

Putin cuts N-arsenal

AGENCE FRENCH-PRESSE

MOSCOW, Nov. 14. - Mr Vladimir Putin announced a "radical" cut in Russia's long-range nuclear arsenal to about one-third its present size, in remarks broadcast on Moscow TV from Washington early today.

"The current qualitative level does not correspond either to the present-day international situation, or the nature of the new threats," the Russian President said.

"I don't doubt that we shall find understanding in the USA on this issue," Mr Putin said in response to Mr George W Bush's announcement that he would cut the US long-range missile to the range of 1,700-2,200 over the next 10 years.

"And that is why we're proposing a radical programme of further cuts in the strategic offensive weapons - at least three times..."

Russia now has over 6,000 ICBMs and Mr Putin's statement suggests that Moscow plans to match Mr Bush's offer, bringing the number of long-range missiles down to about 2,000. Mr Putin has set no time-frame for the Russian cut.

THE STATESMAN

15 NOV 2001

Chechen rebels linked to Osama: Putin

MOSCOW, NOV. 11. Rebels fighting Russian troops in the breakaway republic of Chechnya are linked to Osama bin Laden, prime suspect in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, was quoted as saying today.

At an interview with a group of U.S. journalists in the Kremlin ahead of this week's summit with the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, Mr. Putin noted that this fact "has been established and is not challenged by U.S. secret services," according to Itar-Tass.

"These people are virtually from one and the same organisation. They were jointly trained in the same terrorist centres. They regard bin Laden as their teacher," he said.

Mr. Putin, who has portrayed the 25-month Russian military crackdown in Chechnya as an "anti-terrorist" operation, said that over 2,000 Islamic militants who fought in Kosovo, Kashmir, Sudan and Afghanistan had trained in Chechnya since 1995.

He repeated Russian assertions that Chechen rebels had volunteered to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan against the U.S.-led offensive to flush out Osama.

"This is trustworthy data" from

Russian secret services. "We even have lists, lists with names of people who are now being dispatched across Georgia to Turkey," said Mr. Putin. "We even know a response of Turkish authorities." — AFP

British troops in Afghanistan

LONDON, NOV. 11. British troops are on the ground in northern Afghanistan advising the opposition Northern Alliance, the British Defence Secretary, Mr. Geoff Hoon, said today.

"I can certainly confirm that there are members of Britain's armed forces on the ground in northern Afghanistan," he told BBC radio, for the first time confirming weeks of speculation.

He said the soldiers were liaising with the Northern Alliance as they advanced on the capital Kabul. He declined to say how many soldiers were involved.

There has been widespread speculation for weeks that members of the elite special forces the special air service and the special boat service — experts in lengthy covert operations — have been in Afghanistan acting as target spotters for bombers. — Reuters

THE HINDU

11/11

New refugee camps are not needed: Iran

By Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson

TEHERAN: The Taliban is on the decline, and so is Iran's need to build new camps for refugees, the government's top official on Afghan issues says, a policy shift that the United Nations fears may be premature.

With much of Afghanistan's border with Iran in the hands of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance (NA), the focus should be on sending food and supplies into its war-racked neighbour, not drawing more refugees into his immigrant-weary country, said Hassan Ali Ebrahimi, who heads the interior ministry's department of Afghan affairs.

"If Herat falls, then there shouldn't be a need to create camps because there won't be any refugees coming to Iran," said Mr Ebrahimi, hours before the strategic city in western Afghanistan was captured on Monday by the NA. "Instead, people will go to Afghanistan."

Unofficial estimates support that premise. Iran's border with Afghanistan remains officially closed, but Afghans are being allowed to return home and are reportedly doing so at a rate of about 500 a day. Yet at the same time, the larger of Iran's two existing refugee camps

inside Afghanistan have since on Sunday been overrun by thousands more people than Iranian Red Crescent workers have been able to handle.

"The situation is still fluid in Afghanistan, and we still want to have contingency plans inside Iran or other countries for people seeking asylum," Millicent Mutuli, a spokeswoman for the U.N. high commissioner for refugees' office in Teheran, said on Monday.

Iran had planned to erect nine camps to house refugees from the current crisis. Instead it has built just two, and those have come under fire by the U.N. high commissioner for being in a war zone, threatening the safety of refugees as well as aid workers.

The two camps are a few miles inside Afghanistan near the city of Zaranj; the first, called Mille 46 after an Iranian border marker, recently reported having more than 900 refugees; a second, Mahkaki, reported about 8,000, Iranian officials said.

The refugee agency has refused to allow any of its workers to go to the camps. Iran, in turn, has resisted U.N. pressure to place new camps on Iranian land just inside the border.

Iran has two decades' experience with

Afghans coming into Iran, Mr Ebrahimi said. And most of the close to 2.6 million Afghan immigrants now here came for monetary reasons, not safety, he said. The 1 million jobs they hold in Iran are enough to supply the economy of a small country, he added.

"If we build more camps and advertised them, more will come," Mr Ebrahimi said. "They'll come for a better life, not because they are refugees."

Mr Ebrahimi also criticised the lack of international help for Afghan refugee efforts undertaken by his country since the U.S. military campaign in the country began last month. "All expenses are on the shoulders of Iran," he said. "There is a lot of talk but no action."

While they are still tabulating the cost, Mr Ebrahimi said Iranian aid organisations have already spent \$500,000 on food and medicine for the refugees. Ms Mutuli acknowledged that Iran had shouldered the burden for the millions of refugees in the past two decades. But "after the September 11 events, much of the hesitation has been about the location" of the camps, she said.

"The sites inside Afghanistan are not acceptable." (LAT-WP Svc)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 NOV 2001

general does.

HEARTLESS REMARK

Separate refugees from infiltrators 5/6

WITH Hindus forced to flee from Bangladesh as a fallout of the elections, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee's remark that the influx is not an "alarming" comes across as heartless. Homes belonging to minorities have been burnt and a couple of adolescent girls raped, forcing families to abandon everything and flee. What is alarming is that Buddhadev is treating the influx as an "infiltration problem", on a par with illegal entrants who cross over for a living rather than in fear of their lives. Thus the refugees stand a chance of being pushed back, when some of them have gone on record saying they would ask security forces to shoot them rather than go back. The irony is that for decades, illegal infiltrators have been welcomed with open arms by the establishment, changing demographic profiles in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The latest census report shows that population in North Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad grew at rates of 28.72 per cent, 24.77 per cent and 23.70 per cent over the last decade, compared to West Bengal's overall growth rate of 17.84 per cent. Clearly, vote-mongering by the Left Front is the reason infiltration has been ignored all these years.

Given that even now it is fairly easy to pay touts or grease palms of authorities for infiltrators wanting to crossing over, it would defy common sense if the refugee families are suddenly deemed fit candidates for "pushback". According to the 1951 Geneva convention on refugees, anyone who flees his country due to a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, or political opinion ought to be given refuge. By claiming there is nothing alarming about the influx, Bhattacharjee is unwittingly encouraging thugs and fanatics across the border. While he berates Hindu fundamentalists — and rightly so — this is precisely the sort of statement which creates political space for them. Mamata Banerjee is right in emphasising that people do not give up their land and property and flee of their own free will. Rather than take a bureaucratic line, there is need for an administrative mechanism to separate infiltrators from genuine refugees; a humane approach to the latter is called for.

Burtin
(w)

Russia refutes Pak. charge

HD-16
2/11

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, NOV. 1. Moscow has caught Islamabad forging false reports regarding Russia's policy in the region. Russia's Defence Minister, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, refuted a Pakistani media report that Moscow had allegedly entered into a deal with Washington to send 250,000 Russian troops to Afghanistan to support the U.S.-led war against the Taliban.

"It seems this is what the Pakistanis would want to see happen," the Russian defence chief told reporters on Thursday. Moscow has repeatedly stated its support for the anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan was confined to non-military assistance to the U.S. and supply of arms to the Northern Alliance.

Another senior Russian official denied a Pakistan-originated report that Russia had sold Islamabad military transport helicopters. Mr. Andrei Belyaninov, head of Russia's arms export

monopoly, Rosoboroneport, denied Pakistan embassy claim that Moscow had agreed to sell Islamabad MI-17 transport helicopters. "There is no truth in this report," Mr. Belyaninov told an informal get together with Moscow-based foreign correspondents on Thursday.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Moscow, Mr. Iftikhar Murshed, told Russian media recently that Pakistan had clinched a deal with Russia to buy 16 MI-17 helicopters. MI-17 is dual-purpose aircraft that can be for both military and civilian purposes. It can lift four tonnes cargo and can also be used in a combat role by fitting rocket pods and machine guns.

Mr. Belyaninov also denied suggestions that Pakistan could have bought the helicopters by-passing his company, Rosoboroneport. He reiterated that Russia has a policy of not selling either arms or dual-purpose technology to Pakistan.

Russia rolls into Kabul

FROM MICHAEL STEEN

Kabul, Nov. 27 (Reuters): Uniformed Russians with Kalashnikov assault rifles have occupied a patch of wasteland in the heart of Kabul, and they said today they were building a field hospital, or perhaps an embassy.

About 100 men from Russia's emergencies ministry — which is not part of the military — set up base after dark yesterday, providing a source of rumour and even some consternation among scores of spectators the following day.

"Are they soldiers?" asked one man. "Are they bad people? What are they doing here?"

Russians with guns have a checkered past in Afghanistan.

The Soviet invasion from 1979 to 1989 left the country awash with war widows, landmines and the hulks of burnt-out Soviet tanks and armoured personnel carriers.

The men from the emergencies ministry — some armed with possibly the newest and shiniest Kalashnikovs in all Afghanistan — were not too forthcoming.

"We are building a field hospi-

tal," said one, dressed in a blue anorak emblazoned with "EM — Russia" in large white letters. "And a temporary embassy."

Having spent a freezing night sleeping by camp fires, the Russians parked their 12 huge Kamaz trucks in a circle and strung up green camouflage netting from them while the men with rifles patrolled the perimeter.

In Russia, the emergencies ministry usually deals with helping the victims of natural disasters such as floods.

Russia has for years provided the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance with weapons. Following the collapse of the Taliban government, Moscow pledged to help relieve humanitarian problems in Afghanistan.

But if that was the point of today's exercise, no senior officer was free to explain their mission. And as a location for a clinic based in tents — a stone's throw from two proper brick and mortar hospitals — it seemed a quixotic choice.

A Russian delegation has been visiting Kabul and said one of its

priorities was to survey the wreckage of the old Soviet embassy, a huge compound amid the destruction of west Kabul.

The area was turned into a moonscape of pulverised buildings by civil war in the early 1990s and the gunshot-riddled old compound now provides shelter to thousands of people made homeless by two decades of war.

Though why Russian diplomats would want to live in tents behind green camouflage — which highlights rather than disguises things against the pale yellow dust of Kabul — also remained a mystery.

"The Russians have come here and I don't understand what they are doing," said Fayaz, an unemployed man watching the spectacle. "If they are really setting up an embassy, then I suppose that is fine."

Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov said today that global anti-terrorist operations were only in their opening phase and there were other countries sheltering terrorists which had not yet been touched.

THE TELEGRAPH

STRANGELOVE'S DEMISE

Putin Putin turning Russia around 5-6-01/4

WITH both George Bush and Vladimir Putin calling for deep cuts in their strategic nuclear forces, to the extent of two-thirds of existing arsenals, it looks as if the legacy of the Cold War could finally be over. President Bush indicated that the US would be cutting its nuclear warheads from 7,000 to between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade. President Putin responded likewise, pledging that 6,000 warheads would be brought down to 2,000. There have been other equally startling realignments — who would have thought, before September 11, that US and Russian troops would be operating side by side, in Tajikistan, with the common objective of bringing down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan? Putin, who has been making all the right moves, shows the marks of decisive leadership. He seized the opportunity offered by the WTC attacks to cement relations with the US with alacrity. Going against ingrained Russian instincts, he supported US troop deployments and use of airbases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. He closed a key Russian base for eavesdropping on the US military in Lourdes, Cuba, against protests from Castro and even his own generals.

Putin's moves paid off handsomely — Bush has said he will put Russia on the fast track to WTO membership and repeal the 1974 Jackson-Vanik amendment, which limits US-Russian trade as a protest against Soviet-era restrictions on Jewish emigration. He has also promised not to walk away unilaterally from the Anti-Ballistic Treaty without coming to an alternative understanding. Although the 11 September attacks demonstrated that the maintenance of huge nuclear arsenals is meaningless as today's security threats come from a different direction, Putin needs the missile cuts more than Bush — they will allow him to redirect billions of roubles to the Russian economy. The Yeltsin years showed that crony capitalism can be as bad as Soviet Communism, but the market system is at last beginning to take hold under Putin — last year the Russian economy grew an unprecedented 8.3 per cent. Growing US-Russia alignment augurs well for India too. An understanding with both Russia and the US could be an effective counter to the China-Pakistan axis.

THE STATESMAN

Moscow says 'no' to Taliban

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 30. Moscow has reiterated its opposition to the induction of the "moderate" Taliban into a future government in Kabul.

Russia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, said there was no place in Afghanistan for "even the so-called 'moderate' Taliban." He was the first Russian leader to explicitly denounce attempts to differentiate between "extremist" and "moderate" Taliban leaders.

"We believe it is basically incorrect to divide the Taliban into moderate and non-moderate," the Interfax news agency quoted Mr. Ivanov as saying after talks with the Spanish Foreign Minister, Mr. Josep Pique, in Moscow on Monday. "This movement as a whole is responsible for the crimes committed in Afghanistan and for the tragedy that has befallen the Afghan people."

The Russian Foreign Minister denied that Moscow's rejection of the Taliban in the postwar political arrangement in Afghanistan put it at loggerheads with Washington. Earlier this month the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, backed Pakistan's demand for including moderate elements of the Taliban into a future Afghan administration.

Interfax quoted Mr. Ivanov as saying that Russia's viewpoint was shared by "the majority of the world community" and therefore Moscow "sees no reason to believe that Russia could have any sort of contradiction on this issue with the United States."

The future government in Afghanistan should have a place for all ethnic groups and enjoy "broad international support of both Afghanistan's neighbours and other countries which play a significant role in the region," the Russian Foreign Minister said.

Russian plane crash: missile theory gains strength

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, Oct. 6. Confusion and controversy is surrounding the probe into the crash of a Russian airliner, prompting speculation that political motives could be influencing investigation.

The chartered Tupolev Tu-154 airliner carrying 64 mainly Israeli passengers and 12 crew on a flight from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk plunged into the Black Sea after an explosion sighted by several witnesses on Thursday.

As circumstantial evidence built up in favour of the TU-154 downed by a Ukrainian missile, investigators increasingly looked for other causes. Russian prosecutors, who on Friday opened a criminal investigation into a possible terrorist act aboard the ill-fated plane, on Saturday said they were concentrating on technical malfunction of the airliner. Experts find this cause neigh impossible, for the simple reason that the pilots would have had time to report any technical problem on

board, which they never did.

Russia's *Izvestia* daily on Saturday quoted unnamed sources in the CIS Interstate Aviation Committee involved in the investigation as saying that the missile theory was the most likely.

Ukraine was conducting air-defence exercises over the Black Sea at the time of the crash, but its military officials have strongly rejected ever "hyperthenical probability" that their missile could have hit the Russian airliner. However, Ukraine's Prime Minister, Mr. Anatoly Kinakh, on Friday conceded that this theory "has a right to exist".

Ukraine's Defence Minister, Mr. Alexander Kuzmuk, was caught lying on two occasions within several hours of the crash. First he said that the air defence exercises had not taken place on Thursday, then took back his words, but claimed that the missiles fired had a maximum range of 30 to 35 km. The Ukrainian military later admitted that they had fired some missiles with a range

of 250 km that could in theory hit the Russian airliner. At least one of the missiles had missed its target, but Ukrainian officials said it had been safely destroyed in the air.

Experts said a quick look at fragments of the airliner would be enough to determine whether it had been hit by a missiles. Russian rescuers have already recovered parts of the wreckage, one of which had bullet-like holes, but investigators have refused to comment till a technical expertise has been carried out. Moscow has asked the U.S. to provide satellite pictures that reportedly captured the launching of a Ukrainian missile towards the Russian airliner.

Analysts speculated that the true cause of the crash was already clear to both Russian and Ukrainian officials, but would not be announced before the U.S. begins its strikes in Afghanistan, which would help cushion the negative impact of the plane incident for Russian-Ukrainian relations.

THE HINDU

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PLANE CRASH / MOSCOW ASKS U.S. FOR DOCUMENTARY DATA

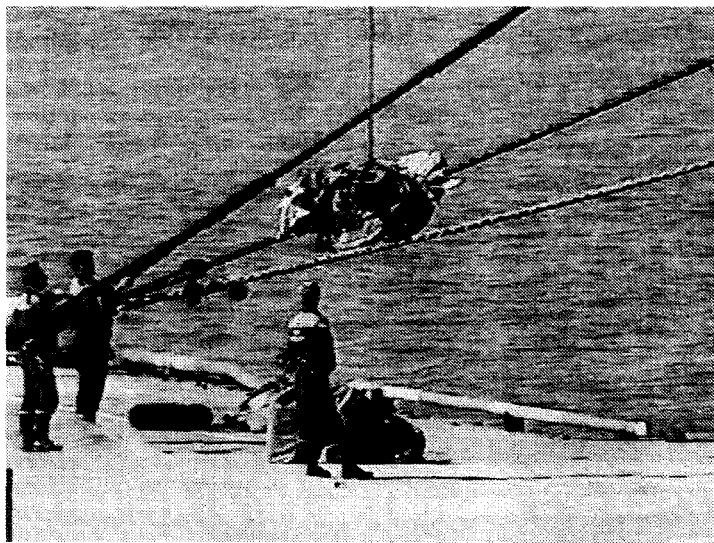
Putin sees terrorists' hand

Russia

SOCHI (RUSSIA), OCT. 5. Rescue workers urgently swept a wide area of the Black Sea on Friday to recover bodies and collect fragments of the Russian jetliner that exploded and crashed, killing 78 people before swift currents carried away potentially valuable evidence as to the cause of the disaster.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, said terrorists may have caused the crash and he had no reason to doubt the Ukrainian Government's statement that missiles used in military exercises did not have the range to reach the airliner. The Defence Minister, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, sent an urgent request to the Pentagon for "documentary data" that could prove or disprove its officials' contention that a missile had brought the plane down. However, U.S. intelligence officials believe a Ukrainian long-range, anti-aircraft missile fired during a military exercise accidentally hit the Tupolev 154. The Ukrainian Government has denied the allegation, and Russia has said it is investigating the possibility of a terrorist attack.

Mr. Vladimir Rushailo, head of Russia's Security Council, who is overseeing the investigation into Thursday's crash, said debris was spread over an area with a radius of 10 km. "Our task today is to maximise the collection of everything from the surface of the water because we can see the



A TV grab taken from the Russian NTV channel shows rescuers of the Russian Emergency Ministry unloading at a port of Sochi, on Friday, recovered fragments of a Russian TU-154 jet crashed into the Black Sea on Thursday. — AFP

current," Mr. Rushailo said after flying over the crash site in a helicopter. "If we don't actively do this, many fragments could be lost." Rescue workers have brought to shore 14 bodies that have been found since the crash, and relatives from Siberia and Israel were arriving in the Black Sea coastal resort of Sochi to identify the victims.

The Tupolev 154 belonging to Sibir Airlines, which was en route from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk, went down in pieces 180 km off

the Russian coastal city of Adler, near Sochi. The plane carried 66 passengers and 12 crew members, according to a spokesman for Sochi's Mayor. The plane was carrying Israeli residents, many of whom had recently migrated from Russia and were flying back to visit family.

Along with the bodies, parts of the fuselage and the cockpit as well as a door of the plane were recovered. Mr. Rushailo said it was premature to conclude holes in the cabin door had come from

bullets. "We don't talk about theories or guesses, we say only what is established fact," he said. There was little hope the plane's black box would be recovered because the wreckage was lying at least 1,000 metres deep. Mr. Rushailo said Russia had asked Israel and the United States for help in recovering the black box.

A U.S. official said there was no evidence of terrorism and a Ukrainian military exercise probably led to the crash. The U.S. had tracked the surface-to-air missile with satellites that sense the heat of its launch. An Armenian airline pilot flying nearby witnessed the explosion and crash. "The plane fell into the sea, and there was another explosion in the sea. After that I saw a big white spot on the sea, and I had the impression that oil was burning," the pilot said.

When Pentagon officials first were told a missile felled the plane, they concluded that the weapon cited did not have the range needed to reach the aircraft. Later in the day, the Pentagon was informed that a much larger weapon was involved. That, along with fresh intelligence information, virtually erased U.S. suspicions of terrorism.

Ukrainian officials angrily denied the U.S. claim, saying they had launched only short-range missiles that couldn't reach the plane flying some 250 km away from the exercise area.— AP

THE HINDU

6 OCT 2002

Russian plane crashes into sea: sabotage or missile-hit?

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 4. A terrorist bomb is feared to have caused a Russian passenger plane, with 76 people on board, to plunge into the Black Sea today, Russian security sources said. The three-engine TU-154 belonging to a Siberian airline was on a chartered flight from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk in Siberia when it burst into flames and fell into the sea, 180 km off the Russian coast. The explosion was reported by the pilot of an Armenian airliner which was in the area at the time of the catastrophe.

The security sources said they were working on a theory that it was a terrorist attack. The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, appointed his security chief, Mr. Vladimir Rushailo, in-charge of the investigation and summoned the defence and counter-intelligence agency chiefs to the Kremlin to discuss the tragedy.

If it is a terrorist attack it, probably, is directed more against Israel than Russia, as most



passengers on board were Israeli nationals, who had migrated from the former Soviet Union.

Ukraine denies its missile downed the plane

Meanwhile, Ukraine has denied reports that the Russian plane had been accidentally shot down by an Ukrainian missile

fired during air defence exercises. The Ukrainian Defence Minister, Mr. Alexander Kuzmuk, admitted that surface-to-air missiles had been fired in the Black Sea but said all the missiles hit their targets. A spokesman for the Ministry explained that the missiles fired had a range of 30 to 35 km, while the Russian plane went down 250 km away from the area of the exercises.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, suggested it could have been a terrorist attack. The Russian Defence Ministry refused to comment on Western media reports that the Russian airliner had been shot down by a Ukrainian missile, citing lack of information.

However, a spokesman for the Russian Navy denied that Mr. Igor Larichev, a press officer of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, mistakenly identified as an officer of the Ukrainian Navy, had spoken to Western agencies about the Ukrainian connection in the catastrophe.

THE HINDU

5 OCT 2002

Putin rethink on Nato expansion

Brussels, October 4

IN A major shift of policy, President Vladimir Putin signalled that Russia might reconsider its long-standing opposition to Nato's eastward expansion, in the light of the need to construct a global anti-terrorism coalition.

The Russian leader repeated Moscow's line that Nato had no need to enlarge because it no longer faced a hostile Soviet Union, but in a highly conciliatory gesture he said this view could change if the alliance adapted to a changing security environment. Russia agreed to hold monthly meetings on foreign and defence policy with the European Union and backed a Nato proposal to set up a new body to oversee what Putin called a "widening and deepening" of relations between Moscow and the alliance.

Speaking at the end of a summit with the EU in Brussels, he made clear that he stood firmly behind Washington as it seeks to construct a global anti-terrorist coalition. Putin said he wanted to discuss improved links with Nato with Tony Blair when the Prime Minister visits Moscow. Former Warsaw Pact countries Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined Nato in 1999, but until now Russia had been strongly opposed to membership for the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which have large Russian-speaking minorities.

Russia has shown an increasing interest in EU plans to deploy a 60,000-strong rapid reaction force for humanitarian and peacekeeping missions and in European concern about President George Bush's missile defence programme.

Enhanced cooperation on ter-

rorism is to include action to block terrorist finances, exchanges of intelligence on suspects, movements of chemical, biological or nuclear material, the use of false documents and other activity. Meetings with Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium and holder of the EU presidency, and Romano Prodi, president of the European commission, included sessions on energy and plans for a "common European economic space" to promote trade. But the terrorism crisis was the biggest issue.

"Russia has impressed many by her willingness to set history aside and to align herself solidly with the international coalition against terrorism," said Chris Patten, the EU external relations commissioner. "I hope this also opens the way to a peaceful resolution of the Chechnya conflict."

Otherwise, little was heard of the situation in the Caucasian republic, where Moscow insists it is fighting the same terrorist network that was behind last month's attacks on the US.

Putin said the bombings of Russian apartment blocks in 1999 bore "the same signature; as the suicide plane attacks on New York and Washington. The EU's softly-softly approach disappointed groups which had urged the union not to "soft-pedal" on human rights in its efforts to shore up the anti-terrorism coalition. But that is exactly what seems to be happening: after meeting Putin last week, the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, said the Chechen conflict should be "re-evaluated" in the light of the attacks on the US.

Nato chief Lord Robertson also played down Chechnya last week, emphasising that Russia had a right to defend its territorial integrity.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 OCT 2002

Russia
H.D. 17

Russia, Iran sign defence pact

3/10

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 2. Russia and Iran have agreed to upgrade their defence ties and to step up anti-terrorist cooperation.

The visiting Iranian Defence Minister, Mr. Ali Shamkhani, signed a framework accord on long-term military-technical cooperation with his Russian counterpart, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, on Tuesday. Analysts said the accord may make Iran the third biggest arms buyer after China and India, bringing Russia \$1.5 billion in defence contracts over the next five years. Moscow has tried to play down this aspect of the visit as it is anxious to improve rela-

tions with the U.S. on the basis of a common struggle against international terrorism. The defence accord with Iran "is non-secret, complies with all norms of international law and is practically identical to the agreements Russia has signed with other countries," Russia's defence chief, Mr. Ivanov said.

The Russian side has put emphasis on closer co-operation with Iran in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. The RIA Novosti news agency quoted Mr. Shamkhani as saying that Russia and Iran came out against "double standards" on the issue of terrorism.

THE HINDU

Chechens launch fresh offensive

REUTERS

5-11 2001
MOSCOW, Sept. 29. - Chechen rebels launched fresh attacks on Russian forces in the separatist region today in their first major action since President Vladimir Putin called on them to down arms and start talks.

Accounts of the fighting varied widely. The rebels said their fighters controlled large sections of major towns and roads while Russian officials said servicemen had beaten off the attacks.

Interfax news agency said the rebels had advanced on Shali, south of the regional capital Grozny, at midnight,

opening fire on the military commander's office, administrative building and police headquarters and setting fire to the court house.

It said four people were killed before the rebels withdrew before dawn taking a number of dead and wounded. The agency reported that the administrative building in nearby Serzhen-Yurt had also been set on fire.

Rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov said rebels had staged attacks on several towns and up to 200 Russian troops were killed. He described the attacks as "the answer to Putin's ultimatum".

THE STATESMAN

30 SEP 2001

Russia gains concessions on Chechnya

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 27. Perhaps it is only the Western tone that has changed. But the latest American and European pronouncements on Chechnya make it clear that Russia may have extracted a concession from the West in its war against separatism in the rebellious province.

The softening Western tone on Chechnya comes barely a day after the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, announced substantive support to American military operations against Afghanistan. In return, the U.S., until recently very critical of Russian policy in Chechnya, called on the rebels to cut links with "international terrorists and their international organisations".

The Germans went a step further. During Mr. Putin's recent visit to Berlin, the German Chancellor, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, stated that "there will be and must be a more differentiated evaluation" of the situation in Chechnya.

Mr. Putin has also used the new international context to announce a 72-hour deadline to Chechen rebels to make contact with Russian officials to discuss laying down arms and negotiating a political settlement. Even as he sought Western concessions on Chechnya, Mr. Putin moved swiftly to end the Russian opposition to talks with the rebels.

Russia has been waging an extended war against extremists in the southern mountainous province of Chechnya. It says there are

strong connections between the rebels and the Islamic extremists based in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As Mr. Putin told the German Bundestag this week, the extremists have plans to set up an Islamic Caliphate in the Russian territory between the Caspian and Black Seas.

Overcoming considerable skepticism at home about letting the U.S. military forces enter Russia's Central Asian backyard, Mr. Putin seized the moment on September 11 to explore the prospects for a grand bargain with the U.S.

The Russian offer of its air space for Western humanitarian missions into Afghanistan, letting American use of military facilities

AMERICA AT WAR

in the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia, and expansive sharing of intelligence are of great value to the U.S.

Besides Western "understanding" of its policies in Chechnya, Russia may want backing for its bid to join the World Trade Organisation and a reconsideration of Western policy on the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to Russian borders.

More fundamentally, Mr. Putin has argued in Berlin that the present structures of international security are outdated and must be revamped to give Russia its rightful role in the management of the international system. Deep suspicions on both sides may complicate a potentially historic

reconciliation between Russia and the West. But the process appears to have gained momentum from the present crisis.

As the world admires the skill with which Mr. Putin moved since September 11, it would be tempting to draw parallels between Russian success in gaining some concessions from the U.S. on Chechnya and the apparent Indian inability to do so on Jammu and Kashmir.

But the two situations are not comparable. India does not have the same weight as Russia in the current American plans to defeat the Taliban regime. Lack of physical access has always put a limit on what India can do in Afghanistan. And access to Afghanistan is what makes Pakistan so central to the geopolitics of South West Asia.

Even more important, Russia's fight is with bands of Chechen rebels with connections to international terrorism. It has no neighbouring country fomenting extremism across the borders.

India, in contrast, has to deal with cross-border terrorism from Pakistan which has nurtured a long-standing dispute with India over Jammu and Kashmir. And as it turns out Pakistan's support has become critical in the current American war against terrorism, at least in the first phase.

Instead of hoping for immediate gains from the external front, India could well emulate Mr. Putin in finding ways to move the pieces within Jammu and Kashmir.

THE HINDU

28 SEP 2001

Resume peace talks, Putin tells Sharon

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, SEPT. 4. Russia has urged Israel to resume peace talks with Palestinians.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, told the visiting Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, in the Kremlin on Tuesday that it was "essential to start building mutual confidence measures in order to sideline forces interested in wrecking the process of political settlement."

Russia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, who briefed journalists after the meeting, said that Russia was in favour of peace talks on the basis of the internationally-approved peace plan drafted by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell. Mr. Ivanov said the main task now was "not proposing new initiatives, but implementing ones that already exist."

Mr. Putin resisted Mr. Sharon's efforts to sway Moscow in support of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. The Russian President made it clear Russia would continue to maintain an even-handed approach to the West Asia crisis.

"There can be no justification to terrorist acts against civilians," Mr. Putin told Mr. Sharon in the Kremlin on Tuesday. Russia was "alarmed" by violence in West Asia, "all the more so since a large part of Israel's population come from the former Soviet Union and Russia."

"At the same time we have traditionally good relations with the Arab world, including the Palestinian Authority," the Russian leader said. "It is a very good basis for Russia to make a weighty contribution to the course of settlement."

The Israeli leader arrived in Moscow on Monday for a three-day working visit. A Palestinian delegation is also to visit Moscow for talks later this week.

Moscow reassured Israel that it was not helping Iran and Iraq to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Sharon's visit was to coincide with the arrival in Moscow of Iran's Defence Minister, Mr. Ali Shamkhani, for talks on defence cooperation. However, Mr. Shamkhani at the last minute postponed the visit indefinitely "to foil the Zionist regime's negative propaganda purposes from the simultaneous trip to Moscow by the Zionist regime's Prime Minister", the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.

THE HINDU

5 SEP 2001

Kim in Moscow after 9-day ride

REUTERS
MOSCOW, AUGUST 4

5/8 (N) Putin (W)

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin met North Korea's Kim Jong-il in Moscow on Saturday, with trade ties top of the declared agenda but Western eyes on Stalinist Pyongyang's ballistic missile ambitions.

The 'Dear Leader' visited the tomb of embalmed Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin before sweeping out of a cordoned-off Red Square in his Russian-made Zil limousine and heading for the Kremlin to meet Putin.

Putin congratulated Kim on completing his nine-day train journey across Siberia to Moscow and said the visit would give a "good boost" to relations between Russia and North Korea, which the United States calls a dangerous "rogue state".

"I have really looked forward to this day," Interfax news agency quoted Kim as saying. Both men lauded the development of relations between Pyongyang and Moscow since Putin's trip to North Korea last year.

"Since our meeting, relations between our countries have developed very positively," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Putin said. "And the Moscow declaration which will be signed today is also a result of this year's work."

Russian officials have not ruled out an arms deal being agreed over the weekend, but they have focused on the development of trade ties, which Moscow says can help foster stability on the Korean peninsula.

The day began with an eerie echo of Russia's Communist days, as Kim's convoy of more than 15 black cars pulled into Red

Square and Kim stepped up to the Lenin's red and black mausoleum.

Beneath sharp-shooters stationed on the Kremlin towers, Kim laid a wreath at Lenin's tomb, with a band that said in Korean: 'Kim Jong-il — VI Lenin'.

Kim entered the mausoleum for a few minutes before returning to his limousine and



North Korean leader Kim Jong-il introduces members of his delegation to President Vladimir Putin at Kremlin on Saturday — AP

heading for talks with Putin.

Kim arrived on Friday night in Moscow after a nine-day train ride across Siberia. He swapped his 21-carriage armoured carriage for a suite in the Kremlin, where he slept in the suite occupied by his father Kim Il-sung in 1984.

"I now know Russia as well, perhaps better, than a few Russian politicians," Interfax

96-1

quoted Kim as telling Putin of his train trip "And I managed to get to know the nature and the feelings of the Russian people."

Russia's efforts to court Kim send a strong signal to Washington that Moscow is not afraid to deal with countries on a US list of 'rogue states'.

Kim's trips to arms and space-related factories will also do little to allay US concerns about Pyongyang modernising its Soviet-equipped armed forces, and its supply of ballistic missile know-how to nuclear threshold states.

North Korea tops the list of states which Washington says could threaten it with missiles and which justify its plan to build a multi-billion dollar rocket shield. Russia says the plan would wreck three decades of arms control and start a costly new arms race.

But during Kim's visit, Russian officials have played down the arms issue and emphasised their desire to involve North Korea in opening up gas and trade links to the booming economy of capitalist South Korea.

One ambitious plan touted by Russia would open the Trans-Siberian Railway to Seoul's exports and Moscow is working on plans for a gas pipeline to China and South Korea, which could provide the North with energy and transport fees. Pyongyang's \$1.7 billion dollar debt could also feature in talks, some in Moscow talking of a partial write-off and rescheduling deal designed to boost trade.

On Sunday, Kim is scheduled to visit Russia's mission control centre and the Khrunichev space technology firm, both near Moscow, before heading for Russia's second city, St. Petersburg.

New Russian supercomputer defeats US ban

GILES WHITTELL
THE TIMES, LONDON

MOSCOW, Aug 2. - Russian scientists have defeated an American embargo on exporting supercomputers by building a machine of their own that could be used to model nuclear explosions. In theory, it would enable new nuclear powers to develop weapons in secret without testing them.

The £7-million MVS 1000M computer, whose designers say it is the most powerful in Europe, is capable of performing a trillion (1,000 billion) calculations per second and is said to have cost the government a 10th as much to build similar computers in use in USA and Japan. Its development is a breakthrough for Russian computing - "akin to breaking the sound barrier in aviation," according to Mr Vladimir Fortov, vice-president of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

He said at the supercomputer's opening that Boeing, the Russian space programme and the Indian government, were among potential customers.

Mr Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, has accused Russia of selling nuclear technology and expertise to "States of concern," and western diplomats said on that they would seek reassurances from the Kremlin that its latest computer would not find its way to countries such as Iran, Iraq and India.

All three are thought to have started nuclear weapons development programmes with the help of underfunded Russian institutes and production facilities.

The new computer, which took two years to build, uses generally available software and more than 700 off-the-shelf microprocessors. Besides particle physics, it should find applications in aerospace design, genetic engineering and

modelling global climate change.

Initially, its usefulness for nuclear physicists will be in simulating the controlled reactions involved in atomic energy generation, Mr Fortov said. A more advanced model capable of five trillion calculations per second is due to be completed by 2003.

The MVS 5000M, for which the Kremlin has earmarked another \$20 million, would be in the same league as the fastest American computers, developed since 1995 on orders from the then President Clinton specifically to simulate thermo-nuclear explosions and thereby do away with the need for physical tests that would otherwise be needed to maintain the Pentagon's ageing nuclear stockpile.

Now, Russian super-computers will have two key advantages on world markets: their low price and an almost-complete absence of export controls.

THE STATESMAN

AUG 2001

Terrorism, drugs closely linked: Putin

DAGOMYS (RUSSIA), AUG. 2. Leaders of the former Soviet republics convened on Thursday in a rustic restaurant in the mountains above a Black Sea resort to discuss regional security and economic cooperation at an informal summit. *Summit 110.16*

Joint efforts to combat terrorism were expected to be a key subject at the summit, which began on Wednesday — a day after a Chechen gunman hijacked a bus with 40 passengers in southern Russia and held it for 12 hours. At Thursday's meeting, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, said the themes of "international terrorism and extremism"

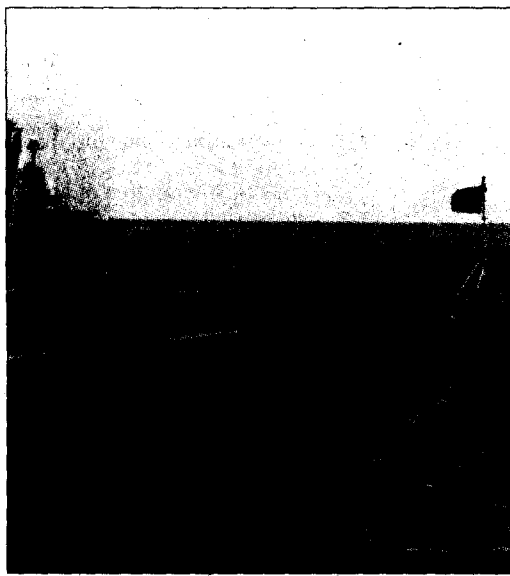
were closely linked to drug trafficking, which he called a "threat hanging over our countries," according to the Interfax news agency. He urged joint efforts to combat drug trade and AIDS, which has been spreading fast in former Soviet states amid increasing use of intravenous drugs and the sharing of dirty needles among addicts.

Presidential delegations flew in by helicopter on Wednesday to the Dagomys resort, near the city of Sochi. On Thursday, they rode 8 km from Dagomys into the mountains to confer in a wooden hut of the Tea House restaurant. — AP *278*

THE HINDU

8 AUG 2001

Divers return to site of sunken submarine



Moscow

DIVERS PLUNGED to the bottom of the Barents Sea on Saturday, beginning the long-awaited operation to raise the sunken submarine Kursk from the sea floor, the Russian navy said.

The first group of divers was lowered in a diving bell to the wreck at 1:00 a.m. (2100 GMT on Friday) to stencil holes that will be cut into the submarine's hull, navy spokesman Igor Dygalo said in a statement. A second group went down six hours later with cutting equipment and a third was to follow to begin actual cutting. "The opera-

tion to raise the Kursk is going to plan," Dygalo said.

The nuclear-powered submarine sank last August, killing all 118 crew on board. Russia says explosions of its torpedoes, through unknown causes, brought the Kursk down.

Divers recovered 12 bodies from the wreck last year, 100 meters (330 ft) below the Barents Sea north of Russia's port of Murmansk, before Arctic winter forced them to halt salvage operations.

President Vladimir Putin has vowed to raise the sub, both to recover the bodies of the crew and to dispose of its nuclear reactors.

Some environmentalists say they believe burying the reactors under concrete on the sea floor would be safer.

The Barents Sea is one of the world's most important fisheries, and any leak of radiation could be devastating. No such leaks have been reported. The plan to raise the Kursk calls for its damaged torpedo bay to be sawn off and abandoned on the sea floor for the time being.

Holes will be drilled into the rest of the hull and cables fastened, lashing the submarine to a giant floating pontoon.

The 18,000-ton submarine will then be hoisted to the surface and towed into port. Plans call for the operation to be complete by late September, before winter returns. Russia has contracted with the Dutch salvage firm Mammoet and the Rotterdam-based marine services firm Smit International to raise the Kursk.

But many of the divers working on the salvage operation are Russians and Moscow says only they will be permitted to carry out work on sensitive parts of the submarine.

AP

HD-19
26/7

Russia, France for upholding stability

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JULY 2. Russia and France have pledged to work jointly to preserve strategic stability and issued veiled criticism of U.S. plans to build a National Missile Defence.

The Presidents of the two countries, Mr. Vladimir Putin and Mr. Jacques Chirac, expressed "willingness to act jointly and on a multilateral level in the interest of building strategic stability," they said in a joint statement signed at the end of their talks in Moscow.

The two leaders said they attached priority to the task of ensuring "strategic balance in the world in new conditions that emerged after the cold war".

The statement made no direct reference to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which the U.S. wants to abandon, but stated that

"the instruments for strategic balance exist" and warned against replacing them "with a system that is not binding".

The Russian and French leaders also reiterated their support for "nuclear deterrence based on the principle of sufficiency". This clearly referred to American plans to build an anti-missile shield, which Russia and France fear will devalue their nuclear arsenals.

The two countries also emphasised the need for preventing an arms race in outer space, favoured an early enforcement of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and described the nuclear non-proliferation pact as a "major instrument of stability".

The two-day summit showed that Russia and France had overcome a chill in bilateral relations caused by Mr. Chirac's strong criticism of Russia's war in Chechnya.

Putin proposes Balkan peace plan

Philippa Fletcher
Belgrade, June 17

RUSSIAN and Yugoslav presidents on Sunday said Kosovo was the main source of instability in the Balkans and urged world leaders to ensure Albanian "terrorists" lay down their guns.

Vladimir Putin, the first Kremlin leader to visit post-communist Yugoslavia, said the country needed help from the entire international community and that Russians, who share Orthodox Slav roots with the Serbs, were ready to play a part.

"Stability in the region is seriously threatened, above all from national religious extremism and intolerance, the main source of which today is in Kosovo," Putin told reporters after his talks with Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica.

"Here I agreed completely with President Kostunica that the international community's task is to fulfil resolution 1244. However difficult it may be, we must fulfil that resolution, we must do everything for the disarmament of the terrorists," he said, referring to the UN text regulating post-war Kosovo.

"I think that the international community's attitude is sobering somewhat in that regard, particularly with tragic and sad events in Macedonia," he said. Albanian guerrillas with backing from Kosovo began operating in neighboring Macedonia



Vladimir Putin addresses a Press conference after his talks with Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica in Belgrade on Sunday.

earlier this year, bringing the majority Orthodox Slav country to the brink of civil war.

NATO has tightened its control of the Kosovo-Macedonia border to try to stop weapons and men crossing and Western leaders are pressing its Slav and ethnic Albanian leaders to agree constitutional changes to address the minority's concerns.

Putin was due later on Sunday to visit the provincial Kosovo capital Pristina. A spokesman for the NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo, KFOR, told Reuters that Putin would meet the head of the peacekeepers at Pristina airport.

Russia has around 3,000 troops as part of the force of some 40,000 peacekeepers who

replaced Yugoslav forces in Kosovo after 11 weeks of NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia in 1999 to stop its repression of the province's ethnic Albanian majority.

Kostunica said the international community had made many mistakes in Kosovo, where he said Serbs could not live safely.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 JUN 2001

Bush, Putin to meet on June 16

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 19. The United States and Russia have agreed that their leaders will meet in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana on June 16; and it has also been announced here that two working groups will be set up to study the plans to deploy a National Missile Defence (NMD) system as proposed by the Republican administration here.

The June meeting between Mr. George W. Bush and Mr. Vladimir Putin was hammered out after hectic rounds of talks between the visiting Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, and senior officials of the Bush administration.

On Friday, Mr. Ivanov met the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, three times. And in the afternoon, the former was at the White House for a meeting with the President and his National Security Advisors. Mr. Ivanov handed over a personal letter to Mr. Bush from Mr. Putin which expressed Moscow's readiness to pursue and continue a constructive dialogue with the U.S.

"The President of the United States has stressed that he is prepared to continue cooperation and dialogue with the Russian Federation and together we are prepared to lay a foundation for a more secure future for the entire world", Mr. Ivanov told the media after the White House meeting.

Moscow has been calling for a meeting of the leaders prior to the Group of Eight session in Genoa, Italy in July. Now, Mr. Bush will be meeting his Russian counterpart for the first time at the end of his four-nation trip to Europe that would include meetings with NATO allies in Brussels and leaders of the European Union in Sweden. The Slovenia meeting will set the stage for Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin's second meeting in July.

Few dispute the fact that U.S.-Russia relations are at a critical stage. For its part, Moscow has made it known that it is for continuing the dialogue on a range of subjects, but that it is opposed to the NMD on the grounds that it would spark a new arms race and jeopardise the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.



The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov (left), meets the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, at the White House in Washington on Friday. — AP

The Bush administration, on the other hand, has made it known in equally firm terms that it considers the ABM treaty an anachronism; and that along with the NMD this Republican administration is seeking vast cuts in the nuclear arsenals. Even if sceptics in this country have called the NMD esoteric, expensive and a pipe dream, the Bush administration has given every indication that it is going ahead with the project, the first phase of which is expected to be completed by 2004 or 2005.

In line with his policy of consulting allies and friends, Mr. Bush sent a high level team to Moscow last week to discuss the NMD. At least on the surface, there appears to be stiff opposition from Russia; but the Bush administration has been making the point that Moscow's

concerns and objections can be met by explaining what the U.S. really wants to do. And the Conservative lobby in the U.S. has long maintained that the ABM Treaty does not exist.

While the NMD will be high on the Bush-Putin agenda, that is not the only item at the meeting. Washington will be seriously pursuing Russia's Iran connections, especially its concern over the latter's programmes in the realm of weapons of mass destruction. And on West Asia, the Bush administration has been seeking to exchange notes on how best to get involved in the peace process there as also in having Moscow on its side on the issue of the Iraqi sanctions. And politically, Moscow has been quite irritated at the statements of Washington on Chechnya.

THE HINDU

Russia unconvinced by US defence plans

Moscow, May 11 (Reuters): Russia remained unconvinced about Washington's anti-missile defence plans after initial talks today, but both sides called the discussions substantive and pledged to keep talking.

Deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz, heading a US team touring Europe to marshal support for President George W.

Bush's National Missile Defence plan, held two hours of talks at the foreign ministry and was meeting other officials too.

The diplomatic language on both sides suggested there had been much detailed talking but little if any change in positions, a pattern largely repeated elsewhere as US teams criss-crossed Europe and Asia this week.

Russian foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said talks had been substantive but left "more questions than answers".

"The US has been unable to give us arguments to convince us that they see clearly how to solve the problems of international security without damaging disarmament agreements which have stood for 30 years," he said. US deputy national security adviser Stephen Hadley told reporters outside the ministry: "The fact that we are meeting and opening this dialogue is a sign of progress."

"It is a first step in a consultation process which will continue over the weeks ahead and include discussions and consultations between our two Presidents," he said, also using the word "substantive" to describe today's encounter. He said the US side had answered some Russian questions and given them much thought, but there was more thinking to do.

Yakovenko also noted talks would continue, in the first instance when foreign minister Igor Ivanov visits Washington next week to meet US secretary of state Colin Powell.

Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin are scheduled to meet at a multinational summit in Italy in July but may get together before that for a first bilateral meeting.

Nato expansion

US and Russia argued today over the contentious issue of Nato enlargement that could bring the military alliance to Moscow's doorstep.

As leaders from nine ex-Communist states looking to join Nato met for the second day of a conference in Bratislava focusing mainly on expansion, influential US Senators Trent Lott and Jesse Helms strongly backed the move.

"We strongly endorse the emphasis on Nato enlargement — the cornerstone of a Europe whole, free and secure," the two said in a letter addressed to the conference host. "It is in America's interest that the process of Nato enlargement continues decisively."

THE TELEGRAPH

12 MAY 2001

Russia loses control of 4 satellites after fire

By JON BOYLE

Moscow, May 10: Russia lost control of four military satellites overnight because of a fire at an important relay station, a senior military official said on Thursday.

Military chiefs insisted however the overall satellite control system was working normally. Some US experts have warned recently that failures by Russia's ageing early-warning satellite system could lead Moscow to launch nuclear missiles in reaction to a false alarm. "As a result of the fire, we do not have constant contact with four satellites," Mr Anatoly Perminov,

commander of Russia's space forces, told state-run RTR television.

"Restoring permanent contact with these satellites will technically be possible once the fire is extinguished," he said. "The entire satellite control system is working normally, including ones with a military designation." Itar-Tass news agency quoted defence ministry officials as saying an electrical short circuit started the blaze at the relay station near Serpukhov, in the Kaluga region some 200 km southwest of Moscow. Fire fighters were sent from the capital to help tackle the blaze with specialised foam-making equipment that

defence ministry crews on the scene lacked. No one was injured and all secret documents, computer programmes, weapons and equipment were rescued from the burning relay station, Mr Perminov said. Starved since the collapse of the Soviet Union of the vast funds it once enjoyed, the Russian military keeps much ageing equipment in use well past its designed lifespan.

Military specialist Alexander Golis said that 70 per cent of Russia's 100-130 military satellites were nearing the end of their operational life. Bureaucratic reorganisations have left the satellite network short of

cash and bedevilled by a complicated chain of command. "Another of the habitual bureaucratic restructurings is going on right now. All the space forces are being separated from the structure of the strategic rocket forces. Two years ago they merged," he said. Mr Geoffrey Forden of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wrote last week that Russia's failing space-based early-warning systems posed a potential risk. "Russia no longer has the working fleet of early warning satellites that reassured its leaders that they were not under attack during the most recent false alert," he said in an article. (Reuters)

Russia, Germany reconcile formally

Moscow, April 10: Russia and Germany, who had fought two of the bloodiest wars in the twentieth century, formally marked their post-war reconciliation with their leaders laying a common wreath at a war memorial in St. Petersburg on Tuesday.

The two jointly laid a wreath reading "From the President of Russia and the Chancellor of Germany."

This is the first time the adversaries in the two world wars and cold war have marked their post-war reconciliation so

formally. On June 22, Russia will mark the 60th anniversary of the Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in which over 27 million were killed. In a highly symbolic gesture, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Russian President Vladimir Putin

stood with bowed heads at Piskaryovo cemetery's eternal flame and then walked along a pathway between the tombs where 500,000 defenders of Leningrad, as the city was then known, are buried.

Over one million residents of Leningrad had died of hunger and bombardments during 900 days of German siege of their city during the World War II.

Mr. Schroeder arrived in St. Petersburg on Monday to preside over a two-day Russian-German forum of leading politicians, economists, industrialists and cultural workers attended by hundreds of representatives from both sides.

Russia's huge debt to former GDR and greater German involvement in Russia's economy are some of the main issues of Russian-German dialogue. (PTI)



ATTENTIVE LISTENER: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (left) listens to Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) during the first session of the Petersburg Dialogue, a forum on Russian-German relations, in St. Petersburg on Monday. (AP)

Kosovo could be Europe's mini-Afghanistan: Putin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MOSCOW, April 10. - Criticising the Nato for arming Kosovo



Mr Putin

separatists, Russian President, Mr Vladimir Putin, has warned Europe that it could have its "own mini-Afghanistan" in the heart of the continent.

Speaking at a joint interview with German Chancellor, Mr Gerhard Schroeder, to Russian state TV RTR and German ZDF channel, Mr Putin urged Europe to strictly implement the

UN Security Council resolution on disarming the Kosovan extremists and give a greater role to Belgrade in the breakaway province of Yugoslavia.

"What I will say now, I would be for the first time speaking publicly. Europe faces menace of criminal redistribution of its economy if Kosovo is not cordoned off," Mr Putin said.

"In Europe, with its transparent and porous borders, it is very difficult to strengthen national frontiers. An average European goes to court to resolve disputes, but the terrorists have only one method, they shoot in the head and take refuge in the uncontrolled territory," he said in an obvious reference to Russia's bitter ex-

perience in combating Chechnyan rebels.

"Small and medium business is most prone to this threat and Europe is not ready to face it," Mr Putin added.

Russia-Germany ties: Russia and Germany who had fought two wars in the twentieth century, formally marked their post-war reconciliation with their leaders laying a common wreath at a war memorial in St. Petersburg today.

The two jointly laid a wreath reading "from the President of Russia and the Chancellor of Germany." This is the first time the adversaries in the two world wars and cold war have marked their post-war reconciliation so formally.

THE STATESMAN

11 APR 2001

Russia clouds fate of Pak Super planes

Islamabad, April 8 (PTI): Pakistan's bid to acquire Super-7 fighter planes in collaboration with China has suffered a setback after Russia backed out of a deal to provide the required engines for the aircraft.

Diplomatic sources said the Russian decision not to supply the required engine could sound a death knell to the ambitious Sino-Pak project to build a futuristic aircraft as Beijing has no matching engine yet in its shelf to fit the fighter aircraft.

Moscow had agreed to supply over 100 engines but later backed off few months ago, sources said. However, it was not yet known whether the Russians have supplied any MiG-29 engines for experimental purposes, which could enable the Chinese to develop an equivalent in the coming years.

In terms of weapon systems and avionics, Super-7 was believed to be a match to the state of the art, Russian Su-30 aircraft being acquired by India.

The story of the S-7 was a repetition of Russia's promise to supply MiG-29 and Su-27 Aircraft in 1992. Russia had later backed out under pressure from India, sources said.

The intensity of the setback can be gauged from the importance the Air Force had attached to the project in its official book *The Story of the Pakistan Air Force*, released last year which said, "the S-7 is vital for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) as it is expected to fulfil about 70 per cent of

its operational requirements." The induction of the S-7, the book said was very important as Pakistan's 350-odd fighter aircraft consisting of F-16, F-7, A-5, Mirage, K-8 were poised for a phase out, it said.

The Super-7 project was cleared by former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1995. The MoU was signed during deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to China in 1999.

The project, also termed S-7, was conceived by the China Aero Technology Import and Export Corporation in 1992 which later invited PAF to invest in the design development.

As per the project profile, S-7 aircraft, which was designed to be multi-role light weight day and night fighter to attack ground targets, ships and enemy aircraft from considerable range would be fitted with MiG-29 engines to be supplied by Russian Mikoyan Design Bureau.

Besides the Russian engine, S-7's design included multimode Pulse Doppler Radar, a mission computer, INS multi-function displays. Its weapons systems included a variety of conventional and guided weapons.

Bogged down by the Pressler Amendment which prevented the induction of American F-16s and the serious economic constraints resulting in the Government's decision to cap its defence budget, Pakistan's continues to rely on 40 odd early versions of F-16s supplied by the Americans in 1993.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 APR 2001

Russia shifts priorities from U.S. to Europe

By Vladimir Radyuhin

110-17 9/12
MOSCOW, APRIL 8. The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin is hosting the German Chancellor, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, in St. Petersburg on Monday in what is seen as Moscow's new policy of prioritising Europe over the United States.

The Russian-German informal summit comes just over two weeks after Mr. Putin received a very warm reception at a European Union summit in Stockholm and a week after the EU foreign policy and security chief, Mr. Javier Solana, visited Moscow to declare that the European Union and Russia are "strategic partners" and would cooperate on security and defence issues. In his state-of-the-union address last week the Russian President described "integration with Europe" as "one of the main directions" of Russian foreign policy and called for strengthening "partnership relations with the European Union". Significantly, Mr. Putin made no reference to the United States in his speech.

Russia's emphasis on building closer ties with Europe comes at a time when relations between Moscow and Washington are at the lowest ebb since the Cold War. Even though Moscow has declared that the U. S. is no longer a top priority for Russia, it is nevertheless willing to accept Germany's mediation to help normalise its relations with U.S.

Mr. Schroeder, who met the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, in Washington on March 29, is expected to offer his "good offices" between the U.S. and Russia when he meets Mr. Putin on Monday. Germany would like to encourage a "close dialogue" between Washington and Moscow on the National Missile Defence (NMD), a German official told the press on the eve of the meeting in St. Petersburg.

The Putin-Schroeder summit, timed to coincide with the "St. Petersburg dialogue" forum of Russian and German business chiefs, will be dominated by economic issues, notably Russia's \$24-billion debt to Germany. Russia has proposed swapping part of its debt for stakes in attractive Russian enterprises and the St. Petersburg meeting is likely to set in motion the first of such deals.

The German Chancellor also counts on Mr. Putin's support for the Kyoto protocol against global-warming carbon dioxide emissions, which the Bush Administration wants to back out of.



A soldier stands on guard at a polling station in Lima, Peru, during the presidential elections on Sunday. — AP

THE HINDU

9 APR 2001



Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin after signing the Irkutsk Declaration at Irkutsk on Sunday.

AP PHOTO

Mori, Putin move towards peace pact

HT-11
2/6/01

Irkutsk (Russia), March 25

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori on Sunday made progress toward resolving a dispute over the Kuril islands and concluding a peace treaty formally ending World War II.

Putin and Mori met for 90 minutes in the eastern Siberian city of Irkutsk. Putin said later the talks were a continuation of work on concluding a treaty. "It is very important to confirm a mutual desire to continue work on concluding a peace treaty," he said.

Mori and Putin began discussions over the islands at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum last year, but failed to break the deadlock that has prevented the conclusion of a peace treaty.

Japan and Russia in 1998 agreed to sign a treaty by the end of 2000, but several meetings between Putin and Mori last year made little progress on settling the dispute over the four islands in the southern Kuril chain which Russia occupied during the closing days of World War II and which both countries continue to claim as their own.

In an interview with Japan's NHK television on the eve of his meeting with Mori, Putin said Russia in principle agreed to transfer two islands to Japan under an agreement signed by the Soviet Union in 1956. But, Putin said, the 1956 declaration was unclear on the actual transfer of the islands. "It is not recorded there on what conditions the islands are to be transferred," he said. "All this is a subject for talks."

Two years ago, then Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi pledged to seek an end to the dispute by the end of 2000. The islands-called the Kurils in Russia and the northern territories in Japan-are surrounded by rich fishing grounds. Russia has been unwilling to relinquish its control over the islands because Russian leaders don't want to lose another piece of the former Soviet Union.

AP

Rain triggers fear after killer quake

Hiroshima, March 25

RAIN TRIGGERED fears of landslides here today after two people were killed and some 160 others injured in the deadliest earthquake to hit Japan for six years.

The quake, measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, on Saturday hit Hiroshima and the surrounding area, some 600 km west of Tokyo. The rain began before dawn, forcing some 20 people to evacuate to nearby shelters in the coastal city of Kure — the hardest hit by the worst seismic disaster in Japan since the massive 1995 quake.

The powerful quake damaged houses, snapped power lines and broke water pipes. The national fire authority said the quake, which struck at 11:58 IST, left two dead and 161 injured. It also damaged 4,424 houses.

The casualties and damage would have been worse if the quake's focus, located 51 km under the seabed off Hiroshima, had been closer to the surface, the meteorological agency said.

AP/AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 MAR 2001

Space station plunges into Pacific after 15-year mission

Mir comes to a sizzling end

Korolyov (Russia), March 23 (Reuters): Remnants of Russia's Mir space station plunged into the Pacific Ocean today, thundering spectacularly over Fiji with a huge smoke trail after engineers ended the laboratory's "triumphant" 15-year mission.

Mission control outside Moscow said a final signal at 5.07 am GMT switched on engines for a 20-minute burst that irrevocably altered the station's trajectory, pitching it into a designated splashdown zone in a remote part of the Pacific Ocean.

"We saw five or six fragments with a huge smoke trail that lasted for 10 to 15 seconds. (It was) followed some time later by a couple of sonic booms," said Reuters photographer Mark Baker from Nadi in the South Pacific islands of Fiji.

Australian officials said they believed Mir — which means both "peace" and "world" in Russian — ended up in an unpopulated part of the Pacific some 3,000 km southwest of Britain's Pitcairn Islands.

"It occurred in the exact area that the Russian space agency had predicted, between Australia and Chile," said emergency management Australia managing director David Templeman.

South Pacific nations had been on standby in case chunks hit land



Remnants of the Mir space station burn up as it enters the Earth's atmosphere over Nadi, Fiji. (AP/PTI)

instead of water. A fleet of 27 tuna boats fishing in the target zone were not hit by any debris, a spokeswoman for the fleet, Tana McHale, said from California. "They didn't even get a decent light show," she said.

At the other side of the globe in Mission Control, there were some long faces as the reality hit home, but also pride in Russia's achievement at keeping Mir aloft far longer than planned — and relieved smiles that everything

went to schedule.

"Mir has completed its triumphant mission," said an announcer at Mission Control outside Moscow. "It was unprecedented in the history of space research." The giant 136-tonne structure — a collection of cylindrical modules sprouting a profusion of antennae and solar panels — had been in orbit since 1986. Chunks of the craft burned up on re-entry but over 20 tonnes of metal splashed into the sea.

"Mir proved Russia cannot just build things but can operate them too," Russian Space Agency chief Yuri Koptev said. Senior space official Nikolai Anfimov told reporters Russia had not had the means to pinpoint where Mir's remnants landed. "We are hoping to get some observers' information and then we can analyse it," he said.

Mir's demise capped 15 years of a record-breaking but also accident-prone career. Koptev said the mission had cost \$4.2 billion, not least because of running repairs towards the end. "Given the state of the station we are obliged to do this," he said.

But most Russians questioned on the streets of Moscow said they felt the loss deeply. "I am really sorry. It is a whole epoch that has gone by," Nadezhda, 29, a company manager, said. "When they launched it I was at school and now my daughter is seven."

Sergei, a 42-year-old economist, said he did not believe in co-operation with Washington on the International Space Station (ISS). "We are giving up our positions one by one," he said.

"As for the ISS, we do not have enough money and the Americans can kick us out of there at any time."

THE TELEGRAPH

24 MAR 2001

Russia firm on disputed isles

By Vladimir Radyuhin ¹⁰⁻¹⁶

MOSCOW, MARCH 25. Russia and Japan have failed to make a breakthrough in resolving their territorial dispute, but agreed to intensify the talks.

Meeting the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, in the Siberian city of Irkutsk on Sunday, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, confirmed Moscow's willingness to return two disputed islands to Japan, but also indicated his opposition to handing over the other two islands claimed by Japan. The two countries are locked in a dispute over four small islands that the Soviet Union seized from Japan in World War II.

In Irkutsk, Russia for the first time agreed to confirm in writing that the 1956 Soviet-Japanese declaration, which called for the return of two islands, remains in effect. "We verify that this 1956 declaration is a fundamental legal document establishing the departure point for peace treaty negotiations," the sides said in a joint statement signed at the end of the Irkutsk summit.

However, Mr. Putin dashed Tokyo's hopes that the return of the two islands — Shikotan and Habomai — would pave the way for talks on the other two sought by Japan — Etorofu and Kunashiri.

Addressing a joint press conference with Mr. Mori after the talks, the Russian leader said the 1956

²⁶⁹ declaration "did not specify the terms on which the (two) islands were to be returned". "This is a matter for talks," Mr. Putin said, in a clear reference to the long-time Russian stand that the return of the two islands should put an end to the territorial dispute with Japan. Mr. Putin also resisted pressure from Mr. Mori to set a deadline for resolving the territorial dispute.

Russia's pledge to return two islands may be too small a gain for the embattled Mr. Mori to retain

control of the ruling party and premiership in the coming months.

At the same time, reference to all the four islands claimed by Japan in the joint statement should sustain Tokyo's hope of having its way in the long run.

The Russian and Japanese leaders "agreed to speed up further talks aimed at concluding a peace treaty by resolving the question of sovereignty over the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai."



The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, gestures, as the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, accompanies him during a visit to a cemetery on Sunday in Shelekhov, near Irkutsk, Russia, where some of the ashes of Mr. Mori's father are buried. — AP

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2001

Russia slams door on 4 US diplomats

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, MARCH 23

IN the first apparent retaliation for the US expulsion of 50 Russian diplomats, the Russian foreign ministry today announced that four US embassy officials would soon be thrown out, and the US State Department said 46 more would be sent home by July 1.

The US Deputy Chief of Mission, John Ordway, was called to the ministry to be read an official protest of the US expulsions and warned that the deportation of four embassy officials was just the first step in a series.

"J Ordway was read a decisive protest in connection with the unlawful activities of a number of official American representatives in Russia," the ministry said in a statement.

"It was announced that four employees of the American embassy in Moscow should leave Russia in the few next days for activities incompatible with their status," the statement continued, using the usual euphemism for espionage.

"J Ordway was also apprised about other measures for stopping unlawful activities of official American representatives in Russia." The terse statement did not

elaborate, but in Washington, the state department said 46 more US diplomats would have to leave the country by summer.

Russian officials at the highest levels had been working out what they called an appropriately "painful" response to the imminent expulsion of four Russian diplomats, and the demand that 46 others leave the United States by July.

Russian officials called the US move politically driven and a throwback to the Cold War, and warned it could seriously injure wobbly relations between the former rivals.

"We will easily find" US diplomats to be

expelled "in a more painful form to the United States than it was in our case," Sergei Ivanov, Chief of Russia's influential security council, said on Polish state television during a visit to Warsaw late yesterday.

The roiling spy scandal was the latest sign of rising tensions between the two countries, which have clashed over Washington's plans to deploy a limited missile defence system, NATO's eastward expansion and US allegations of Russian corruption.

Experts have already described the situation as the relapse of the Cold War era.

WAR OF EXPULSION

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

24 MAR 2001

Russia rejects Japan's claim on island

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, MAY 14. Russia has rebuffed Japan's renewed claim of four Kurile Islands, but confirmed its readiness to consider handing over two of the four disputed isles.

The Russian Foreign Ministry denied Moscow had ever agreed to discuss the fate of all the four islands claimed by Japan. At the same time, the Ministry reiterated Moscow's consent to hand over two smaller islands after signing a peace treaty with Japan. Russia and Japan are yet to sign a full-fledged treaty ending their enmity in World War II.

The former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, said on Sunday that during his meeting with the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, in Irkutsk in March Moscow and Tokyo had basically agreed to launch talks on the return of Shikotan island and the Habomai islets with separate negotiations started for the larger Kunashiri and Etorofu islands.

"No agreement was ever reached to conduct separate consultations on terms of handing over the Smaller Kurile Chain (Shikotan and Habomai) and on the fate of the Kunashiri and Etorofu," said the Russian Foreign Ministry in a statement on Monday. It recalled that the sides had agreed to

pursue talks on the basis of the 1956 declaration, in which the former Soviet Union voiced "readiness to hand over to Japan the Smaller Kurile Chain after a peace treaty has been signed".

The statement appeared to have been issued in response to a hardening of Japan's stand on the disputed islands under the newly elected Prime Minister, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi.

In a letter to the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, brought to Moscow by a group of Japanese MPs, Mr. Koizumi made it clear Russia must recognise Japan's claim to all the four disputed islands, known as Northern Territories in Japan, before a bilateral peace treaty is signed.

The previous Japanese government was inclined to signing an interim peace pact with Russia after getting two smaller Kurile Islands. Even this possible concession to Japan is meeting strong resistance in Russia.

The Lower House Speaker, Mr. Gennady Seleznyov, has ruled out ceding any Russian territory to Japan.

"There can be no question of recarving borders," Mr. Seleznyov told a press conference on Monday. The handing over of disputed islands to Japan would create an unwelcome precedent.

THE HINDU

15 MAY 2001

CHECHNYA / RUSSIA CHANGES TACTICS

Moscow halts troop withdrawal

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, MAY 12. The Russian military is changing tactics in Chechnya for the second time this year in what amounts to tacit recognition of its failure to deal with the continuing rebel insurgency in the region.

Russia's new Defence Minister, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, has ordered a halt to troop withdrawals from Chechnya announced earlier this year. Under a plan approved by the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, in January, the forces stationed in Chechnya were to be slashed from 80,000 to 50,000 troops. However, after just 5,000 troops had been pulled out Mr. Ivanov told a meeting of military and security chiefs in Chechnya over the weekend that there would be no further withdrawals.

The stay-put order will entail a change in tactics as the pullout plan called for removing the bulk of army units from Chechnya. With Moscow claiming to have crushed organised rebel resistance, the emphasis in the military operation was to be placed on special anti-terrorist forces from the Federal Security Service and the Interior Ministry. However, the spring flareup of rebel activity forced the Russian command to keep the Defence Ministry forces in Chechnya.

Military sources in Chechnya said rebels had dramatically stepped up attacks on Russian forces over the past month. Last

Sunday saw the fiercest battle in the region for over a year, when about 50 rebels ambushed a Russian military convoy in the town of Argun and for many hours beat back attempts by Russian troops reinforced with tanks, artillery and helicopter gunships to dislodge them from their positions inside a five-storeyed building. The Moscow-installed civilian administration in Chechnya was ordered to move out of the capital Grozny last week because of security concerns, just a fortnight after it had moved in.

Russia's Interior Minister, Mr. Boris Gryzlov, has announced a plan to deploy military patrols in Chechen towns and villages during the night. Until now Russian troops would barricade themselves inside big garrisons at night and let the rebels take over control. The new tactics will require dispersing small military units throughout the republic. This will expose them to more hit-and-run attacks by rebels and may increase Russian losses.

Since February the military stopped giving weekly casualty figures in Chechnya. As of February, Russia lost close to 2,000 soldiers and over 5,000 were wounded since October 1999, when federal forces launched a second bid in five years to crush Chechen separatists. Moscow has consistently refused to hold peace talks with the rebel leader, Mr. Aslan Maskhadov.

THE HINDU

13 MAY 2001

Mass expulsion rocks US-Russia ties

FROM MARTIN NESIRKY

Moscow, March 22 (Reuters): Russia and the United States were locked in a deepening row yesterday after a US official said it planned to expel some 50 Russian diplomats in what would be the biggest mass expulsion since the Cold War ended.

An unnamed US official said yesterday the United States was expelling diplomats suspected of being intelligence officers, partly in retaliation for the case of FBI agent Robert Harissen, accused of spying for Moscow over 15 years.

"Concerns have been raised for many years about the level and the presence of intelligence officers in this country," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. "The state department yesterday asked a certain number of Russians to leave, declaring

them persona non grata.

The Kremlin said the expulsion plans would be a sorry lapse into Cold War spy-mania if carried out, and security sources told Russian news agencies Moscow would retaliate swiftly. "If these reports are true, such action would cause deep regret in Russia," Interfax news agency quoted President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser as saying.

"Any campaigns of spymania or search for an enemy are only worthy of deep regret and are a relapse into the Cold War era," Sergei Prikhodko said in the first Kremlin reaction. Foreign minister Igor Ivanov told Russian reporters he might have an official statement later on the spy row.

A diplomatic source told Interfax Russia was waiting for confirmation from Wash-

ington that diplomats were being expelled. "If it happens, Moscow's retaliatory measures will follow without delay," the source said.

US ambassador James Collins held brief pre-arranged talks at the Russian foreign ministry today but declined to comment as he left the Stalinesque skyscraper in central Moscow. "I have no comment whatsoever on this matter," he said. Interfax said deputy foreign minister Georgy Mamedov had discussed with Collins the growing number of irritants in ties with US President George W. Bush's administration.

Russia denounced plans by US officials to meet a Chechen rebel envoy as an "explicitly unfriendly act". A US official had said on Tuesday contacts with Ilyas Akhmadov, the foreign minister of the separatist Chechen government that is resisting

Russia's military onslaught in the region, were planned for later this week. "Such meetings seriously complicate our joint fight against international terrorism, which is one of the most dangerous challenges to world security and stability, and cannot but influence Russian-U.S. relations," the ministry said.

Russian security and diplomatic sources, quoted by Russian news agencies, have been swift to condemn the US plans and have vowed to respond in kind. "To respond adequately, Russia would have to expel hundreds of employees from the US embassy to reflect the proportionate Russian losses in the United States," RIA news agency quoted a Russian security source as saying. Russia had 190 people at its missions in the United States while the United States had 1,100 of its citizens in Russia.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2003 MAR 23

23 MAR 2001

119-16

Mir's motley assortment 2373

MOSCOW, MARCH 22. Russia's veteran space station Mir is due to fall back to earth in a ball of flame on Friday, taking with it a Bible, a Koran and a motley assortment of cosmic mutant fungi.

During its 15-year lifetime, which spanned the Soviet era, the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of communism and a tentative start to market reforms in a post-Communist Russia, 106 cosmonauts and astronauts have lived on Mir.

In the 12 years, six months and nine days during which Mir was inhabited, the space station completed 86,220 orbits of the earth.

Valeri Polyakov, by spending 437 consecutive days on board, demonstrated that in theory manned flights to Mars are possible. U.S. astronaut Shannon Lucid holds the record for the longest stay on Mir by a woman — 188 days.

When the orbiter burns up on re-entry into the earth's atmosphere, 11 tonnes of scientific equipment, a library of 100 books, including the Bible and the Koran, and a photo of the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, will also be incinerated.

Temperatures on board Mir will reach some 1,500 degrees celsius on re-entry, which should be hot enough to destroy aggressive forms of fungi inhabiting Mir, some of which date from the Salut-7 Russian space station.

None of the micro-organisms have proved harmful to the various crews over the years, but they could

mutate with unforeseen consequences if returned to earth. Experts believe none will survive re-entry.

If all goes to plan, Mir should splash down safely in the south Pacific, but Russia has taken out a \$200 million insurance policy to cover any claims should stray chunks of the 140-tonne station cause damage or injury on dry land.

Despite becoming increasingly accident-prone as its life extended well beyond its original design, Mir set a raft of benchmarks which the international space station (ISS) that has superseded it could struggle to break.

The invaluable knowledge of long-haul space flight gleaned aboard Mir will considerably enhance work on the ISS, ensuring the legacy of the Soviet era will live on.

Meanwhile, technicians today successfully prepared Mir for its plunge to fiery oblivion by switching back on its guidance systems to help bring the 136-tonne craft back to earth.

The operation will allow them to manoeuvre the craft into its final position, from which it should crash into the Pacific Ocean.

"The orientation has been carried out successfully. All systems are working normally," a duty officer told Reuters. Flight engineers will fire three engine bursts tomorrow beginning at 0603 hrs IST. These will slow down the craft and allow it to be drawn back toward earth. — Reuters

REUTERS

'Caspian Sea' legal status needs to be defined

IRAN'S PRESIDENT Mohamad Khatami and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have stressed definition of the controversial legal status of the oil-rich Caspian sea.

In a joint press conference, Putin yesterday said Iran and Russia have agreed to hold several expert meetings on the Caspian Sea before taking part in a summit of the five States surrounding the Caspian Sea. The issue should be settled in a way that the shipping and fishing rights of other States not be stamped on, he added. The Caspian Sea is estimated to contain the world's third largest reserves of oil and gas. The Islamic republic has repeatedly indicated it will agree to an equitable sharing of the oil rich Caspian Sea, which would give it a 20 per cent share.

Putin on vacation

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived early Tuesday in the Siberian province of Khakasia, for a short vacation.

PTI/AP, Moscow

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 MAR 2007

15 MAR 2007

5/8 TUNNEL STATUS 14/3
Russia kicks up a superpower row

ALL the time the Russian Ambassador to Washington was confabulating with his officers, the CIA and the FBI were sitting in a tunnel, dug below the embassy building and monitoring. Of course, embassies that belong to countries with which one is likely to have a conflict of interest, present or future, are routinely bugged. But espionage works on the deterrent principle that all covert actions should be countered covertly, otherwise a lot of dirty linen might end up being washed in public. The Russian Foreign Ministry says the tunnel would amount to a 'blatant violation of recognised norms of international law', etc, but it is highly unlikely that the KGB was unaware of the tunnel all these years.

The Russian Foreign Ministry's indignation is also a reflection of the tension prevailing between the two countries over the National Missile Defence and incursions that American military might have been making in Russia's immediate neighbourhood. The other thing is that the tunnel provides the Russians with an opportunity to score a point in the context of the developing quarrel over the deployment of an American missile shield in violation of the 1972 ABM treaty. If we apply the perverse logic of superpower rivalry, we can even say that the tunnel is, in fact, very flattering to the Russians, because it puts them on a strategic par with the Americans. It is a reminder of the kind of threat that the Soviet Union once posed and bringing up the issue may be a way of re-asserting some of the now highly-diminished power in terms of something that is more intangible — status.

THE STATESMAN

9 4 MAR 2001

Putin revives Russian-Vietnam bonhomie

HANOI (VIETNAM), MARCH 3. After paying his respects to the embalmed body of Ho Chi Minh, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, left for home on Friday showing some satisfaction that he had re-established Russia as a player in Asia.

With his visits to South Korea and to this citadel of solidarity with Russia's Soviet past, Mr. Putin settled important economic issues of Soviet-era debt, advanced Russian energy and transport projects that could reap significant benefits for Moscow over the next decade, and showed that he is able to play a constructive — perhaps crucial — role in defusing the region's most urgent security threat, the North Korean ballistic missile programme.

But the Russian leader's foray to Asia, where two-thirds of Russian territory lies, also showed just how far Russia lags behind the United States, Japan and China in playing a meaningful role in security and trade in the region. Where the U.S. maintains 37,000 troops in South Korea and conducts more than \$55 billions in annual trade with Seoul, Russia is just starting, hitting the \$2.5-billion mark last year. In Vietnam, where Moscow's profile once dominated, economic relations with Hanoi have been all but frozen by the

impasse over Soviet-era debt, while Hanoi's trade with the U.S. has reached nearly \$1 billion and could expand greatly if Congress approves a trade pact completed in Mr. Bill Clinton's second term as President.

Although he has almost no capital to invest and no visible means to finance Russian exports, Mr. Putin has gotten down to business like a traveling salesman, looking for opportunities in India, China, Iran, Cuba and elsewhere, to clear Soviet accounts as best as he can and move on to offer what he would like to sell, so Russia can revive its dilapidated industries, especially those that he deems still competitive in the energy and military sectors. And he has scored some notable successes.

One senior Western diplomat here said that he was not at all concerned by the announcement that Russia was willing to resume arms sales to Vietnam. First of all, he said, Vietnam's once vaunted armed forces have become a "marshmallow" of neglect and deterioration. "I am concerned that the weakness of the Vietnamese military could stimulate mischief on the part of other countries in the region," the diplomat said, a not-too-subtle reference to China, which invaded Vietnam in 1979, after Vietnam had invaded Cambodia with Soviet backing. "The military needs to be

modernised, and the Vietnamese like Russian weapons," the diplomat said, adding, however, that "there is no way that they are going to sell any weapons until Vietnam has an economy to support their purchase."

Thus for Russia, clearing away the debt issue was an important milestone in making its return to Vietnam — however modest — possible, the diplomat said. As if to underscore that point, Vietnam's leaders organised a rally on Friday of thousands of former Vietnamese students trained in the Soviet Union, some of them now senior members of the Communist Party here, to say farewell to Mr. Putin with cheers of, "Long live friendship!" in the hall still known as the Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Palace.

In his remarks, Mr. Putin touched on the effects of the Soviet collapse, which stranded thousands of Vietnamese students in Moscow and other educational centers and cut them off from financing. "I am glad that our relations, which have lasted already for 50 years, were not the object of serious changes," he said, referring to some of the problems of the last decade. He told them that Moscow's aim in the future would be "not to lose or betray our cooperation." — AP

THE HINDU

4 MAR 2001

Russia to aid Korean dialogue

hmsin By Vladimir Radyuhin *X10-17*

MOSCOW, FEB. 26. Russia will do its best to normalise relations between North and South Korea, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, said on Monday as he left Moscow for an official visit to South Korea.

"As Korea's next-door neighbour which maintains traditionally friendly relations with it, Russia can and must make its positive contribution" to a North-South reconciliation, Mr. Putin said in an interview published today, reiterating Moscow's bid to play a role in multilateral mechanisms on the peninsula. Until now, Russia had no say in the peace talks conducted in a four-party format between the two Koreas, China and the United States. The North's supreme leader, Mr. Kim Jong-Il, is expected to visit Moscow in April, to return Mr. Putin's visit to Pyongyang last July.

In Seoul, Mr. Putin will also seek to step up economic cooperation with South Korea and develop trilateral cooperation with North Korea. Russia, in

particular, is keen to build an oil and gas pipeline and to link South Korea to Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway via North Korea. Mr. Putin will also discuss cutting Russia's \$ 1.8-billion debt to South Korea by supplying weapons to Seoul and upgrading North Korea's power plants under South Korea's humanitarian aid package to its northern neighbour.

From South Korea, Mr. Putin will fly to Vietnam in what will be the first ever visit by a Russian President to that country.

Vietnam and Russia will sign a joint statement on strategic partnership and a number of cooperation agreements in economy, science and technology, trade and education. Economic ties between two close Cold-War allies faltered after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but Russia still has a significant stake in Vietnam's key oil and gas industry.

Mr. Putin is also expected to discuss the future of Cam Ranh Bay naval base where Russia has a lease that expires in 2004.

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2001

Russia presents anti-missile plans

REUTERS

MOSCOW, Feb. 20. — Russia today handed over its proposals on European anti-missile defence to the visiting Nato secretary general, Mr George Robertson. Moscow regards the set of proposals as an alternative to the US national missile defence system.

"The priority for us is to achieve a common understanding," Mr Robertson told defence minister Mr Igor Sergeyev at the start of talks with top Russian officials due to culminate in the opening of a Nato information office here.

Later a dossier containing the Russian proposals was given to Mr Robertson.

Colonel-general Leonid Ivashov said the three-stage plan for non-strategic anti-



Mr Igor Sergeyev

missile defence, which puts closer assessment of the threat and political efforts

before military hardware, would keep existing arms accords intact.

Gen Ivashov, who heads the defence ministry's foreign relations department, said the proposal was "radically different from what the Americans are proposing".

He said it was "not a defence for the whole of European territory, only a part, the main part of European territory".

Russia has been alarmed by US plans to push ahead with NMD which, Moscow believes, would undermine the cornerstone 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty and trigger a new arms race.

The NMD is touted by Washington as a form of protection from missile attack: by what it considers to be rogue nations such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2001

Russia irked at US, UK raids

AP Moscow, Feb. 17: Russia issued fresh denunciations on Saturday of US-British raids on Iraq, saying the attacks proved both countries were determined to use force and side-step the United Nations in dealing with Baghdad. *Russia*

Mr Sergei Prikhodko, deputy head of the Kremlin administration, said Russia would continue to criticise any such action if it had no explicit backing from the UN Security Council. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

18 FEB 2001

Handwritten mark

Russia test-fires ballistic missiles

MOSCOW, FEB. 16. Russian armed forces on Friday test-launched two ballistic missiles, one from a land-based silo in northwestern Russia and the other from a nuclear-powered submarine in the Barents Sea. *HD-16*

The launches came amid an outpouring of anger among top military officials over U.S. allegations that Russia was selling missile technology to dangerous regimes, and over the U.S. plan to pursue a National Missile Defence (NMD) system. Russia says that plan could derail the strategic balance of power.

Mr. Ilshat Bamchurin, the head of the press service of the Strategic Missile Forces, said a Topol-M Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile had been launched successfully from the Plesefsk cosmodrome to a target on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia's Far East. He said the launch was part of a training exercise. The Northern Fleet launched another ballistic missile from a submarine in the Barents Sea to the Kura test range on Kamchatka, said the Fleet spokesman, Mr. Igor Dygalo. *13/2*

"The successful shooting of a ballistic missile from underwater was yet another confirmation of the effectiveness of the system of the military administration, and also the reliability of the naval strategic nuclear forces," Mr. Dygalo said in a press statement. The launch was part of a strategic command and staff exercise. Mr. Dygalo said the submarine crew "showed a high level of training in the course of the conduct of the given task."

The Topol is expected to be the main component of Russia's long-range missile forces. Most of Russia's other long-range missiles are either past their service lifetime or will have to be dismantled under the START-II arms reduction treaty, which both Russia and the U.S. have ratified. — AP

THE HINDU

17 FEB 2001

Russia for closer ties with E.U.

HO 76 By Vladimir Radyuhin *Radyuhin*

MOSCOW, FEB. 15. Russia is demonstrating increasingly cosier relations with Europe amid signs of growing acrimony in Moscow's relations with the United States.

The E.U. current President, Mrs. Anna Lindh, of Sweden has described as "extremely good" her talks with Russian leaders in Moscow, which covered bilateral cooperation in security and defence, as well as U.S. "Star Wars" plans, news agencies reported. The Swedish Foreign Minister leads a delegation of the E.U. to Russia, which also includes the E.U. Commissioner for External Affairs, Mr. Chris Patten, the foreign policy chief, Mr. Javier Solana, and the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Louis Michel.

Russia's national Security Council chief, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, noted that "mutual understanding is emerging between Russia and the E.U. in the area of foreign policy, defence and security" and called for a "broad-based dialogue" with it on the issues.

Mr. Ivanov said the talks showed that the E.U. felt "a measure of disquiet over the U.S. plans" to build a National Missile Defence and did not want their opinion to be ignored. The sides also discussed crisis management in Europe and called for cooperation between Russia and the E.U. in the prevention and settlement of crises.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, who also met the E.U. delegation, said "the frequen-

cy of our meetings reflects the intensity of our political dialogue", which reflected a mutual striving for "partnership between Russia and the E.U".

The continuing rapprochement between Russia and Europe is unfolding against the growing animosity in Moscow's relations with Washington.

Russia on Thursday angrily rejected accusations by the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, that Moscow was "an active proliferator" of missile technology.

Gen. Leonid Ivashov, who heads the Russian Defence Ministry's international relations department, dismissed as "baseless" charges that Russia was exporting missile technologies to Iran, North Korea and India. He said the U.S. defence chief was just trying to justify Washington's deployment of the national missile defence system.

"Unlike the United States Russia has been strictly honouring all its international obligations... including the regime of non-proliferation of missiles and missile technology," General Ivashov said.

Interestingly, U.S. attacks on Russia intensify each time Moscow moves to forge closer ties with European countries. The latest accusations against Russia coincided with the visit to Moscow of the E.U. delegation, whereas the first report on alleged movement of Russian nukes to Kaliningrad appeared during a visit of the German Chancellor to Russia in January.

216 1000

26 FEB 2001

① Putin move to woo Ukraine

GILES WHITTELL & MARTIN FLETCHER
THE TIMES, LONDON

MOSCOW/LONDON, Feb. 13
— Mr Vladimir Putin turned a flying visit to Ukraine into a bold piece of power politics yesterday as he sought to bind the second largest country in eastern Europe back into Russia's sphere of influence barely a year after it voted to turn towards the West.

The Russian President took advantage of a deepening crisis in Ukraine, where President Kuchma is embroiled in a murder scandal, to throw him a moral and financial lifeline in return for an undertaking to rebuild joint energy and high-tech schemes that once formed the heart of the Soviet military-industrial complex.

Kremlin delegates arrived in force yesterday in Dnepropetrovsk, the centre of the Ukrainian aerospace industry, for a day of talks that produced agreements to reconnect the Russian and Ukrai-

nian power grids, create a \$4 billion-a-year Russian-Ukrainian aerospace consortium and even build a £700 million bridge connecting Russia to the Crimean peninsula.

Russia's decision to ignore widening calls for Mr Kuchma's resignation could not have come at a more valuable

moment for the embattled leader. Secretly recorded tapes that appear to show him demanding that a troublesome Internet journalist, Georgi Gongadze, be "dealt with" have unified a powerful Opposition movement against him. Gongadze's headless body was found outside Kiev last year.

Mr Kuchma was re-elected in October 1999 on a pledge to turn Ukraine unequivocally towards Western Europe, but a visit by Mr Chris Patten and a European Union delegation will test his presidency further today by demanding a "robust, clear and thorough probe" of Gongadze's murder.



Mr Vladimir Putin

THE STATESMAN

14 FEB 2001

Putin strives for anti-missile pact

ROGER BOYES
THE TIMES, LONDON

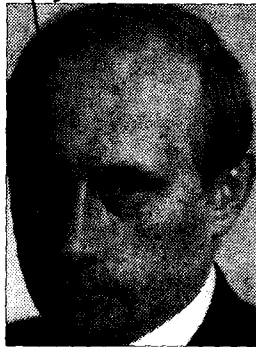
BERLIN, Jan. 31. — Moscow tried yesterday to enlist Germany in its efforts to block American plans for a national missile defence system.

The German defence minister, Mr Rudolf Scharping, who visited Moscow yesterday, was plainly viewed as a sympathetic petitioner for the Russians, having last week described as unrealistic the US plan for an anti-missile shield.

So far there have been only crisp communications on the subject between Europe's leaders and the US President, Mr George W Bush. On Monday a senior government source in Berlin said the German Chancellor, Mr Gerhard Schroder, and the British Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, had discussed

the issue "in the broadest of terms". Britain is sympathetic towards aspects of the US plan but all other leading European powers are expressing varying degrees of scepticism. German defence experts say that, apart from their technical reservations, they believe it is a bad strategy to start an arms race with a large field of competitors.

The NMD programme is intended to defend the USA against nuclear attack from so-called rogue states such as Iran and North Korea, and China. Germany says this increases the probability of a nuclear



Mr Vladimir Putin

exchange.

The Russians made a similar point yesterday during the Scharping visit. Russia's First Deputy Chief of General Staff, Colonel General Valery Manilov, said the US system was "liable to destroy the balance of strategic, defensive and offensive weapons and lead to a new

arms race".

An alternative Russian system, involving Nato and the EU, he said, would leave the military balance intact and would also eliminate the threat of missile strikes from rogue countries.

Details of the US plan and the Russian counter-plan for co-

operation with Nato and the EU are vague. Herr Scharping would not be drawn on the Russian proposals.

Like the French defence minister, Mr Alain Richard, he upheld a commitment to anti-ballistic missile systems and asked for more information from Moscow.

The key issue for Germany is: can it legitimately lobby the US administration on behalf of Europe?

Increasingly, Germany sees itself as the true voice of the Continent because Britain, France and Italy are tied up with elections.

Germany is convinced it has a better understanding than Britain of the mind of Mr Putin who speaks German.

The Schroder team thus feels it could interpret Russia for the US administration.

THE STATESMAN

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Moscow denies sending N-missiles to Baltic enclave

Fred Weir
Moscow, January 4

MOSCOW HAS angrily denied US claims that Russian tactical nuclear missiles have been secretly deployed in the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad, to bring them closer to Western Europe.

"No Russian nuclear weapons have been moved from their permanent sites," a Russian Defence Ministry spokesman said Thursday. "Russia completely fulfils all its arms control obligations."

Citing unidentified US intelligence officials, the *Washington Times* has charged this week that Russia has been shifting nuclear weapons into Kaliningrad for the past six months.

The newspaper also said Russia has developed a new short-range nuclear missile, the Toka, which could threaten the entire Baltic Sea area.

American State Department spokesman Richard Boucher seemed to confirm the report, and said: "It's something that we'll be talking about with the Russians as we do in all arms control issues".

The officials cited by the *Washington Times* said Russia is trying to offset the expansion of the NATO into Eastern Europe by forward deploying its battlefield nuclear deterrent to the borders of new NATO member Poland.

Defence experts say Russia possesses about 10,000 tactical nuclear weapons of all types, more than half of which are slated for destruction under existing arms control agreements with the West. It was not clear whether movement of Russian combat weapons would amount to a violation of any agreements.

Kaliningrad is a Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea, between Poland and the former Soviet republic of Lithuania, just a few hundred miles from Germany. It is the home base of the Russian navy's Baltic Fleet.

Last year the Russian government adopted a new security doctrine mandating greater reliance on nuclear weapons to compensate for the collapse of the pro-Soviet Warsaw Pact military alliance a decade ago and Russia's subsequent weakness in conventional defences.

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