

Central European Update

Poland

At a meeting of the UN General Assembly on 24 September, Poland reiterated its goal of strengthening the role of the Security Council. Poland favors increasing the Security Council's sanctioning powers. The head of the Polish diplomatic service, **Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz**, stated that the reform must not be limited to the organization's institutional dimension; he believes that the key to making the Security Council more effective is not simply a function of the size of its membership.

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Warsaw police are still investigating a bomb explosion in an office building in the city's downtown area on 29 September. Explosive material had been planted on the seventh floor, but the blast was not strong enough to cause significant damage. The building was promptly evacuated and only one person was slightly injured.

Czech Republic

On 24 September, the Czech Chamber of Deputies approved the adoption of the European arrest warrant and overturned the veto by President **Vaclav Klaus**. The opposition Civic Democratic Party claims that the warrant breaches the

Czech bill of basic rights and freedoms and has announced its intent to take the matter to the Constitutional Court. The European arrest warrant was created as a tool against criminality and terrorism.

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On 24 September, the lower house of the Czech Parliament approved a law that will do away with mandatory military service starting in 2005. The legislation terminates 140 years of military conscription. The Czech Army will officially become a professional force at the start of 2005 when the remaining soldiers recruited under the old system leave the service.

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The Czech military has announced the establishment of a high-tech electronic surveillance center with an initial headquarters in Opava, Northern Moravia, commissioned to detect and monitor enemy targets. The Czech "Vera" radar system, which is capable of detecting even U.S. Stealth fighters, will be an integral part of the center. The Czech Republic has thus far concentrated on providing elite anti-biological and anti-chemical teams and intends to offer specialized surveillance units in the coming years.

Hungary

Ferenc Gyurcsany was confirmed as Prime Minister by the Hungarian parliament on 29 September. Out of 384 parliamentarians, Gyurcsany received 197 votes in favor from the ruling coalition comprised of the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) and the Free Democrats. 175 opposition MPs abstained and 12 lawmakers voted against him. The new premier unveiled his cabinet on 30 September, with his minister-elects scheduled to take their oaths on 4 October.

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Defense Ministry Communications Director **Peter Matyuc** told the daily *Nepszabadsag* on 25 September that the Hungarian Army has had chemical weapons in the past, but in accordance with international agreements since 1990, has reduced the quantity of these hazardous materials to much below the defined limit. *Nepszabadsag* also clarifies that the permitted amount is about 5 pounds, used for experiments and equipment testing. At the same time, at the end of August and beginning of September, Hungary began the demolition of excess ammunition at a rate of 1,000 to 1,100 pieces per day. The parts will be recycled

or used as raw materials for other industries.

Slovakia

The Slovak parliament voted down a proposal by the opposition Communist Party (KSS) to withdraw Slovak soldiers from Iraq. Out of 106 MPs present, only 20 were in favor, 58 voted against, and 25 abstained. Slovak military engineers and other units will remain in Iraq. KSS deputies are convinced that Slovakia's presence in Iraq is a violation of international law and that the country should focus more on humanitarian aid.

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On 28-29 September, Slovakia's Ministry of Defense hosted a two-day NATO conference on fighting terrorism and disposing of explosives. The conference served as a forum for experts to exchange experience and ideas and to improve cooperation among NATO members. Presentations were given by army units and interior ministry members, as well as by international participants. Since July 2004 Slovakia has held a leading position within NATO in the sphere of ammunition and explosives disposal.

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Baltic States Update

Lithuania

Pending official confirmation, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry will work with the International Republican Institute to train Iraqi election officials in running democratic elections and conducting opinion polls. Foreign Minister **Antanas Valionis** expects between 10 and 12 Iraqi officials to arrive in Vilnius early next month. The Iraqis will observe polling techniques and will meet with President **Valdas Adamkus**, party leaders, and the representatives of the Central Election Committee. The Iraqi trainees will return to their country in time to apply their expertise to the January 2005 election.

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Estonia

Estonian President **Arnold Ruutel** attended a memorial service dedicated to the 1994 MS Estonia ferry disaster. The service was held on 28 September and marked the 10th anniversary of the vessel capsizing in the Baltic Sea on route from Tallinn to Stockholm. The accident

Featured Photo: Joeelahtne Church, Estonia



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occurred in a severe storm and resulted in the loss of 852 out of 989 passengers.

Latvia

On 24 September, the Latvian government passed the 2005 national budget. Government revenue is estimated at 2.58 billion lati, while expenditures are set at 2.73 billion lati. The 2005 budget figures reflect 26.6 percent and 24.2 percent increases respectively in revenue and spending. Finance Minister **Oskars Spurdzins** attributes the significant rise in revenue to the rapid development of the economy. The proposed deficit of 160 million lati equals 2 percent of the national GDP – well within the 3 percent limit outlined by the European Union's Stability and Growth Pact.

Southeast European Update

Croatia

Representatives from the European Commission and Croatian ministries and institutions held a two-day meeting on small business development on 28-29 September. They concluded that Croatia had made significant progress in certain areas of the EU Charter for Small Enterprises, such as certification, informal training for small business owners, and accelerated procedures for opening small businesses. However, Zagreb still needs to improve its procedures in establishing new firms, financing entrepreneurship, and establishing e-business. **Edward Tersmette** of the European Commission's Enterprise Directorate-General told reporters after the meeting that the process of setting up new companies was longer, more expensive, and more complicated not only in comparison with the EU, but also in relation to some Western Balkan countries.

Slovenia

Thomas Bolling Robertson, the new U.S. ambassador to Slovenia, presented his credentials to Foreign Minister **Ivo Vajgl** and President **Janez Drnovsek** on 29 September in Ljubljana, just a week after Slovenian ambassador **Samuel Zbogar** presented his credentials in Washington. In his statement, Robertson said that the U.S. appreciates Slovenia's contribution in securing stability in the region. Vajgl in turn praised the U.S. as one of the most important factors in preserving stability and development in the world. However, prior to his departure, outgoing U.S. Ambassador **Johnny Young** admitted that he was

"disappointed" with Slovenia's opposition to sending troops to Iraq and its refusal to exempt American soldiers from prosecution before the new International Criminal Court (ICC).

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Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy envoy, visited Slovenia only four days after Ljubljana withdrew support for Croatia's EU accession in response to a bilateral border dispute. Solana encouraged Slovenia on 28 September to fulfill its duty as an EU member and assist Croatia in the accession process. "Slovenia was the first state from the Balkans to join the EU and NATO and that obliges it to show the way to other states from the region," Solana said after meeting Slovenian Prime Minister **Anton Rop**.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's role in the struggle against drug trafficking both in the region and globally was praised at an international conference in Istanbul held on 28-30 September, organized by the Turkish General Security Directorate and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). According to DEA Administrator **Karen Tandy**, intelligence received from Bulgaria yielded results in fighting drug trafficking and money laundering in the Balkans. Representatives of the special services of several EU countries, Bulgaria, the U.S., Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, India, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, attended the conference and outlined regional strategies in combating organized crime.

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On 29 September, the Bulgarian Privatization Agency launched

procedures for the sale of eight companies of the TEREM military repair complex. In the interest of national security, Bulgarian legislation requires that the state maintain sufficient control over TEREM. Therefore, the procedure will involve the sale of a 75 percent stake in each of the eight TEREM subsidiaries and will be open for bidding in a competitive tender.

Romania

Romanian Defense Minister **Mircea Pascu** announced on 27 September that U.S. Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld** will arrive in Romania one and a half days before an informal meeting of NATO defense ministers, scheduled to take place on 13-14 October in Poiana Brasov. In his statement, made at the Kogalniceanu air base near Constanta, Pascu also noted that Romania had not yet reached a decision whether to send additional troops to Iraq.

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On 27 September, Romania's Minister of European Integration **Alexandru Farcas** attended meetings with German officials in charge of European affairs. The Romanian government is working to convince the EU that all reforms are on schedule in the final

weeks before the European Commission report. Romania still has to complete negotiations on five chapters of the *acquis communautaire* in order to gain EU accession in 2007. On 6 October, the European Commission will announce whether Romania has a market economy that can withstand competitive pressures within the bloc and whether it can complete negotiations by December.

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On 28 September, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Romania had violated the rights of two journalists, **Dan Corneliu Sabou** and **Calin Dan Pircalab**, who had published a series of articles detailing a controversial deal in which a mother of a well-known judge acquired a plot of land. The court ruled that there had been a violation of Article 10, which guarantees freedom of expression, and found the sentences given to the journalists to be too harsh.

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A new weekly magazine called "Euro Lider" was launched on 28 September. The magazine will aim to explain to the public details about Romania's EU negotiations, the stage of implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, and how the new regulations will influence local communities.



Featured Photo: The Three Bridges, Ljubljana, Slovenia © www.europa.eu.int

Other Developments

Letter Criticizing President Putin

This week 115 European and U.S. leaders, among whom Vaclav Havel, Sen. Joseph Biden, Sen. John McCain, Richard Holbrooke, James O'Brien, as well as former prime ministers, officials and experts, signed an open letter

of concern over the failed state of democracy in Russia. The powerful statement expresses criticism that Vladimir Putin's government has "systematically undercut the freedom and independence of the press, destroyed the checks and balances in the Russian federal system [and] arbitrarily imprisoned both real

and imagined political rivals." The letter also calls on both U.S. and EU policies toward Russia to counter the growing authoritarianism of President Putin. CSIS experts Janusz Bugajski, Sarah Mendelson, Simon Serfaty, and Celeste Wallender were among the signatories.

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