



DEFEATING TERRORISM

STRATEGIC ISSUE ANALYSIS



Russia and the U.S. War on Terrorism

Stephen J. Blank

Conclusions:

- Provide Russia expanded trade access to the U.S. market and investment opportunities.
- Develop programs help Russia with the clean up of nuclear materials, ecological repair, and reconstruction of its public health system.
- Provide some form of compensation for an end to proliferation of WMD technology and systems.

To grasp the impact upon Russia of our new war and the requirements for sustaining Russia's cooperation, we must distinguish four sets of players in Russia and one set of foreign players besides the United States. President Vladimir Putin must balance the inputs and pressures emanating from these sources. Based on public record, they are the intelligence community, i.e., the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the domestic Federal Security Service (FSB), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the armed forces, represented by the General Staff. The Central Asian governments also influence Moscow's thinking from the outside.

The Players in Russia.

The SVR and perhaps FSB apparently have previously offered the United States covert rights to bases in Tajikistan for use against Osama Bin Laden. The Russian government regularly professes deep anxiety about the rapid spread of insurgency in Central Asia supported by bin Laden and the Taliban. The assassination of the latter's main rival, Ahmad Shah Massoud, military leader of the Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan, might eventually provoke a Taliban offensive towards the Afghan border

with Central Asia. That would facilitate the direct spread into Central Asia and beyond of large-scale refugee flows, terrorism, insurgency, and rampant narcotics trading that finances this violence. Russia also argues that these Afghan-based forces are materially implicated in Chechnya.

The SVR and FSB have previously shared intelligence up to a point with their U.S. and Western opposite numbers concerning these terrorists. They clearly view the attacks on America as a basis for a deeper and more enduring intelligence and thus political entente with the West. They also evidently believe that the U.S.-led military alliance will facilitate resolution of the problem of military suppression of either the Central Asian and Afghan-based forces or allow Russia greater scope for action in Chechnya without worldwide opposition. Preliminary indications concerning the expectation of less Western opposition to Russia's activities in Chechnya seem to be justified. Therefore the SVR and FSB have now revealed their past cooperation with Washington (in general terms) and appear ready to upgrade it. Thus, after Putin's offer to share intelligence with Washington, it is likely that a deeper and perhaps more regularized mechanism of sharing and cooperation between our two intelligence systems will take place.

The MFA evidently also sees opportunities for gain here, including at least the expectation of Western silence, if not active approbation for Russian activities in Chechnya. Therefore Moscow has steadily proclaimed the tie between the Chechens and Bin Laden's network. U.S., German, and Italian reactions to Russian policy in Chechnya evidently justify that expectation. The MFA also apparently entertains the hope of future membership in a revamped NATO. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, who supports such cooperation, now also urges the establishment of a mechanism with NATO for deeper and more regularized security cooperation with Moscow. Moscow also wants compensation for any cessation of weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability transfers to Iran and other "rogue states" (Iraq and North Korea, among others); a veto, presumably in the U.N., over any action that may be taken against Iraq; presumably membership in the World Trade Organization; and debt forgiveness. Thus it is also urging that the United States act exclusively through the U.N., a bad idea for many reasons.

The point of this gambit is not just approving Russian aims in Chechnya, but also preventing NATO enlargement in 2002, especially to the Baltic, reversing the idea of NATO and Western primacy in providing security to Eastern Europe, and recognizing a privileged place in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for Moscow—the last one being its topmost foreign policy and defense priority. This attempted reconstitution of NATO not only reverses the thrust of Western policy in Europe, it also gives Russia its long-sought-after veto on NATO's activities without having undergone or affirmed internal reform, defense reform, and acceptance of the territorial status quo in Eurasia, not to mention renouncing its hegemonic aspirations in the CIS. None of these objectives, except for financial and economic assistance, comport with vital U.S.

goals that our new war on terrorism does not supersede.

However, Putin's offer to assist Washington also came about because Moscow cannot control the Central Asian states to the extent that it wishes. His offer followed numerous reports that Uzbekistan and Kazakstan, and possibly Turkmenistan, would offer the United States overflight rights, access to air bases and intelligence sharing, and that U.S. forces were either in Uzbekistan or en route there. Failing to stop this move by Central Asian governments, Moscow apparently tried to jump on the bandwagon and regain control of it. Moscow wants to retain control over the duration, modalities, and extent of U.S. military and other presence in Central Asia by offering Washington more than would be otherwise expected. It also hopes to obtain the political benefits sketched out above.

The military, led by the General Staff and its Chief, General Anatoly Kvashnin, is clearly the most suspicious element in Russian policymaking. Beyond concern about being dragged into another Afghan or Chechen-like war which it cannot win, or of becoming a target for further terrorist attacks, it also harbors deep suspicions about any U.S. military presence in the CIS under any conditions. Consequently, it not only refused to commit any troops to the operation, it preempted Putin when Ivanov practically ruled out even the kind of cooperation that Putin later supported. We can reliably expect the MOD and General Staff to resolutely oppose any extended U.S. strategic presence in Central Asia and the CIS, generally to seek to limit America's presence and Russian and Central Asian cooperation with U.S. forces, and loudly to demand compensations even beyond what we have mentioned.

Russia's Offer and Its Ambivalent Role in the War on Terrorism.

Putin offered the United States intelligence cooperation with the SVR and

possibly FSB, opened Russian airspace to humanitarian flights and to search and rescue missions, and offered weapons and arms to Afghan anti-Taliban forces. Putin also tried to pretend that he was graciously offering former Soviet air bases in Central Asia and had coordinated this with those governments to maintain the pretense of Russian hegemony there. But he refrained from offering Russian military or air bases as staging posts for U.S. or coalition forces or from allowing overflight rights to U.S. aircraft in support of military missions. Thus actual operational assistance will be limited strictly to nonmilitary operations. Russia will not directly support attacks on the Taliban. Should the war shift to other theaters known for harboring terrorists, like Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Libya, it is very doubtful that even this limited cooperation will continue.

Indeed, Russia's actual conduct in the war on terrorism is highly suspect and rather different from its loud anti-terrorist rhetoric. The war in Chechnya largely stems from Putin's and Yeltsin's effort to launch a quick, victorious war against an enemy that certainly could be charged with terrorism in Dagestan and perhaps beyond that in Russia, and to do so for domestic electoral purposes. Yet there is no credible evidence of any Chechen terror in Russia since 1999 apart from Dagestan, and there are new charges that the FSB was behind the terrorism of 1999 in Moscow. Although international Islamic fighters are present in Chechnya and ties to Bin Laden do exist, that war is more about Russian issues than about terrorism.

Moreover, Polish scholars have noted that the only power that benefits from ongoing insurgency and terrorism in Central Asia is Russia, since that justifies Russian efforts to project its military power and to advocate integrating Central Asian states around Russia's armed forces. Yet when those states faced real threats last year, Russian help was minimal and derided by local governments. Furthermore, there are charges within the

Russian press that Russian forces allowed the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan (IMU) to cross into Central Asia by opening the Tajik-Afghan border to them in 2000. Russian troops and commanders in Central Asia have also participated in the drug trade originating there and in Afghanistan. Nuclear smuggling has taken place in Central Asia, and this suggests at least some officials' or armed forces' connivance with the smugglers and the intended recipients of this contraband. Finally, Russian intelligence (as the *Washington Times* reported on June 14-15) sold Bin Laden high-tech communications and apparently encryption technology stolen by Robert Hanssen. These facts suggest Russia's rather unique approach to terrorism, one that the United States should not reward unduly.

Sustaining the Coalition.

Most Russian objectives run counter to U.S. goals in Europe and Asia and our new opportunities to gain a lasting influence in Central Asia. Since many Central Asian governments clearly seek some lasting U.S. presence and were disappointed at not getting it, we now have an opportunity to gain that presence while making fewer "side payments" to Russia than might otherwise have been the case. We can offer the following "compensations" to Russia, even while expanding our visibility in Central Asia.

- We should offer Russia expanded trade access to U.S. market and investment opportunities (provided the legal bases for the latter are implemented).
- We should also offer large-scale public programs to clean up nuclear materials, and help deal with some of the monumental ecological and public health issues there that are beyond Russian control.
- Furthermore, we can and should offer reasonable compensations to induce a

cessation of proliferation of all forms of WMD technology and systems (and, if we are able, conventional weaponry as well) to Iran and other rogue states: Iraq, Syria, Libya, etc.

- A very important inducement to Russia is to move rapidly on reducing strategic offensive arms in return for building strategic defenses to levels outlined by President Bush and the administration. This neutralizes some of the Russian military opposition to cooperation, reaffirms our willingness and ability to be a reliable partner, eases many Russian security dilemmas since they cannot afford parity any longer, and conforms to our overall desire to rewrite relations with Russia. Agreement here demonstrates our desire to forge truly nonadversarial relations with Russia. But, at the same time, it does not compromise any of our other existing and still continuing broad strategic-political objectives across Eurasia.
- It would also be helpful to devise, if it is possible, a mechanism for regular intelligence exchanges on terrorism and narcotics trafficking.
- These incentives should not stop or limit our plans for NATO enlargement and our intention to forestall spheres of influence in the CIS.
- Nor is it time to admit Russia into NATO. Indeed, doing so would be an act of the greatest strategic folly because it would utterly compromise NATO's mission, purpose, and standards for entry, as well as regional security, especially in the Baltic, Balkan, Black Sea, and CIS areas.
- Although there is no doubt of Chechen ties to Bin Laden and other such groups, that war has a different profile and etiology than our current campaign, and they should not be linked. While we may urge the Chechens to sever ties with Bin Laden,

we should not refrain from criticizing Russian operations, or more importantly, urging a political solution to the war.

- This crisis offers us an opportunity to achieve other key aims beyond Russia's integration into the West through strategic arms and economic agreements sketched out above.
- In particular, this crisis provides an opportunity to undermine the essentially anti-American thrust of the Shanghai Cooperation organization that was imposed on Central Asia by Russia and China. That organization's recent communiqué licenses Chinese and Russia military presences there in the guise of anti-terrorist or anti-separatist operations (terms that could justify Russian assistance over Taiwan).
- Recent events demonstrate not only that the Central Asian states, particularly Uzbekistan and Kazakstan, still desire a meaningful and multifaceted U.S. presence there, they also show that Russia cannot stop it from taking place. Therefore, we need to prevent this area from becoming not only a site for regular terrorist activities and insurgency, but also a platform for an anti-American coalition aiming to restore Russian hegemony or extend Chinese influence in Asia. Our invited presence there can serve all the strategic objectives of security, energy, and maintaining trade access and Central Asian states' independence that we have previously proclaimed for Central Asia. And we might successfully do so at a smaller cost vis-à-vis Russia than has been imagined.



More information on the Strategic Studies Institute may be found on the Institute's Homepage at: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/welcome.htm> or by calling (717) 245-4212.

