

# Soyuz crew touches down on earth

Associated Press  
Arkalyk (Kazakhstan)  
October 24

A SOYUZ capsule carrying a US-Russian crew back to Earth following six months at the International Space Station hurtled through the Earth's atmosphere and landed safely and on target in Kazakhstan early on Sunday.

American Mike Fincke, shown after landing on Sunday in Kazakhstan, spent six months at the International Space Station.

The bell-shaped Soyuz TMA-4, carrying Russian

cosmonaut Gennady Padalka and American partner Mike Fincke, touched down beneath a parachute at the targeted landing site, some 55 miles north of Arkalyk, in pre-dawn darkness.

Russian and US officials had waited alongside search helicopter crews for the first glimpse of the Soyuz.

At Mission Control outside Moscow, where Russian and American space officials — including NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe — gathered, applause broke out at news of the landing.

The Soyuz crew had been

in contact with helicopter crews as they made their final approach and reported that all were feeling well, Mission Control said.

Padalka and Fincke had been in space since April. Seated in the Soyuz alongside them was Cosmonaut Yuri Shargin, who had spent eight days on the space station. Shargin had arrived Oct. 16 along with the station's new crew, Saitzhan Sharipov of Russia and Leroy Chiao of the US.

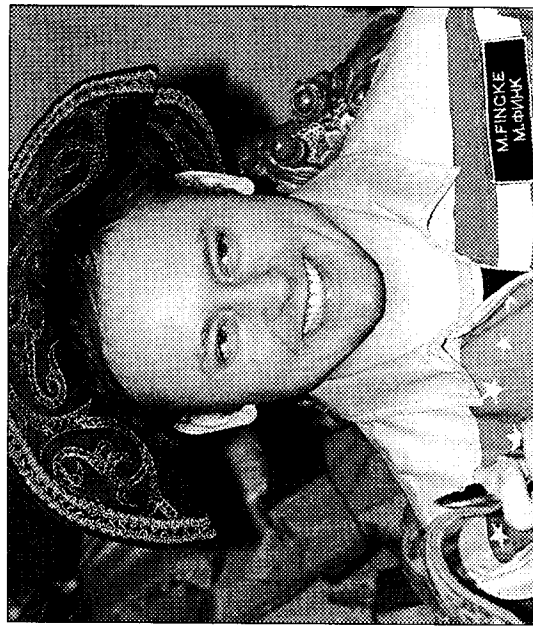
The two crews had bid each other farewell hours earlier, before the Soyuz had undocked. "Good luck. I

wish you a fortunate mission. We'll meet you back on earth," Padalka told Sharipov and Chiao before entering the Soyuz. "We'll be home soon," Padalka's American partner, Mike Fincke, said.

Shortly after their landing, search crew members helped the three men out of the capsule.

They sat in chairs with hot drinks while awaiting brief medical checks in a nearby tent.

Fincke, looking elated, spoke by satellite phone with his family. "Hi, baby," he said.



AFP  
US astronaut Mike Fincke sports a traditional Kazakh hat at a Press conference in Kustanai on Sunday, shortly after landing aboard the Russian Soyuz TMA-4 space capsule.

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## Bush faults Putin for centralising power



A policeman stands guard outside school No. 6 in Beslan, as schools in the town reopened after the hostage crisis on Thursday. — AFP

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16. — Finding fault with President Vladimir Putin's moves to centralise power, US President George W Bush has said that the decision could "undermine democracy in Russia".

"Great countries or great democracies have a balance of power between central and local governments. As governments fight the enemies of democracy, they must uphold principles of democracy," Mr Bush said during celebrations of Hispanic Heritage Month here yesterday.

Mr Putin announced the plan as part of his effort to deal more effectively with terrorism after the Beslan attack. His moves have renewed fears that he's concentrating too much power in the Kremlin. The US state department had earlier signalled its displeasure over Mr Putin's moves. Yet Mr Bush said, in a conversation with Mr Putin this month, "I told him that we stand shoulder to shoulder in fighting terror. We abhor the men who kill innocent children to try to achieve a dark vision." — PTI

# Russia blasts USA over talks with Chechen rebels

Associated Press

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MOSCOW, Sept. 8. — Russia castigated the USA today for its willingness to hold talks with Chechens agitating for independence and suggested the issue could harm bilateral relations, the Interfax news agency reported.

Responding to a statement by US state department spokesman Mr Richard Boucher, foreign minister Mr Sergey Lavrov said: "We solve our internal problems ourselves and there's no need to search for an American route to political normalisation in Chechnya," according to Interfax.

While joining in condemnation of last week's attack on a Russian school in which more than 350 people were killed by hostage-takers, the U.S. State Department said yesterday that Russia ultimately must hold political talks with rebellious Chechen leaders who are determined to break away from the Russian Federation.

Mr Boucher said: "Our view on the overall situation has not changed" and ultimately "there must be a political settlement" over Chechnya.

The state department spokesman added that US officials had met with Chechens with a variety of views in the past, although "we do not meet with terrorists." There may be additional meetings in the future, though none are planned, he said.

# লাদেনকে নিয়ে আমেরিকাকে খোঁচা পতিনের

মস্কো, ৭ সেপ্টেম্বর: জঙ্গি সমস্যার মোকাবিলায় কঠোর মনোভাব নিয়ে পরিস্থিতি আরও জটিল করে তুলছেন তিনি— এই সমালোচনা বন্ধ করতে এ বার মুখ খুললেন রুশ প্রেসিডেন্ট দ্বাদশমির পুতিন। স্লোবের সুরের তার মন্তব্য, হোয়াইট হাউসে লাদেনকে ডেকে আলোচনা হোক। তার পর না হয় তিনি চেচেন জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে শান্তি-বৈঠকের কথা ভাববেন!

ব্রিটেনের দুটি পত্রিকার বার অনুযায়ী পুতিন বলেছেন, “আপনারা লাদেনকে ব্রাসেলস বা হোয়াইট হাউসে ডেকে কথা বলুন না। উনি কী চান, জেনে নিয়ে সেই দাবি মিটিয়ে দিন। যাতে উনি আপনারদের শান্তিতে থাকতে দেন!” প্রসঙ্গত, ব্রাসেলসে নেটোর সদর দফতর এবং পণবন্দী-সঙ্কটের পর থেকেই জঙ্গি সমস্যা নিয়ে রাশিয়ার সঙ্গে অন্য সদস্য দেশগুলিকে বৈঠকে বসাতে

তৎপরতা দেখাচ্ছে নেটো। পণবন্দীদের মুক্ত করতে বেসালানের স্কুলে সেনা অভিযানের পর থেকেই পুতিনের সম্মান-দমন নীতি নিয়ে ক্রমাগত প্রশ্ন তোলা হচ্ছিল। শিশুদের অক্ষত দেহে বার করে আনতে বলপ্রয়োগ করা হবে না বলে তিনি আশ্বাস দেওয়ার ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই সেনা অভিযানে অজস্র প্রাণহানি হওয়ায় প্রচারমাধ্যম এবং মানবাধিকার সংগঠনগুলি রুশ প্রেসিডেন্টকেই কাঠগড়ায় তুলেছিল। পশ্চিমী দেশগুলির সাংবাদিক এবং শিক্ষাবিদদের কাছে তাঁর নীতি ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন, পুতিন। লাদেন-প্রসঙ্গ তুলে জানতে চেয়েছেন, “এই রকম দুর্বৃত্তদের সঙ্গে আলোচনার ক্ষেত্রে যে কিছু সীমাবদ্ধতা আছে, আপনারাই তা মেনে নিয়েছেন। তা হলে আমরাই বা কেন শিশু-ঘাতকদের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসব?”

বেসালানের ঘটনার বিভাগীয় তদন্ত ছাড়া যে বেশি কিছু হবে না, সেটাও স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন রুশ প্রেসিডেন্ট। বলেছেন, সংসদীয় তদন্তের মতো কিছু করতে গেলে তা ‘রাজনৈতিক নাটক’ হয়ে দাঁড়াবে। তবে ৩ সেপ্টেম্বর ঠিক কী কী ঘটেছিল, সেগুলো সাজানোর চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। কাউকে দোষী পাওয়া গেলে কড়া শাস্তিই দেওয়া হবে বলে পুতিন জানিয়েছেন। সেই সঙ্গে আবার কঠিন ভাষায় বলে দিয়েছেন, ককেসাস অঞ্চলের জন্য তাঁরা নীতিতে কোনও পরিবর্তন হবে না এবং চেচেনদেরও ক্ষমতায় বসতে দেওয়া হবে না। “যারা বাচ্চাদের পিছন থেকে গুলি করে, তারা এই গ্রহের কোথাও ক্ষমতায় বসছে— ভাবা যায়! প্রশ্নটা নিজেদেরই করে দেখুন না। রুশ চেচেন-নীতি নিয়ে তা হলে আর প্রশ্ন তুলবেন না।”

দিয়েছেন মস্কোর লাখানকে মানব। সম্মানস্বাধীন বিরোধী মিছিলে পা মিলিয়েছেন তাঁরা। বেসালানে আঙ্গু ও টলেছে নিহতদের স্মৃতি সৎকার। রাশিয়ায় জাতীয় শোকের আজ ছিল শেষ দিন।

এর পাশাপাশি ঘটনার দিন বেসালানের স্কুলে ছিল সন্দেহে যুত এক ব্যক্তি জানিয়েছে, চেচেন প্রেসিডেন্ট আসলান মাসকাদভের নির্দেশেই জঙ্গিরা কাজ করেছিল। মাসকাদভ অবশ্য গোড়া থেকেই বলছেন, বেসালানের ঘটনায় চেচেনদের হাত নেই। রুশ সেনার বিশেষ বাহিনীর প্রাঙ্গণ কর্তা ইগর সেনিন বলেছেন, স্কুলে যে অভিযান চালানো যাবে না, সেনাদের কাছে তা পরিষ্কার হয়ে গিয়েছিল। অল্প কয়েক জন পণবন্দীকে নিয়ে জঙ্গিরা যখন পালানোর চেষ্টা করবে, তখনই অভিযানের সম্ভাবনা ছিল। কিন্তু এ সব জেনেও সেনা আগেই বাঁপিয়ে পড়ে।

— রয়টার্স

# Russia warned USA of Iraqi plot: Putin

Associated Press

ASTANA (Kazakhstan), June 18. — Moscow warned Washington before the Iraq war that Saddam Hussein's regime was preparing attacks against the USA and its interests abroad, President Vladimir Putin said today.

Mr Putin said he couldn't comment on how critical the Russians' information was in US decision to invade Iraq. He, however, added that the intelligence didn't cause Russia to waver from its firm opposition to the war.

"Indeed, after 9/11 and before the start of the military operation in Iraq, the Russian special services received information that officials from Saddam's regime were preparing terrorist attacks in the USA and outside it against the US military and other interests," Mr Putin said.

"Despite that information... Russia's position on Iraq remains unchanged," he said in the Kazakh capital Astana after a regional economic and security summit.

Mr Putin said Russia didn't have any information that Saddam's regime had actually been behind any terrorist acts. He didn't elaborate on any details of the terror plots or mention whether they were tied to the Al-Qaida terror network. Mr Putin said the USA had thanked Russia for the information.

Also today, a top Russian



President Putin: From Russia with love to USA. — AFP

diplomat called for international inspectors to conclusively resolve the question of whether Iraq had any weapons of mass destruction — one of the main reasons Mr Bush used to justify the war.

"This problem must be resolved... because to a great extent it became the pretext for the start of the war against Iraq," deputy foreign minister Mr Yuri Fedotov said in Moscow, according to Interfax news agency.

**Diplomatic dogfight:** The Russian and US air forces engaged in a diplomatic dogfight today over a commemorative flight using a nuclear bomber, a plan that Moscow said was shot down by Washington, AFP adds from Moscow.

## Bush's fixation with Saddam

NEW YORK, June 18. — President Bush, rushing to defuse an explosive election issue, has challenged the findings of an independent commission that there was no "collaborative relationship" between Saddam Hussein and the Al-Qaida. As the 9/11 commission held a gripping final hearing yesterday, Mr Bush repeated his conviction that there was a link between the Iraqi dictator and Osama bin Laden's terror network — one of his key reasons for the war against Iraq. "The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and Al-Qaida is because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al-Qaida," Mr Bush said after a meeting with his Cabinet. "This administration never said the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated between Saddam and the Al-Qaida," he said. "We did say there were contacts between Saddam and the Al-Qaida." — The Times, London

Russia had earlier announced it would for the first time land a Tu-95 nuclear bomber on US territory as it celebrated the 100 year anniversary of the birth of Valery Chkalov — who took a non-stop flight over the Arctic and landed in Washington in 1937. But Russia's air force chief said US authorities did not appear to trust Moscow's intentions and demanded that a US pilot be placed in the bomber to oversee the flight.

# NUCLEAR POTENTIAL

## Russia And USA Must Launch Constructive Dialogue *WS - Burma*

By ANDREI KISLYAKOV

*5-6 5/11/04*  
**R**ussia's Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov said in December 2003 that he would inform President Vladimir Putin about specific aspects of developing the country's strategic nuclear forces in 2004 early this year. "We intend to streamline all strategic nuclear forces still further, enhancing the quality and efficiency of our nuclear triad, first and foremost", Ivanov told a traditional conference involving the President and Government members. As far as national pride is concerned, the Minister's statement makes one quite optimistic. But how will the implementation of these plans influence global strategic stability?

### US plans

First of all, it should be noted that Russia's decision to enhance its nuclear potential in the obtaining military-political situation is an entirely justified and essential step. The decision is motivated by specific US plans to deploy new national missile defence system's first echelon in late 2004.

The shield's weapons and infrastructure components are to be sited in the United States, as well as in Western Europe, Scandinavia and Southern Europe, i.e. Great Britain, Italy and Hungary, while the components will be based in Japan and Israel. Moreover, the United States is now establishing a joint global data-exchange and reconnaissance network that will feature satellite clusters.

*The author is associated with Ria Novosti*

The US Administration's special memorandum, which was published in early May 2003 and deals with the national ABM (anti-ballistic missile policy), notes that the projected system should shield the United States and their allies from accidental

countries that could launch a hypothetical nuclear strike against North America in the coming decades.

The Russian leadership has repeatedly stated that it will opt for an asymmetrical response if the United States goes ahead



missile launches, as well as single terrorist-launched missiles. This system cannot threaten the security of other countries, including Russia, the document reads.

### Advanced systems

However, Alexei Arbatov, director of the Centre of Political and Military Forecasts (Russian Academy of Sciences), believes that the advanced US ABM system is, in reality, spearheaded against Russia and China because it will apparently shield the entire US territory. This was previously forbidden by Article 1 of the 1972 Soviet-US ABM Treaty. Washington admits that Russia and China are just about the only

with its ABM programme. In other words, Russia does not intend to deploy new ABM-system elements immediately. On the contrary, Moscow will attach priority to strategic offensive arms, enhancing their anti-ABM capabilities all the same, while new combat options will also be chosen. Moreover, this country will prepare to conduct active operations against the most vulnerable "enemy" ABM-system components to neutralise them. Sergei Ivanov and Vladimir Putin will discuss all these aspects in early 2004.

Strategic offensive and defensive arms are inter-dependent, constituting an integral system of

strategic arms. It is no coincidence that the SALT-I Treaty and the ABM Treaty were both signed on 26 May, 1972. Russia continues to believe that the ABM Treaty considerably slowed down the arms race and enhanced strategic stability. This document had great significance because any potential aggressor, which lacked a territorial ABM system, was bound to suffer grievously as a result of a retaliatory, albeit limited, nuclear strike. Consequently, anyone who launched first was going to die second. This was the gist of the MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) concept, which minimised the chances of an all-out nuclear war.

### Readiness

Russia will now have to rely on the retaliatory strike concept more actively than before, while it will also have to maintain considerable part of its nuclear forces in a state of permanent readiness. These forced measures will not enhance nuclear security, nor will they rule out any accidental nuclear conflict.

It is an open secret that no country can build a safe world for itself to the detriment of other countries. This was proved by the horrendous 11 September, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Consequently, Russia and the United States must launch a constructive dialogue, discussing strategic-stability issues in line with the START-ABM format. This is the only way to prevent another round of the arms race and to cut the available nuclear arsenals to reasonable levels.