
International Intelligence

Putin Moves Swiftly To Reorganize Ministries

On July 11, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree, among others, to re-consolidate Russian intelligence agencies under the Federal Security Service (FSB). The decrees surprised Russian experts who had believed that a reshuffle in the so-called "force ministries" had been postponed until September.

According to FSB spokesman Gen. Col. Yevgani Loyev, the July 11 decree elevated FSB head Nikolai Patrushev to the status of Cabinet minister and expanded his authority to appoint and promote staff without specific Presidential approval. He will work with two first deputies (one for the FSB Border Service) and two deputies, instead of the recent structure of 12 deputy directors.

Loyev denied media reports that the FSB was being renamed the Ministry of State Security. Loyev did *not* officially confirm reports that the revamped FSB would reincorporate agencies that were spun off from the old Soviet KGB in the early 1990s, such as the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). Many Russian media, however, rushed to headline, "FSB Will Have Practically All the Functions of the U.S.S.R. KGB." London's *The Electronic Telegraph* (*Daily Telegraph* online) followed suit with a July 15 headline, "Putin Brings Back the Cold War Spy System," asserting that Putin had reunited the SVR with the FSB "under one directorate." This is not actually stated in the decree, though there are reports in Moscow that it will happen soon.

Britain's Muslims Prepare To Abandon Labour Party

According to a commentary in the London *Independent* on July 12, penned by Ismail Patel, "The Iraq War, the Anti-Terrorism Act 2001 and the government's failure to protect Muslims under race discrimination laws" mean that most Muslims will no longer vote Labour. The electoral significance of this can be seen in towns like Leicester, where some burroughs have a 19%

Muslim vote. The Conservatives and the Liberal Democratic Party are well aware of the fact, he wrote, and Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy and Tory chief Michael Howard have recently made more than a dozen visits to Leicester.

Patel notes that because of the anti-terror laws, "Muslims are no longer politically guided by their mosques. . . . The average voter has turned to grassroots organizations and individuals with a track record of civic commitment, over mainstream politicians."

Thai Prime Minister: We'll Provide HIV Drugs

Ahead of the opening of the 15th International AIDS Conference on July 12, host country Thailand announced that every person living with HIV/AIDS in Thailand will get the medication needed to keep them alive, *The Nation* of Bangkok reported on July 11. Thai Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan told the paper that Prime Minister Thaksin would also announce plans to provide the locally produced anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs GPO-Vir to neighboring countries Burma, Cambodia, and Laos, which have also been ravaged by HIV/AIDS.

The theme of this year's conference is "Access for All." Currently, Thailand treats about 50,000 people with HIV/AIDS with GPO-Vir, the fixed-dose combination of three drugs; lamivudine, stavudine, and nevirapine. Sudarat said the goal was to extend the treatment to 70,000 by next year. The Government Pharmaceutical Organization will soon produce two more ARV drugs for those patients who cannot tolerate GPO-Vir.

Israeli Army Fires on UN Gaza Food Convoy

The top United Nations relief official for Palestinian refugees said on July 14 that part of a UN aid convoy delivering food to 20,000 Gaza Strip residents besieged by Israel came under fire, apparently from an Israeli armored personnel carrier (APC). The attack occurred when 16 trucks of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

(UNRWA), cleared for entry by the Israeli military, delivered 370 tons of food to residents of Beit Hanoun, a town that has been cut off from the rest of Gaza by Israel since June 28.

Shortly after passing the APC, a five-vehicle section of the convoy, marked with UN flags and symbols and with UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen on board, was attacked. "At that point, rapid firing appeared to come from the APC in the direction of the convoy," UNRWA said in a statement. Hansen, who was inspecting some of the demolished areas on the edge of the town, and the UNRWA personnel were forced to take cover in a nearby building.

After talks with Israeli military officials, the firing stopped about 25 minutes later, and the convoy resumed its delivery.

Shaken Italian Govt. Makes Big Budget Cuts

The Italian government enforced "Maastricht Treaty criteria" with large cuts in its budgets on July 8, two days after Standard & Poor's downgraded Italy's debt to AA-, and in the midst of the crisis triggered by the resignation of Economics Minister Giulio Tremonti. The government issued an executive order enforcing budget cuts and tax measures for a total 7.5 billion euro. The EU Commission expressed its satisfaction for the maneuver.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who is also Economics Minister *ad interim*, appeared next to Banca d'Italia Governor Antonio Fazio in a public conference, in which he endorsed Fazio, thus signalling the end of the conflict between executive and central bank which had characterized Tremonti's mandate. Berlusconi also suddenly dropped his radical tax reform proposal, announcing a more moderate plan which envisions a higher tax burden for high incomes. The proposal had been the putative issue of the conflicts within the coalition government, which led to Tremonti's resignation.

On the same day, the Parliament bipartisan committee working on financial reform plans, including measures reducing the independence of the Banca d'Italia, disbanded.