting of visa barriers between Russia and the E.U. [have produced their first visible results]. [Agreements on simplifying travel procedures... have been reached with Germany, France and Italy."

9. "A mechanism has been developed to simplify travel for Russian citizens to and from Kaliningrad Region via Lithuania."

10. "[A] council of heads of entities of the [Russian] Federation was established under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry".

11. "At Russia's initiative, the 'human rights and terrorism' resolution...was adopted at the 58th session of the UN General Assembly."

Mr. Yakovenko is entitled to his view of Russia's successes, but so is the rest of the world. Taking credit for providing a way out of the acute Iraqi crisis and restoring the unity of the international community overlooks the fact that Moscow was in favor of allowing the Iraqi crisis to continue, with Saddam Hussein at the helm, and that its alliance with "old Europe" during the pre-war debate exacerbated the very split in the international community that Yakovenko is crediting Moscow with alleviating. In time, the Kremlin's deeper involvement in and support of Saddam's regime may be revealed, as indicated by reports that American authorities have corroborated illegal arms sales to Iraq prior to the war.
Moreover, although Moscow's contributions to establishing the six-party dialogue with North Korea are evident, it is more difficult to accept the view that its cooperation with Iran, which enabled Tehran to have a nuclear program in the first place, created the transparency necessary to ease the tensions of that crisis.

Yakovenko presents rather flimsy evidence of Russia's Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) integration success; the Single Economic Space (SES) is unlikely to develop into a successful, European Union- (E.U.) type organization any time soon, and it is even more difficult to imagine the CSTO operating as an effective, united and organized military alliance. More prominent CIS events in 2003 were Moscow's fallout with Minsk over the Kremlin's discontinuing Gazprom's subsidized gas prices for Belarus, Russia's continuing delays in the withdrawal of forces from Transdniester, and a narrowly averted military conflict with Ukraine over the Kerch Strait affair.

Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's claim to have contributed to resolving the revolution in Georgia was acceptable, but Moscow has not yet played all its cards in that game. In Malaysia, President Vladimir Putin's attendance at the OIC summit in October, though no doubt beneficial to Moscow's desire to bond with the Muslim world, proceeded rather awkwardly as Putin's host, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed of Malaysia, proclaimed to the summits audience and the world, that Jews rule the world by proxy. (BBC NEWS WORLD EDITION ONLINE, news.bbc.co.uk, 21 Oct 03)

Moscow's achievement of lifting visa barriers between Russia and certain E.U. countries was indeed a success, but not because it helped to unite Russia and the E.U., rather because these bilateral arrangements help to split the E.U. and create for Russia the ability to have non-uniform standards for its relationships with different E.U. member states.
It was kind of Yakovenko to spell out the MFA's success stories of 2003, however, foreign affairs analysts would have been more grateful for his vision of 2004. No doubt, a candid version of a list of such predictions for the new year would include: Reform of the United Nations Security Council, further integration of the Russia's near-abroad including departure of U.S. forces from the Caucasus and Central Asia, membership in the World Trade Organization without compliance with the E.U.'s demands for lowered energy rates, and a quick hand-over of power in Iraq from the U.S.-led coalition to the Iraqi authorities, so that Russia can get back in business there. Even without the benefit of a list from the MFA, such goals are likely to be evident in Moscow's international activities over the next 12 months.

**Moscow watches for signs from Tblisi**

The direction that the new Georgian leadership takes in its relationship to Russia is of concern for Moscow, which has done what it could to nudge the fledgling administration in Tblisi toward a more pro-Russian policy. Following the November 2003 revolution in Georgia and the overthrow of President Eduard Shevardnadze, there was little real competition for the presidency; despite reports that Moscow may have considered supporting the former Georgian KGB-chief, Igor Georgadze, the election of U.S.-schooled lawyer and opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili was something of a fait accompli. Moscow's approach thus became one of taking measures to influence the incoming president's attitude toward Russia without arousing suspicion from the West.

The Kremlin first angered Tblisi by inviting representatives of Georgia's two secessionist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and of separatist Adjaria to Moscow, and then by announcing a simplified visa regime for the residents of Adjaria. The latter step, Adjarian officials countered, should not be seen as threatening to Georgia, but rather as a sign of what could be between Russia and Georgia as a whole. (ITAR-TASS, 9 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Another message came from one of Moscow's most notorious "pro-integration" statesmen, Yevgeni Primakov, who reminded Georgians: If the new Georgian leaders changed the balance in favor of the West, [thereby] diminishing the relationship with Russia, in his view, Russia would not continue to support these new leaders, and they should remember that it is not the USA that supplies electricity and gas to Georgia [to heat their homes]. (RIA, 9 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The military factor was reiterated in a Nezavisimaya gazeta article which argued the implausibility of Georgian military action against the secessionist regions considering the Russian military presence, the strength of the regions' own militias and the deplorable state of the Georgian armed forces. (8 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Russian Duma Deputy Andrei Kokoshin stated in a TV interview that it would be logistically and financially impossible to withdraw Russian forces from Georgia anytime earlier than the already announced ten years. Moreover, he stated, the Russian bases provide work for a significant number of Georgian citizens and, if the withdrawal of troops and hardware were sped up, this would leave such persons without a livelihood. (CHANNEL ONE TV, 9 Jan 04; BBC Monitoring via JRL #8008, 10 Jan 04) I'm sure most Georgians are thrilled to know the Russian Duma has such concern for them.

Now that the election is over, Moscow appears to be watching for signs of Georgia's first move. Thus far, the statements of the new Georgian president, though not overtly negative toward Russia, are unclear at best. President Saakashvili insists that one of (emphasis added) the main priorities of Georgia's new leadership is to establish much closer, warmer, and friendlier relations with the Russian Federation (RADIO MAYAK, 5 Jan 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database), and that the new Georgian authorities are taking "neither a pro-American nor a pro-Russian stance". At the same time, he said,
the Russians do not understand well enough that Russia is not an overlord and we are not colonies". (RIA NOVOSTI, 7 Jan 04 via JRL #8005, 8 Jan 04)

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Kate Martin

LEGISLATURE
It’s our ball and you can’t play
In a remarkable display of democratic brotherhood (or, maybe not), the head of the central executive committee of United Russia—which obtained enough seats in the December 2003 Duma elections to hold an absolute majority, and even to pass constitutional changes—is unwilling to build a consensus with his fellow parliamentary members, or, for that matter, the millions of Russian voters (well over 60%) who did not vote for United Russia. According to Yuri Volkov, he doesn’t have to. In fact, he barely acknowledges the existence of much competition.

"At present, there are two parties in Russia: one is the [Communist Party of the Russian Federation, KPRF], a moribund party, and the other one is ours, which is gaining power. The Rodina bloc captured enough votes and we are certainly ready for constructive cooperation with them. As for that bloc's destructive initiatives, our party is ready to fight them. From my point of view, the Rodina bloc is a PR bubble project hyped in the past three weeks. In fact, Rodina, the SPS (Union of Right-Wing Forces), and Yabloko are television projects," he said. (Rossiyskaya gazeta in Russian 18 Dec 03 p. 3; FBIS-SOV-2003-1219 via World News Connection.) So there.
Fortunately for the other deputies elected to parliament, Volkov won’t be in charge of the roll call. In fact, four factions were registered at the first session of the new Duma at the close of 2003: United Russia (304 members, led by Boris Gryzlov), the KPRF (52 members, led by Gennady Zyuganov), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) (36 members, led—officially—by Igor Lebedev and unofficially by his father, Vladimir Zhirinovsky), and Motherland (Rodina) (36 members, led by Sergey Glazyev). In addition, there are 22 "independent" MPs. (ITAR-TASS in Russian 1227 GMT 29 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229 via World News Connection.) The number of members in the United Russia faction continued to grow after the election, and now includes some independent deputies. (ITAR-TASS 1651 GMT 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1226 via World News Connection.)

Aside from the smug joy in the United Russia camp, the reaction to the election results has been mixed. The Communist Party and YABLOKO—parties that expected a much better showing than published by the Central Election Commission—each sought to lodge complaints. (Vedomosti, 11 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1212 via World News Connection.) These parties were not alone in their dissatisfaction. While the OSCE condemned the process almost immediately after the polls closed (See The NIS Observed, 10 Dec 03), others waited a little while. Eventually however, over 300 complaints were filed, mostly by district electoral commissions, particularly in Bashkortostan, Karachai-Cherkessia, Krasnodar Territory, Astrakhan Region and Moscow, according to Central Electoral Commission secretary Olga Zastrozhnaya. (ITAR-TASS in Russian 0954 GMT 19 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1219 via World News Connection.) And while Zastrozhnaya’s boss, CEC Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov, validated the results of the election, he did note the "the violation of the principles of objectivity in presenting information in (...) the state mass media sources." (ITAR-TASS in Russian 1021 GMT 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1226 via World News Connection.) He did not, however, mention any penalty for that behavior, so any improvement is unlikely.
As for the future of the parties who failed to overcome the five-percent hurdle to obtain seats via party lists, YABLOKO leader Grigori Yavlinsky asserts that preserving the party (with himself at the head) is the priority now, and that YABLOKO will remain an opposition party outside parliament. (ITAR-TASS in English 1640 GMT 9 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1209 via World News Connection.) A party congress held after the election confirmed that agenda; members refused to vote out Yavlinsky as leader of the now-marginalized party. (ITAR-TASS in English 2131 GMT 20 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1220 via World News Connection.)

Not so comfortable in the driver’s seat are the three leaders of another party that did quite poorly, the Union of Right Forces (SPS). Boris Nemtsov said a new democratic party should rise out of the ashes of the SPS and YABLOKO debacle. Nemtsov and his colleagues at the helm of SPS—Irina Khakamada and Yegor Gaidar—already have submitted their resignations from the top posts. "[This] resignation is not a simple gesture, it is an invitation addressed to new people to join us," Nemtsov said. "We need restructuring. Without it we shall have no future," he said. (ITAR-TASS in English 1514 GMT 16 Dec 03 FBIS-SOV-2003-1216 via World News Connection.) Members will decide whether to accept the resignations at a party congress later this month.

Yet Russia’s politicians have little time to dwell on the parliamentary elections that are now part of history. Rather, most are turning their attention to the next race—the presidential elections set for March 2004. Nemtsov said he hopes the democratic forces will join and select a single candidate (Ibid.) — however, such a consensus has managed to elude the two democratic parties for years, and continues to do so. Discussions between the two parties broke down, once again, in December. (FBIS Report in Russian 23 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1223 via World News Connection)
In all, eight candidates willing to face Vladimir Putin have been registered thus far: Federation Council Chairman Sergei Mironov, who repeatedly has asserted his support of the president (Rossiyskaya gazeta in Russian 31 Dec 03 p. 3; FBIS-SOV-2004-0102 via World News Connection.) and likely is the designated sacrificial lamb meant to give the elections the flavor of democracy; Ivan Rybkin, a self-nominated candidate (the justice ministry refused to register his branch of the Liberal Democrats party for the parliamentary elections); Oleg Malyshkin, a Duma member, described as the "LDPR leader's first deputy and head of his guard" (ITAR-TASS in English 1229 GMT 30 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1230 via World News Connection); three other self-nominated candidates—Irina Khakamada representing SPS, Sergei Glazyev of Rodina, and an unaffiliated businessman, Anzori Aksentyev — as well as Nikolai Kharitonov, nominated by the Communist Party, and Viktor Geraschenko, nominated by the Russians Regions party. (ITAR-TASS in English 1756 GMT 5 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0105 via World News Connection.)

It is doubtful that they will make any headway against the man who is bound to retain his seat as head of state; Vladimir Putin once again has asserted that he will not represent any political party in the election, but will run on his own. (ITAR-TASS in English 1219 GMT 18 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1218 via World News Connection.) Then again, with the state-owned media and apparat behind you, who also needs a party?

JUDICIARY

Politics can be murder

Two notable assassinations are back in the headlines, as suspects head to trial for the murders of Galina Starovoitova and Sergei Yushenkov. In each case, prosecutors are, at the very least, hinting that the motives behind the killings were political.
Six defendants were taken to court at the end of December to stand trial for the murder of Yushenkov, an MP and co-chairman of the registered faction of the Liberal Russia party, who was shot on 17 April 2003 outside his Moscow home. The defendants, headed by Mikhail Kodanev, a leading member of Liberal Russia splinter group that remains loyal to oligarch-in-exile Boris Berezovsky, include Kodanev’s assistant, Alexander Vinnik, (ITAR-TASS in English 1136 GMT 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1226 via World News Connection.) Aleksandr Kulachinskiy, and his accomplices, Igor Kiselev, Anton Drozd and Vladislav Palkov. All have been charged with murder, attempt on the life of a state or public figure and illegal acquisition of weapons. (ITAR-TASS news agency, in Russian 0943 GMT 26 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring International Reports, 26Dec 03, via Lexis-Nexis) Prosecutors have alleged that the splintering of the party was at the core of the murder. (The NIS Observed, 9 Jul 03) Jury selection is expected to begin on 26 January.

The same number of defendants currently are charged in the murder of Starovoitova, a pro-democracy MP who was shot in the doorway of her apartment building in St. Petersburg in November 1998. Federal Security Service (FSB) investigators have charged four individuals with playing a direct role in the murder, and two with abetting the crime. Other suspects are being sought. (ITAR-TASS in English 1408 GMT 5 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0105 via World News Connection) Prosecutors have identified Vitali Akishin and Oleg Fedosov, who remains at large, as the alleged "triggermen." Notably, the six currently facing trial next month—Anatoli Voronin, Yuri Ionov, Akishin, Igor Lelyavin and Igor Krasnov—reportedly are members of the anything-but-pro-democracy Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. Kolchin, reportedly was a former employee of Russian military intelligence (GRU) who worked for the so-called Tambov organized crime gang when the murder took place. (St. Petersburg Times, 9 Jan 04; Johnson’s Russia List, #8007, 9 January 2004; and The Toronto Star, 13 Jan 04, via Lexis-Nexis)
The case has dragged on for years, sparking rumors of a government cover-up. (Ibid) Suspicion as to possible high-level involvement remains. (The St. Petersburg Times, 19 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) The latest move by prosecutors—refusing to grant the defense’s request for a jury trial (Channel One TV, 1200 GMT, 29 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis)—certainly gives weight to such accusations. Indeed, some have noted their surprise that anyone has been arrested. In the end, the FSB has charged the six defendants with "an act of terrorism or an attempt to kill a state or public official so that she would cease carrying out her state or other political activity." (The St. Petersburg Times, 19 Dec 03; Lexis-Nexis)

MEDIA

Journalism’s no picnic either, apparently

Reporters in Russia face lots of obstacles to doing their jobs — evaporating financial support, harassment at newspaper offices, reluctant sources. And, according to outgoing OSCE representative Freimut Duve, death. "In certain regions of Russia we have quite a high rate of censorship by killing, because if you kill a journalist who goes after corruption then you know that this journalist will be dead and quiet and other journalists will stop searching because they want to survive," Duve told Agence France-Presse. Moreover, such tactics appear to be working, Duve said: "So we have more silence now in the post-Soviet world than we had five years ago." (AFP (North European Service) in English 1659 GMT 10 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1210 via World News Connection.)

In his final report, Duve subsequently lambasted Russia, along with Italy, for moving backward on the road to press freedoms. "When I took the job in 1997 ... who would have thought that in the developing Russia, the Kremlin would again have direct or indirect control of many of the print media and most of the electronic media," he said in his report. "Who would have predicted that the just-concluded Russian State Duma elections would be so widely criticised for failing
to meet international standards because of the lack of media independence?" (Paris AFP (North European Service) in English 1659 GMT 11 Dec 03; FBIS-WEU-2003-1211 via World News Connection)

The recent parliamentary elections did, indeed, provide the Russian media with numerous examples of government interference, from the above-mentioned control of state-owned media to obstructionism, particularly at the local level, towards regional outlets. Regional media complaints included confiscation of newspapers, interference in the production and distribution of papers, and intimidation of reporters, including interrogation of journalists and publishers. Prime targets were supporters of SPS and critics of United Russia. (FBIS Report in English 11 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1211 via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Kris Beasly and Paul Lyons

By then maybe we'll be flying to Mars...

In a move designed to prevent future erosion of its struggling space program, at the start of the new year, Russia extended its lease of the Baikonur Cosmodrome (at 45.5 deg N and 63.2 deg E) from Kazakhstan. While negotiations were not conducted in an adversarial atmosphere, neither was it an easy agreement to read. Russia wanted to add fifty years starting in 2014 when the current agreement (signed in 1994 in the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR) runs out. Kazakhstan didn’t want to commit to that long a lease, but because the Cosmodrome is a major source of income and jobs, it did want to secure a lease past 2014. In the end, both sides settled on a 36-year extension to 2050. The good news for Russia is that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev so wanted to ensure the continuation of jobs and income derived from the agreement that the idea of raising the rent, set at $115 million a year in 1999, never even came up in negotiations. What the Kazakhs wanted, and obtained
from Russian President Vladimir Putin, was an agreement to clean up the former ICBM test area at Baikonaur and to develop more environmentally friendly rockets (Baitrek, a modified Angara launch vehicle), which together will help clean-up existing, and reduce future, pollution. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE Part I, 12 January 2004; Gazeta, 12 Jan 04; What the Papers Say–Defense and Security, Vol. 2., 14 Jan 04 via Lexus-Nexis)

Russia definitely is not placing all of it future space launch eggs in one basket, even if that basket is in the hands of a fairly friendly neighbor. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has been developing, as funds allow, the former ICBM bases at Plesetsk (about 800 Km north of Moscow in the Archangel Region at 62.8 deg N and 40.3 deg E), and Svobodny (in the Far Eastern Amur-Sakhalin region at 51.2 deg N and 128.8 deg E), into full-function space launch centers, giving her a quasi "bi-coastal" launch capability, much as the U.S. has in its two launch ranges in Florida and California. Plesetsk has launched "molniya" and other polar orbiting spacecraft since the 1960’s, while work started in 1996 to redevelopment "Svobodny" craft for equatorial-inclined launches. (http://www.russianspaceweb.com/centers.html) It seems Russia will continue to develop both sites, with the idea of someday moving all of their launch activities to these Russian pads. In fact, the main (state-owned) Russian launch company is building a brand-new launch complex for its more environmentally friendly Angara family of launch vehicles at Plesetsk. Certainly, the lack of an increase in the Baikonaur rent gives Russia some flexibility to invest both in the Plesetsk and Svobodny launch complexes. (The Design Bureau web site, http://www.kbtm.ru/english/complexes/plesetsk.htm; Gazeta, 12 Jan 04; What the Papers Say–Defense and Security, Vol. 2., 14 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis)

Even if Russia eventually does move all its launch activities into Russia itself, all is not lost for Kazakhstan. Not only will the entire complex at Baikonaur revert back to it at the end of the lease (or sooner), the new agreement allows for greater joint use. I suspect that while the Russians are busy getting ready to
move in a few decades, the Kazakhs will be preparing to take over and use what will one day be entirely theirs.

The Caviar Bomber

In another sign that the Russian military continues to have corruption and leadership problems, on 19 December 03 the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), together with Internal Affairs (MVD) police officers of Khabarovsk Kray, seized a very large (and illegally-poached) cache of red and black caviar and expensive sturgeon fish from the cargo bay of a Russian Air Force Tu-154 long-range bomber (operating in its alter ego cargo/passenger role). According to Colonel Aleksandr Talalin of the Internal Affairs office, police confiscated 5.5 metric tons of red caviar, 160 Kg of black caviar and half a ton of sturgeon from the bomber just before it was to fly from Khabarovsk to Moscow via Chita and Novosibirsk. The delicacies have a street value of more than 11 million RUR in Moscow. (IZVESTIYA, 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229 via World News Connection)

A Russian Air Force spokesman says that they have no idea how the contraband got aboard an Air Force plane, but regional Duma deputies and law enforcement organizations suspect the goodies were intended to grace the tables of many senior officers in Moscow for the New Year celebration. Police are working with the Khabarovsk Garrison Military Prosecutor’s office to determine if this profitable poaching and smuggling operation was a local effort or, as has been alleged by spouses of the junior officers, standard practice dictated by senior leaders in Moscow for their benefit. (IZVESTIYA, 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229 via World News Connection)

The latest allegations are contained in a letter that Izvestiya received from a group of officer’s wives at the State Aircraft Testing Center at Akhtubinsk, Astrakhan Oblast. The wives wrote, "An emissary from a general in Moscow, who comes to us…every year, settles up with the poachers [members of the former
Fishing Inspectorate and their families] …right next to the sturgeon pits. And Russian Army officers are forced to transport the sturgeon from where they were caught to the appointed place in their own cars -- on direct orders from the head of the unit HQ. One of the three duty officers is stood down and has to pick up the sturgeon in his own car. Any objections are construed as disobeying orders. If any officer is caught by the Fishing Inspectorate with such a load, he must say: 'I caught all of this myself! I left my post of my own volition!' No one is interested in the young officer’s fate: There he is with no pay, no apartment, and for having such a load in his car -- sturgeon and black caviar -- he can be put in prison. Save our husbands...." (IZVESTIYA, 26 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229 via World News Connection)

If true, the situation once again illustrates the "acceptable" level of corruption that is still rampant at even the very highest strata of military leadership. The "brass" continues to profit while the junior officers and troops not only don’t benefit from the "spoils" but they are set up to take the fall if something goes wrong. In the end, not only does morale suffer (because the troops see the leadership out for its own gains), but also training and operational expertise continues to decline when precious flying hours and aviation gas are used to further these illegal activities, instead of conducting routine training.

**The name’s Ivanov, Sergei Ivanov**

Is Sergei Ivanov, current Russian Minister of Defense and close friend of President Vladimir Putin, in line to get a new job? Many analysts in Russia believe he may become, in the near future, the Prime Minister, putatively the second most powerful job in the Russian Federation. The latest evidence is his recent visit to four Siberian regions from 12-15 January 04. Initial reports mentioned the usual dog and pony shows: getting a briefing from Colonel-General Nikolai Makarov, commander of the Siberian military district, on the readiness of his combat units and visiting a Strategic Rocket Force unit...ho
But other reports mention much more unusual goings on. During his visit he discussed with war veterans in Irkutsk ways to bring up young people more patriotically; emphasized to military officials in the Siberian Military District the importance of working with the public; briefed local media in Barnaul on the challenges and successes of the military; and in Omsk, met with civil and elected leaders of the regions making up the Siberian Federal District and discussed ways to improve cooperation between the military and local authorities. The agenda is strikingly political and far from the norm for a defense minister. Although Ivanov travels a lot, his itinerary is usually full of meetings with senior military officers of the military districts or fleets, visits to units and barracks, military planning or international treaty meetings, or, as he did in October 03, riding a Tu-160 bomber to observe a major exercise. But seldom does he meet with so many regional and local civic leaders.

Senior Defense Ministry officials deny that this tour has anything to do with President Putin’s re-election campaign or a future promotion for Ivanov, but other sources in the Defense Ministry, while saying that the trip is not related to the presidential election, do admit that the trip has certain overtones, as Ivanov tries to obtain a clearer picture of, and discuss problems concerning, all strata of Russian society, not just the military niche. Ivanov himself has downplayed all the speculation. At a news conference on 9 January 04, he said, "When I was in the Security Council, and now that I'm with the Defense Ministry, I made a point to count all rumors concerning my transfers. There were 13 or 14 of them. You wouldn't believe some of the rumors I heard for myself...let them talk...I don't mind." The Minister specifically denied leaving the Ministry of Defense anytime soon, saying, "I'd like some tangible results here first. Something like implementing the transition of permanent combat readiness units to contract service." (Kommersant, 13 Jan 04; What the Papers Say–Defense and Security, Vol. 2., 14 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis)
Vol. 2., 14 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis) Interestingly, this effort, promoted at a major conference attended by President Putin in October 03, is expected to take until 2007, leaving Ivanov available in 2008...for a well-deserved vacation...or perhaps a new job if Putin doesn't end up stretching his presidency beyond its current legal limits.

In any case, Ivanov’s recent successes in aggregating power in the Defense Ministry (control of arms exports, absorption of the Railroad troops, coordinator of the branches of Russia's security apparatus, etc.) make one thing clear: he’s a man whose name we all will come to know even better. (Kommersant, 13 Jan 04; What the Papers Say–Defense and Security, Vol. 2., 14 Jan 04 via Lexis-Nexis)

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Dept. of Defense or the United States government.

**NAVY**

**On course within the Kerch Strait**

Addressing the territorial impasse that developed between Ukraine and Russia in October-November 2003, bilateral negotiations between Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and Russian President Vladimir Putin seem to have yielded consensus concerning the demarcation of sovereignty in and access to the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. On the surface, the agreement signed between Ukraine and Russia on 24 December in the Crimean town of Kerch constitutes a step towards resolving a confrontation that, at one stage, threatened to precipitate hostilities. The more esoteric ramification of the agreement goes far beyond the issues of sovereignty and access. For Ukraine this means resolution of a border dispute that impeded Ukraine’s path to putative NATO membership.

"The agreement defines the Sea of Azov as the internal waters of both Ukraine and Russia, and it provides for the free navigation of Ukrainian and Russian"
military and civilian vessels in the area, while third-flag vessels need the consent of both Ukraine and Russia to operate within those waters." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vol. 7, No. 242, Part II, 30 December 2003) Removed from contention were proposals by both countries to demarcate state borders on the bottom and surface of the sea. As witnessed in the Northern Limit Line that territorially separates North Korea from South Korea on both coasts, sea demarcations constitute (an admittedly volatile) framework within which neighbors with potentially disparate interests may coexist. In the case of the Kerch Strait the assumption is that vast mineral resources lie beneath the strait and that access to the area can boost both countries' fishing industries. The Sea of Azov itself "will be divided into Ukrainian and Russian territorial waters based on the countries' coast lines. Ukrainian ownership of islands close to the Russian shore will give Ukraine a lion's share of any division of the waterway." (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 24 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis database)

The agreement may enhance claims that the creation of a Single Economic Space between Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan could provide a forum of cooperation, mutual understanding and economic prosperity. Time will tell if the Single Economic Space paradigm will prove viable considering the competing interests of the putative members. Russian President Vladimir Putin referred to the creation of the Single Economic Space as well to as the agreement regarding the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov in his New Year's Day speech and in his message to Ukrainian President Kuchma that claimed cooperation between Russia and Ukraine, "will without doubt become an important factor in improving the well-being of the peoples of both states." (UNIAN news agency, Kiev, 31 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via What the Paper's Say database)

The agreement was lauded by Russian shipping magnates, who previously had to pay tolls to the Ukrainian government for transit through the constricted waterway that separates Ukraine’s Crimea peninsula from Russia’s Krasnodar province. In addition, tolls levied on third-party vessels transiting the Strait will be
divided equally between Ukraine and Russia. The military implications of the agreement were welcomed by Russia; "Battleships will be able to enter the Sea of Azov only by consent of both Russia and Ukraine. Thus, Kyiv won't be alone in sanctioning the voyage of battleships of third countries which are NATO member states, which was Russia's main fear." (Moskovsky Komsomolets, 26 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis database)

The disposition of the disputed Tuzla spit remains unresolved and was not addressed publicly in the agreement between Ukraine and Russia.

**K-159 heads to court**

Court proceedings are underway in Severomorsk in the criminal culpability trial of Admiral Gennadi Suchkov, one-time Commander of the Northern Fleet. A former bright star in the Russian Navy and thought to be destined for Russia's highest military position, Suchkov now faces up to 5 years in prison if found culpable of negligence in the sinking of submarine K-159 and the loss of nine sailors near the Kola gulf last August as the vessel was under tow to a Murmansk scrapping facility.

Unresolved are the inconsistent reports concerning the factors at play in the incident as well as the timelines involved. Although shrouded in secrecy, awaiting the potential release of confidential material and procedures, initial reports of the case that have been released by the Chairman of the North Sea Navy Court, Major-General of Military Justice Aleksandr Khomyakov, state that "the criminal case consists of twenty-one volumes. There are eighty-five witnesses. Therefore, the court has a far from easy and long job ahead in order to get to the bottom of the disaster." (ITAR-TASS, 13 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0113 via World News Connection database) Charges were preferred against Admiral Suchkov and other Northern Fleet officials by a "group of investigators from the office of the main military prosecutor [who] said the tragedy was a result of negligence on the part of the officials who were subsequently brought to trial." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan
The trial is expected to take five weeks.

The case is arousing renewed concerns on the disposition of the remaining nuclear submarines as well as calls to scrap them rapidly. To date, "of the 119 nuclear-powered submarine that have been taken out of service from the Northern Fleet, 58 have been recycled. The rest are located at resting bases and present a major radiation hazard not only for the Kola peninsula, but also for northern regions of neighboring Norway," (ITAR-TASS, 09 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109 via World News Connection) stated the chairman of the Murmansk Oblast Duma, Pavel Sazhinov.

Sazhinov is voicing a concern among many in Russia and around the globe with regard to the safety concerns posed by nuclear submarines inactive for decades. However, the defense budget is already unable to meet the demands placed upon it. Foreign assistance monies from the United States and Germany have been allocated already to expedite the deactivation and scrapping of submarines.

Whatever the fiscal realities, Sazhinov considers "it extremely necessary to consider at government level the issue of why implementation of the state program to reduce radiation hazards, which is funded from the federal budget, is not running smoothly, and to adopt emergency measures to prevent tragedies similar to that of the K-159 from recurring." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0112 via World News Connection database).

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

UKRAINE

Why are the Ukrainians silent?
In the wake of recent developments concerning Ukrainian political reform developments that violate the very notion of democracy, there has been very little visible reaction from those whose rights were disregarded—the people of Ukraine. To recapitulate these events: the Ukrainian parliament voted on the political reform draft law, which proposes that presidential elections by popular vote should be held in October 2004, but that the powers of the president elected would be terminated by the inauguration of a president chosen by parliament in 2006. (MOSCOW ITAR-TASS, 23 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1223 via World News Connection) In addition, the Constitutional Court ruled that, since the current constitution was adopted after Kuchma had already started his first term in office, that term would not count against him should he decide to run for the third time in the 2004 presidential elections.

Clearly, such developments are directed against the opposition, whose most likely presidential aspirant—the leader of Our Ukraine block, Victor Yushchenko,—if elected in 2004, would be challenged again in 2006 through presidential elections held by the parliament. Other reasons for the proposal are to give Kuchma enough leverage to retain control of the pro-presidential parliamentary majority, which is about to fall apart (even though it is unlikely that Kuchma will actually run for the third term, since his popularity rating is extremely low, as he undoubtedly realizes).

Considering the arbitrary rulings of the Constitutional Court and the politicians' disgraceful conduct in the parliament, one cannot help but wonder: Why are the Ukrainians silent? Why are the people not responding to the calls of the opposition to rise up and try to protect their basic right to elect a president?

A traditional answer might be the known passivity and incredible patience of those who went through the communist system of conformity and inertia. That may be. Another reason is more likely however: The current government might be bad, but the opposition is perceived as being no better. The opposition has
been extremely weak in Ukraine. The failure of the opposition parties to unite behind a single opposition candidate is an indication of that weakness. The leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) Petro Symonenko in an interview that has been published on the Ukrainskaya pravda web site said that "a single opposition candidate in the upcoming presidential elections was an utopian dream...[the CPU] and the other leading opposition movement, Out Ukraine, had irreconcilable ideological differences. The only thing the four opposition parties could agree on was to fight tirelessly for a free and fair election." (UKRAINSKAYA PRAVDA web site, 14 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis)

It seems that no opposition leader is willing to associate with any other. Yushchenko is afraid that Yulia Timoshenko's "oligarch" history will rub off on him, and the hard-liner Communist Symonenko is no favorite of other opposition leaders. This inability to find common ground and to unite has resulted in the population's opinion of the opposition. Taras Kuzio in his article, "Why is the Opposition Weak in Ukraine?", summarizes some significant statistics. A June poll by Democratic Initiatives revealed that 57.5 percent of the Ukrainian population trusted neither NGOs nor political parties; an Interfax poll found out that 69.2 percent of the Ukrainians are unwilling to take part in opposition protests; according to the poll cited by Ukrainskaya Pravda on August 18, 32 percent will never vote for Yushchenko—the most popular, pro-Western Ukrainian politician. (RFE/RL, 9 Dec 03, Vol. 5, No.46) The reason is that 40 percent of Ukrainians (mostly in Eastern Ukraine) are ethnic Russians or Russian speakers and tend to favor integration with Russia. Yushchenko's largely pro-Western politics are disliked in that part of the country.

Recent activities in the parliament showed that the unwillingness of the population to support the opposition (as well as the authorities) is understandable. The antics of parliamentary deputies late in December evoked both ridicule and disappointment: The minority MPs threw paper airplanes at the
speaker, broke the electronic voting system, and at the end were unable to accept defeat gracefully. The authorities were no better. They were guilty of dirty machinations to ensure their own well-being when forgoing the well-being of millions of fellow countrymen who elected them.

There is general apathy in Ukraine about the population's ability to change the situation. A Ukrainian friend of mine revealed her despair to me: "Nothing depends on us. The election results are falsified at all levels. There is big money involved in the politics, therefore it is impossible to trust anyone. We are being deceived every time and no politician takes responsibility for his or her actions."

So why are the Ukrainians silent? They have no one worthy to be loud for.

**BELARUS**

In 2004, parliamentary elections are due in Belarus. Each side is preparing for the elections in its own way. The opposition is creating new blocs and appealing to Europe for support, while the authorities are closing down and shutting up anyone who can stand in their way to parliamentary victory. The closure of nearly a dozen non-governmental organizations in 2003 was, most likely, politically motivated.

Many doubt that the elections would be free and fair. Lukashenko, who has won past presidential elections by falsifying the results, finds virtually nothing to stop his associates from taking parliamentary seats for their own people. The leadership of the Conservative Christian Party (CCP) of the Belarusian People's Front believes that "the authorities will ensure victory for themselves at any elections or referenda, irrespective of voting...The only possibility for preventing the authorities from using elections in their interests is not to vote, this means an intentional total boycott." (MINSK BELAPAN, 12 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0112 via World News Connection) The Front is planning to organize the boycott of
illegitimate elections, with democratic presidential elections under an international protectorate to follow.

Some think there is still hope, however. The beginning of the year was marked by the creation of the Young Belarus bloc of candidates for participation in the 2004 elections to the National Assembly's House of Representatives. Around 30 members have already joined the bloc including deputies of local governments, representatives of business and ecology movements and some unregistered organizations. (MINSK BELAPAN, 12 Jan 03; FBIS-SOV-2004-0112 via World News Connection) According to the bloc founders, Young Belarus is not a challenge to existing blocs and parties, as it is not nearly strong enough to compete with them, but it is rather a manifestation of society's discontent with the present government.

In order to assure minimally fair elections, the European institutions are planning to monitor the political situation in Belarus during this year. The representatives of the European "parliamentary troika" (the Council of Europe, OSCE Parliamentary Assemblies and the European Parliament) are scheduled to visit Belarus in January 2004. This might leave Lukashenko a little less room for maneuver. And what can really hurt Lukashenko's support is the recent talk about his being involved in the disappearance of several political figures. Christos Purgudes, an OSCE special reporter, who has been conducting an extensive investigation in Minsk about missing political figures in Belarus is preparing to make his findings public at the January session of the OSCE. While the report is not ready yet, some quotations have appeared already. Novaya gazeta published some excerpts from that report: "The Belarusian authorities have not conducted an independent investigation of the missing cases…on the contrary, an active campaign has been conducted at the top levels of the government in order to conceal the true nature of these cases. I suspect that government officials might be involved in disappearance of these political figures." (NOVAYA GAZETA, 12 Jan 03)
The European observers better get to Minsk fast, since you never know who else may disappear before the 2004 elections.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

GEORGIA
Thus far, a spirit of conciliation has permeated the tone and tactics of Nino Burjanadze's interim government vis-à-vis Russia and Georgia's rebellious republics of South Ossetia, Adjaria and Abkhazia. However, with the 4 January presidential election victory of Mikhail Saakashvili, the Georgian government’s position is likely to give way to renewed confrontation, since its domestic and foreign initiatives will follow President-elect Saakashvili’s policy goals of Georgia's territorial restoration. Saakashvili's determination to reassert Georgian control over the country’s recalcitrant autonomous republics of South Ossetia, Adjaria and Abkhazia will encounter the opposition of governments and their de facto protector--Moscow. The Autonomous Republic of Adjaria will provide the first proving ground for Saakashvili's policies. Additionally, it will demonstrate the reinvigorated US interest in Georgia and show how this dynamic relationship will alter the power balance in the Caucasus.

Before Georgia’s tumultuous November parliamentary election, Saakashvili’s dealings with Adjarian political leader Aslan Abashidze were marked by antagonism. In December, after Saakashvili led popular protests that culminated in former president Eduard Shevardnadze’s resignation, the mutually hostile language gave way to an interlude of conciliatory rhetoric. Before the Georgian presidential election, Saakashvili indicated that Abashidze could play "an important role" in Georgia's political life. (ITAR-TASS, 2 Jan 04; BBC Monitoring; ISI Emerging Databases) Meanwhile, Abashidze did not follow through on threats
that Adjaria would boycott the January 4 presidential election, won by Saakashvili (ITAR-TASS, 3 Dec 04; www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=310389 ),
and as recently as January 9, Abashidze said he was ready to "cooperate actively" with Tbilisi, describing Adjaria as "an integral part of Georgia" (ITAR-TASS, 10 Jan 04; ISI Emerging Databases).

However, mutual suspicion remained beneath the veneer of compromise -- a fact underscored by the decision of Adjarian officials to arrest two student activists on January 7. The activists — members of the Kmara student organization, which played a high-profile role in the Tbilisi protests in early November — were taken into custody on January 6 in the Adjarian capital of Batumi on charges of possessing weapons and seditious pamphlets. (Rustavi-2 TV Tbilisi, 7 Jan, 04; via BBC Monitoring; via ISI Emerging Databases)

The incident threatened to put Georgian-Adjarian relations back on a hostile footing. Interim Georgian government leaders denounced the Adjarian arrests, along with Abashidze’s decision to re-impose a state of emergency in Batumi. "The days when human rights activists and people merely holding different views can be arrested [arbitrarily] should be over," said Zurab Zhvania, the interim government leader who is slated to become prime minister in Saakashvili’s administration. (ITAR-TASS, 7 Jan 04; via BBC Monitoring; via Lexis-Nexis)

Currently though, Georgia’s interim government is seeking resolution through the democratic process, by providing support for an anti-Abashidze political initiative in Adjaria. The movement Our Adjaria was created in Tbilisi by the Adjarian intellectuals and politicians who seek to liberalize Abashidze’s authoritarian system in the region through parliamentary elections. (www.eurasianet.org/departments/articles/eav011204; 12 Jan 04)
More importantly though, Abashidze's opposition prompted US efforts to resolve the situation in Tbilisi’s favor, thus leading to the Adjarian leader’s abrupt departure to Moscow on 14 Jan (Rustavi-2 TV, 14 Jan 04; via BBC Monitoring) for the ostensible reason of "discussing possibilities for strengthening trade and economic relations with Russia," as stated by the official representative of the Adjarian Autonomous Republic in the Russian Federation Bagri Meladze (ITAR-TASS, 15 Jan 04; BBC Monitoring; via ISI Emerging Databases). Prior to Abashidze's leaving, both U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles and Deputy Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe visited Adjaria, followed by U.S. NATO Committee Chairman Bruce Jackson. It was after meeting with Jackson, that Abashidze left Batumi for Moscow. (Rustavi-2 TV, 14 Jan 04; via BBC Monitoring) Soon after his meeting with Abashidze, Jackson stated "The present situation in Georgia is that democratic institutions and civil society as a whole are in the process of formation. The steps which are being made are meant to promote the process. They are significant for Georgia and the United States." Time will tell how Moscow will react to the enhanced U.S. relationship with Georgia.

**CHECHNYA**

Recent relations between Grozny and Moscow indicate that the Russian administration is divided on its Chechen policy, specifically on whether or not to support the increasingly autonomous Kadyrov regime.

Throughout November and December of 2003, Akhmad Kadyrov worked to consolidate his control over the Chechen government apparatus, and to place all administrative mechanisms into the hands of his loyal appointees. To give himself additional power, Kadyrov also repeatedly requested Moscow to draft a new treaty which would redefine Chechnya's administrative relations with the federal center and increase Grozny's control over federal subsidies. Moscow, though, has moved slowly in this matter, indicating the administration’s hesitancy to give Kadyrov control over the projected one billion dollars to be allotted to
Chechnya in the coming year. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 18 Dec 03; What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Databases; ITAR-TASS, 7 Dec, 03: BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis)

However, though some in Moscow may be unwilling to give Kadyrov total fiscal control of Chechnya, Kadyrov has his allies in the Kremlin as demonstrated by the announcement on 12 January that Anatoli Popov, Chechnya’s Prime Minister, would not be returning to the republic. (Interfax, 12 Jan 04 via ISI Emerging Databases; Nezavisimaya gazeta, 13 Jan 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis) Popov was the only remaining federal representative holding an important position within the Kadyrov administration. Popov's expected replacement is acting Prime Minister Eli Isayev, who is governing Chechnya during Kadyrov's trip to Riyadh from 14 Jan to 18 Jan (ITAR-TASS, 14 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0114, via World News Connection), and is personally dependent on Kadyrov for his appointment.

Moscow’s ambiguous Chechen policy and Kadyrov’s ability to curry favor and manipulate the divided administration indicate both Chechnya’s volatility and Putin’s fear of a misstep. Putin’s fear of the Chechen situation is derived partially from the realization that Kadyrov is unable to control or calm the republic, because Putin, by spearheading Kadyrov into power in Chechnya, has created a tyrannical, ineffectual government. Kadyrov does not hold the loyalty of the Chechen people or of the various Russian military contingents stationed in the republic. However, a key question to ask is whether Putin’s fear is generated partially by his knowledge that Moscow no longer controls the loyalties of some of the Russian military forces in Chechnya.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery
Closer relations and a note on Religion & Security

The New Year brought steps aimed at forging closer relationships between Russia and Kazakhstan as well as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. As is often the case in Central Asia, gestures of warming ties were marked by talks of delimiting common borders and the expressed desire to cooperate in combating common security threats. Terrorism and religious extremism constitute issues around which the countries of Central Asia can voice agreement.

Kazakh-Russian Relations

In terms of meetings and productivity, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s early January visit to Kazakhstan resulted in an array of investment plans and cooperative agreements. Setting the tone of the meetings between Putin and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, was the January 9, 2004, signing of an agreement of cooperation to delimit the 7500km Kazakh-Russian border by the end of 2004. While relations between Kazakhstan and Russia have been amiable, post-Soviet independence created a situation wherein sections of Russian railway lines cross into Kazakh territory and Kazakh railway lines cross into Russian territory. The agreement to delimit the borders goes on to define the extent of border cooperation on migration, trafficking and security issues. (ITAR-TASS, 0529 GMT, 12 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0112; 2104 GMT, 9 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109 via World News Connection)

While the meetings between the two presidents were lauded in part for boundary cooperation, economic cooperation seemed more to constitute the motive. Putin expressed his desire that "in a relatively short term, the volume of trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan" would at least double. (ITAR-TASS, 1917 GMT, 9 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109 via World News Connection) Thirty-eight percent of goods imported to Kazakhstan come from Russia, whereas trade in the other direction accounts for 15 percent of Kazakhstan’s exports. Given a current $5.5 billion relationship, Nazarbaev advocated the uniformity of transportation tariffs to help double bilateral trade to
$10 billion annually. (ITAR-TASS, 2235 GMT, 9 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109, via World News Connection)

The largest area of interest for the two countries, of course, is the energy sector. According to Yuri Shafranik, head of the Russian Oil and Gas Union, Kazakh "fuel exports have increased fivefold [in the last ten years and] exceeded 50 million tones in 2003." Seeing Russia as lagging in acknowledging the energy potential of Kazakhstan, Shafranik went on to advocate an annual Russian investment of $1 billion in the Kazakh energy industry. (ITAR-TASS, 1330 GMT, 9 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109 via World News Connection) LUKoil and KazMunaiGaz announced plans to cooperate in developing the Tyub-Karagan and Atashskaya deposits in the Caspian region of Kazakhstan, and with additional pipelines to a Baltic port, to help Kazakhstan reach its oil export goal of 100 million tons after 2010. (ITAR-TASS, 1835 GMT; 1710 GMT, 9 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0109 via World News Connection)

**Tajik-Uzbek Relations**

The talks between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which took place at the end of December, had a less grandiose economic agenda but did touch on the efficient use of energy and water resources. The thrust of talks between Tajik Prime Minister Akil Akilov and Uzbek President Islam Karimov centered on issues of cross-border security and improving the relationship between the two neighbors. The meetings were broad in scope — discussing economic, political, and cultural relations — but can be seen as an initial step towards greater cooperation in meeting both the economic and security needs of the two countries. (ITAR-TASS, 1529 GMT, 29 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229 via World News Connection)

As a sign of desire to improve relations, Tajik Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov said that the demarcation of the final 180km of the 2000km Tajik-Uzbek border should be finished and agreed upon by April 2004. (ITAR-TASS, 1235 GMT, 29
Nazarov also added that he and Sadyk Safayve, his Uzbek counterpart, were discussing the possibility of abolishing visa requirements for trips between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, emphasizing that "it is in the interests of our two countries and our peoples to continue that work." (ITAR-TASS, 1145 GMT, 29 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1229, via World News Connection)

**Note on Religion & Security**

Security is one of the driving forces behind the desire to improve Tajik-Uzbek relations. As the countries of the region come together to meet the threats of terrorism, religious extremism, and drug trafficking, new working relationships are being forged and old ones revived. As noted earlier, Central Asia is a region threatened by the potential of Islamic extremism. Two more activists of the banned group Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT) were detained in Shahr-i Nav and Khujand for distributing "Wahhabi literature", bringing the number of HT members detained in Tajikistan to over 70 during 2003. (ITAR-TASS, 0502 GMT, 28 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1228 via World News Connection) In what was seen by some as a political move, Shamsuddin Shamsuddinov, leader of Tajikistan’s Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), was sentenced to 16 years in prison for "organizing a criminal group, illegally crossing the border, and polygamy;" charges which Shamsuddinov denies. (RFE/RL, 13 Jan 04, via www.rferl.org) (The IRP was part of the Tajik government’s main opposition during the civil war and the 1997 peace agreement afforded it recognition, which in turn made the IRP Central Asia’s only officially registered Islamic political party.)

The governments of Central Asia react quickly to the threat of religious extremism and its potential manifestation in terrorism. This, of course, has opened up the region for improved cooperation at the governmental level and reawakened old relationships. Thus, while Russian Lt-Gen. Aleksandr Manilov of the FSB Federal Border Guard Service supports the gradual transfer of sections of the Tajik-Afghan border to Tajik border guards, he made clear that there are
no plans for "any withdrawal of the Russian border directorate from Tajikistan."
(ITAR-TASS, 0933 GMT, 11 Jan 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0111 via World News Connection) Russia's support (and hegemony) is not without reward. Nazarov said that Russia and Tajikistan would remain "strategic partners for years to come" (ITAR-TASS, 1612 GMT, 24 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1224 via World News Connection) and confirmed that "a Russian military base must exist in Tajik territory, and no one is going back on this." (ITAR-TASS, 1533 GMT, 24 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1224 via World News Connection)