

## **Russian Foreign Policy: A Chronology January - March 2006**

**1 January 2006** Gazprom cuts off all gas supplies to Ukraine. Only transit gas to Europe is running through Ukraine. Ukraine rejects Gazprom's new terms. Gazprom accuses Ukraine of siphoning gas in transit to Europe.

**2 January 2006** Gazprom accuses Ukraine of stealing Russian gas intended for Europe. It amounts to about 100m cu.m. of gas.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry (MFA) says that Russia's reduced gas supplies to Ukraine and a five-fold increase in the price of gas for Ukraine breach various international agreements.

Andrey Illarionov, former economic adviser to Vladimir Putin, criticises Gazprom's decision to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine.

Russian gas supplies to Moldova are cut off due to the absence of a new contract with Gazprom. Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin says that the price of 160 dollars per 1,000 cu.m. declared by Gazprom is not market-based.

**2 January 2006** Viktor Opekunov, the chairman of the nuclear energy sub-committee of the Russian State Duma Committee on Energy, Transport and Communications, says that Russia should continue its cooperation with Iran in the nuclear sector.

**3 January 2006** Gazprom resumes the supply of gas to Europe following claims that gas was being siphoned off in Ukraine.

The MFA denies that Russia is putting economic pressure on Ukraine.

Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov sends a letter to Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel, who is chairman of the EU Council, in connection with the unresolved issue of the transit of Russian gas to European consumers across Ukraine. Viktor Khristenko, the minister of industry and energy, says he has sent the EU his assessment of the gas situation with Ukraine. Khristenko says that it is essential to diversify routes for the supply of gas to Europe.

**3 January 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin says that it is not currently possible to sign a framework treaty with Georgia as Tbilisi is pursuing an anti-Russian campaign.

**4 January 2006** Russia and Ukraine reach agreement over the price of gas. Gazprom resumes gas supplies. Gazprom will sell gas to the Rosukrenergo company at 230 dollars. Rosukrenergo, 50 per cent of which is owned by Gazprom, will mix Russian gas with gas from Central Asian suppliers (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan). As a result, on the Russian-Ukrainian border the average price of gas that Rosukrenergo will supply to Ukraine will at the initial stage be 95 dollars per 1,000 cu.m., with the transit rate at 1.6 dollars per 100 km.

**4 January 2006** Rodina leader Dmitriy Rogozin says Russia should not pay Ukraine to lease facilities for the Black Sea Fleet, while Sevastopol should be returned to Russia.

**4 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov is interviewed in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. He says Western pressure on Belarus has no prospects.

**5 January 2006** The MFA issues a statement on Iraq. It urges all political and confessional forces in Iraq to come to national accord.

**6 January 2006** Gazprom and Naftohaz Ukrayiny issue a joint statement on the settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute.

**6 January 2006** The MFA criticises remarks made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made on 5 January in connection with Russian-Ukrainian relations in the gas sphere. She says that the Russian stance during the conflict situation surrounding gas supplies to Ukraine was "undoubtedly dictated by political motives".

The stakeholders in Moldovagaz and Gazprom fail to agree a price of natural gas for Moldova.

**7 January 2006** A delegation headed by Deputy Secretary of the Security Council Valentin Sobolev visits Iran for closed door talks on all aspects of the Russo-Iranian relationship.

**8 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov states he hopes that tension in relations between Iran and the West in connection with the Iranian nuclear programme will not result in an armed conflict flaring up between them. A delegation of Iran's Supreme National Security Council will visit Moscow in February 2006.

**9 January 2006** Gazprom reaches an agreement with Belarus to increase the transit of gas to Europe.

**10 January 2006** The MFA expresses its concern about the decision by Iran to resume work on uranium enrichment, and calls on Tehran to return to the moratorium on this.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak says the Russian proposal to set up a joint project with Iran in the field of nuclear energy remains in force. He says that Iran's energy problems have to be addressed "in such a way as to resolve the remaining issues and remove all the political baggage, so that Iran has no need to force through its programmes, which are causing concern".

Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the State Duma International Affairs Committee, says that Iran's nuclear ambitions pose a direct threat to Russia which is duty bound to use any means to remove it. He says that if "provocations" continue, Russia will side with other permanent members of the UN Security Council.

**11 January 2006** Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko hold a joint news conference in Astana.

**11 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says he is disappointed and disturbed by Iran's unilateral decision to continue its nuclear programme.

**11 January 2006** Maj-Gen Marat Kulakhmetov, the commander of Joint Peacekeeping Force in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone, says that the region's demilitarization is impossible at present.

**11 January 2006** The MOD denies that it has made official statements to the effect that Russia is willing to supply MiG-29 fighters to Venezuela.

**11 January 2006** Vladimir Putin meets President Hamed Karzai of Afghanistan in Kazakhstan.

Putin has talks with Chinese Vice-President Zeng Qinghong in Astana.

**11 January 2006** Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov speaks to acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert by telephone.

**11 January 2006** Russian and German finance ministers Aleksey Kudrin and Peer Steinbrueck discuss issues concerning the preparations for, and Russia's hosting of, the G8 finance ministers' summit. Kudrin says that:

the issues for Russia's presidency of the G8 are connected with the drafting of the principles and an action plan to ensure the stable provision of energy supplies for all countries, and in addition there will be discussion of developing and increasing the transparency of energy markets and also attracting new investment into energy and developing alternative energy sources...Russia is going to increase the extraction and supply to world markets of oil and gas and intends to develop alternative sources of energy, and that includes the use of the power from nuclear plants.

**12 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and chairman of the Gazprom board of directors Dmitriy Medvedev says that: "Gazprom has guaranteed Europe's long-term energy security...I think attempts by certain individuals to accuse Russia of putting political pressure on the major countries of the European Union are untenable. Russia was, is and will be a reliable supplier of gas to Europe."

**12 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that Moscow has not ruled out having the Iran nuclear case sent to the UN Security Council. He also says that Russia is still hoping to persuade Iran to resume the moratorium on nuclear research. He says it will be difficult for Russia to facilitate the efforts aimed at settling the situation regarding Iran's nuclear programme if Tehran does not return to a moratorium. He also says:

We recognize Iran's right to create its own nuclear cycle under the IAEA's control, but we cannot ignore factors such as the lack of economic sense and the absence of any real need for it. These are issues which continue to feed suspicions that this programme may have a secret military aspect...It is cheaper for Iran to buy fuel abroad than to spend money on the creation of its own fuel cycle, at least at this stage.

An article in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* by Yevgeniy Shestakov states that Russia is no longer a reliable partner of Iran.

**12 January 2006** Vladimir Putin and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev hold a summit in Astana. They discuss economic relations and the 2005 border treaty.

**12 January 2006** Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko says that Belarus will not join with Russia to form a single state.

**12 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov predicts in an interview on *Ekho Moskvy* that Russia will move to market prices for gas supplies to all countries, including Belarus.

**13 January 2006** Gazprom chief Aleksey Miller assures Germany and other EU nations that Gazprom will ensure reliable supplies of natural gas in the future.

**13 January 2006** Deputy prime minister and defence minister Sergey Ivanov says Moscow's proposal for the fuel for Iran's nuclear energy facilities to be enriched on Russian territory remains on the negotiation table. The essence of the Russian proposal is that fuel for Iran's future nuclear power plants should be enriched in Russia and that spent fuel from the Iranian plants should be returned to Russia. Ivanov thinks that under the current circumstances it is possible that the Iranian nuclear dossier could be submitted to the UN Security Council. Ivanov also says a contract for the export of Russian Tor-M1 air-defence systems to Iran will go ahead despite the situation with Tehran's nuclear programme,

The MFA says Moscow is attentively looking into the question of whether the IAEA should inform the UN Security Council about the situation concerning Iran's nuclear programme. The MFA calls on Iran to revise its decisions and to return to the moratorium on nuclear research and to cooperate fully and in a transparent way with the IAEA.

**13 January 2006** The MFA demands that the Ukrainian authorities to take steps to allow Russian Black Sea Fleet officials to carry out their official duties at the Yalta lighthouse.

Aide to the navy commander-in-chief Capt 1st Rank Igor Dygalo says the Black Sea Fleet has taken measures to step up security at all its marine navigation installations in the Crimea.

**13 January 2006** Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) Nikolay Patrushev says he is satisfied with cooperation with foreign counterparts in the fight against international terrorism.

**13 January 2006** Japanese Defence Agency Director-General Fukushima Nukaga visits Russia. He expresses concern over Russian arms exports to China in a meeting with his Russian counterpart. They discuss Russo-Japanese military cooperation plans for 2006.

**14 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov is interviewed on *Ekho Moskvy*. He discusses Iran, reform of the UN, the role of the CIS, and the recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine.

**14 January 2006** The Navy states that talks in Yalta to settle the situation surrounding the Yalta lighthouse have ended without any results.

**14 January 2006** Rodina leader Dmitriy Rogozin says there is no point in Russia being a member of the Council of Europe.

**14 January 2006** Georgiy Mirskiy of IMEMO writes on the Iranian nuclear issue in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*.

**15 January 2006** Gazprom head Aleksey Miller is interviewed on *Vesti Nedeli*.

**15 January 2006** The Commander-in-chief of the navy Admiral Vladimir Masorin views the Ukrainian side's position regarding the status of the Yalta lighthouse as being at odds with the letter of the fundamental agreements on the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) and, in particular, as being at odds with the agreement on the parameters for the division of the BSF.

The navy states that five unidentified people tried to make their way into a Russian Black Sea Fleet facility in Crimea (the Mars-75 radio navigation facility of the hydrographical service of the BSF near Genichesk [Sea of Azov]).

**16 January 2006** German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Moscow for talks with Vladimir Putin.

**16 January 2006** Vladimir Putin says that Russia will continue to cooperate with its European and American partners in resolving the Iranian nuclear problem.

**16 January 2006** The head of Rosatom Sergey Kiriyenko is appointed co-chairman of the permanent Russian-Iranian commission for trade and economic cooperation.

**16 January 2006** The Navy command urges Ukraine to observe BSF agreements.

**16 January 2006** Moldova and Gazprom have reached an agreement on gas prices. In the first quarter the price for gas for the republic will be 110 dollars for 1,000 cu.m.

**17 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov says he is opposed to the introduction of UN sanctions against Iran.

Sergey Lavrov calls for a direct dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. He says Israel must abide by the road map. He calls for a nuclear free zone in the Middle East.

Sergey Lavrov says that the Russo-Ukrainian Crimean lighthouse talks are deadlocked.

Sergey Lavrov says that Russia will start talks with Georgia if the Georgian parliament categorically demands the withdrawal of peacekeepers. He says that Russia's interests in the so-called South Ossetia and Abkhazia must be taken into account.

Sergey Lavrov says that Russia is ready to sign a border treaty with Latvia, but without other issues being tied in.

**17 January 2006** Nikolay Bordyuzha, secretary-general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), has spoken in favour of cooperation between the CSTO and NATO. He expresses concern over Ukraine's plans to join NATO.

**18 January 2006** The MFA calls on the Ukrainian side to engage in a constructive dialogue on the BSF.

Anti-Russian leaflets are being distributed in Henychesk (Kherson Region of Ukraine), the location of a BSF military facility.

Commander of Space Troops Col-Gen Vladimir Popovkin says that that radar stations located in Sevastopol and Mukacheve in Ukraine which form part of the missile attack early warning system are operating in the interests of the Russian Space Troops.

**18 January 2006** Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili says that Russian arms are still flowing illegally into the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone.

The head of the public relations department of the South Ossetian part of the Joint Control Commission for resolving the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, Inal Pliyev says that any unilateral demands for the withdrawal of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone are illegal.

**18 January 2006** Chairman of the Israeli National Security Council Giora Eiland visits Russia for talks with Sergey Lavrov and Igor Ivanov. They discuss Iran and the Middle East peace process.

**18 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussed the Iranian nuclear problem by telephone.

**18 January** Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Dmitriy Mezentsev speaks out for granting North Korea the status of observer at the 15th session of the Asian-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, which is due to be held in Moscow in January 2007.

**18 January 2006** French Foreign Minister Phillippe Douste-Blazy arrives in Moscow on a working visit.

**18 January 2006** The MFA confirms that if Slobodan Milosevic is to undergo medical treatment in Moscow, his return to The Hague is guaranteed

**19 January 2006** Gazprom says it will maintain gas supplies to Europe despite the current cold spell in Russia.

**19 January 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declares that in its actions at the emergency session of the IAEA Board of Governors on the Iranian nuclear problem on 2 and 3 February, Moscow will be guided by the assessments of the situation formulated by the international agency. He denies that Russian experts could have taken part in creating Iran's nuclear programme.

**19 January 2006** French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy visits Moscow for talks.

**19 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that talks on the Nagorny Karabakh settlement were encouraging in 2005 as the sides reached a high level of mutual

understanding on key principles at bilateral summits under the aegis of international mediators - the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs (Russia, USA and France) - in Warsaw on 15 May and Kazan on 27 August. He says these key principles could lay the foundation for a settlement agreement.

**19 January 2006** Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov says a referendum on adopting the constitutional act of the Union State of Russia and Belarus may be held before the end of 2006.

**19 January 2006** A Russian-Swedish joint military exercise starts in the north of Sweden called "Snowflake-2006."

**20 January 2006** Gazprom and Uzbekistan have established the price of Uzbek gas supplies at a rate of 60 dollars per 1,000 cubic metres, while the transit rate will be 1.1 dollar per 1,000 cubic metres per 100 km. The agreement was reached following talks between Gazprom chairman Aleksey Miller and Uzbek President Islom Karimov. In April 2004 Gazprom and Uzbekneftegaz signed a production-sharing agreement for the development of the Shakhpakhty gas condensate deposit in the Ustyurt region. The agreement is for a 15-year period and investments in 2004-07 will total 15m dollars.

**20 January 2006** The president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Yevgeniy Primakov, says that harsh statements aimed at Israel by Tehran are hindering Russia in its conducting of its line on Iran.

The head of the Duma International Affairs Committee, Konstantin Kosachev, says that excessive pressure on Iran could lead to a repeat of the North Korean scenario in which Pyongyang left the nonproliferation regime because of US pressure. He also says:

On the other hand, we cannot close our eyes to what is happening in Iran, particularly in the context of recent statements by the Iranian president, defiant and provocative, that cannot be accepted under any circumstances by the international community.

The fears that exist in the world over the Iranian nuclear programme are shared by Russia, of course. We have absolutely no interest in Iran becoming a country possessing nuclear weapons. That can simply be ruled out. This would sharply destabilize the situation not just in the region, but also in the world as a whole. All these fears must be dealt with in the most scrupulous manner in the regime of operations of IAEA representatives, and if needed in the regime of discussion in the UN Security Council.

Konstantin Kosachev criticizes the report on human rights in the Republic of Chechnya, prepared for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) session, which will open next week in Strasbourg.

Sergey Ryabkov, director of the Foreign Ministry's department for European cooperation, says that Russia believes that its financial contribution to the Council of Europe does not yield adequate results and intends to reduce it.

**20 January 2006** A ban on import of meat from Ukraine is introduced in Russia.

Sergey Lavrov says he expects that the situation concerning the lighthouse in Crimea will be settled by bringing the matter back into the field of law.

The MFA ejects Kiev's accusations that Ukraine's territorial waters were violated during Russian work in the Kerch strait.

**20 January 2006** The FSB says that Russia's power structures have stepped up security measures in the North Caucasus after receiving information that international terrorists in (Georgia's) Pankisi Gorge are planning to carry out acts of terrorism in a number of regions in the south of Russia.

**20 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says that Russia is not planning to accelerate the creation of a BSF base in Novorossiysk.

The commander-in-chief of the Russian navy, Admiral Vladimir Masorin, is interviewed in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. He says that the seizure of Yalta lighthouse can ruin all the agreements on the BSF.

**20 January 2006** Minister of Internal Affairs Rashid Nurgaliyev visits Italy.

**21 January 2006** Anatoliy Chubays, United Energy Systems (UES) head describes the situation with energy supplies in Russia as unprecedentedly difficult, approximately the same as in Moscow and Gazprom says that it is maintaining gas supplies to Europe via Ukraine.

Gazprom spokesman Sergey Kupriyanov says that Gazprom believes that the Russian-Ukrainian gas agreements "need to be worked on a bit more."

UES cuts power supplies to Finland by 30 per cent. The cause lies with low temperatures in Russia, which have created problems in Russian energy networks.

**21 January 2006** The MFA calls on the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian National Authority to cooperate so as to create normal conditions for the holding of elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council on 2 January.

**22 January 2006** Natural gas supplies to Georgia and Armenia are stopped because of explosions at the main gas pipelines. The explosions hit the North Caucasus-Transcaucasus and Mozdok-Tbilisi pipelines at 0252 Moscow time and 0315 Moscow time. The prosecutor's office blames the blasts on sabotage. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili accuses Russia of the intentional cut-off of gas supplies and of provoking an energy crisis in Georgia.

**22 January 2006** Vladimir Putin opens the Year of Armenia exhibition in Moscow.

Armenian President Robert Kocharyan arrives in Moscow on a working visit.

**23 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov calls on Iran to help resume the negotiating process on the nuclear issue. He has talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari in Moscow.

Iranian ambassador to Moscow Gholamreza Ansari says that Tehran is expecting in the near future to agree with Moscow the schedule for completing the construction work on the nuclear power plant in Bushehr.

**23 January 2006** Vladimir Putin meets Cypriot President Tassos Papadhopoulos in Moscow. He says Russia will continue to take an active part in settling the Cyprus problem within the framework of UN mechanisms.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Cyprus counterpart, Yeoryios Iakovou, sign a programme for cooperation in the fields of science, education and culture for 2006-2008 in Moscow.

**23 January 2006** The MFA says it is bewildered by Georgian statements that the Russian authorities were responsible for explosions on gas pipelines to Georgia.

**23 January 2006** The deputy prime minister and defence minister, Sergey Ivanov, visits Azerbaijan. He says Russia is ready to sell weapons to Azerbaijan and Armenia taking into account the balance of forces in the region.

Vladimir Putin says at the Year of Armenia ceremony in the Kremlin that Moscow is determined to find a military-diplomatic solution that would help consolidate stability in the Caucasus region.

**23 January 2006** The deputy head of Gazprom, Aleksandr Medvedev says that Ukraine is taking gas intended for Europe.

You can't work that way, when the whole of Europe - and in Russia all measures are being taken to optimize deliveries - [you can't] behave as if paradise on Earth has already arrived in your country. Paradise has not yet arrived - and it will not arrive with such an approach to work because to all intents and purposes what is taking place - you can describe this any way you like - you can call this waste or an outfeed, legal, illegal, you can call it what you like, but in actual fact what is happening is that gas is remaining in Ukraine above the volumes that were envisaged, which is not allowing us to fulfil our obligations to foreign buyers in full volume.

**23 January 2006** President of Turkmenistan Saparmyrat Nyayazow visits Moscow for talks with Vladimir Putin.

**23 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Sergey Ivanov says that Russia does not rule out that under certain circumstances it will refuse to observe the flank limits as enshrined in the adapted CFE Treaty.

Sergey Ivanov says that some hardware and ammunition from a Russian military base in Georgia will be redeployed to the territory of the 102nd Russian military base in Armenia.

Sergey Ivanov says that the aim of the planned creation on the Caspian of the Kasfor naval operative cooperation group is to bring elementary order to the region.

**23 January 2006** Russian presidential aide Igor Shuvalov, the sherpa responsible for G8 summit preparations, gives an interview to *Itogi* on Russia and the G8.

**23 January 2006** The Rosoboroneksport deputy director general, Viktor Komardin, says Russia and India have signed a contract for the delivery of two

consignments of Smerch multiple launch rocket systems. The contract was signed on 31 December.

**24 January 2006** The St Petersburg prosecutor's office requests an additional investigation of a criminal case into unlawful commercial activities concerning foreign language courses at the British Council.

**24 January 2006** the head of the Russian delegation at the PACE session and head of the State Duma international affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev says he welcomes PACE debate on the problem of CIA secret prisons.

**24 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov has a telephone conversation with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

**24 January 2006** Secretary of the Security Council Igor Ivanov has talks in Moscow with Secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of National Security Ali Larijani. Rosatom head Sergey Kiriyyenko has talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari.

**24 January 2006** Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka visits St.Petersburg for talks with Vladimir Putin. Several agreements are signed.

**24 January 2006** Tajik President Emomali Rahmonov has talks with Vladimir Putin in St.Petersburg.

**24 January 2006** The head of Rostekhnadzor, Konstantin Pulikovskiy, meets the chief of the National Nuclear Security Administration of the US Department of Energy, Linton Brooks.

**24 January 2006** Former Yukos head Mikhail Khodorkovskiy's lawyers intend to appeal against the actions by the management of the prison in which he is held at all judicial levels, including the European Court of Human Rights.

**24 January 2006** The secretary-general of the CSTO, Lt-Gen Nikolay Bordyuzha, says that so far Russia has not ratified a single one of six fundamental international agreements on the strengthening and development of collective security in the CSTO framework.

**25 January 2006** Gazprom concludes a long-term production-sharing agreement with Uzbekistan.

Russia starts supplying more gas to Europe through the territory of Belarus. This has been done to compensate Poland for the losses caused by gas transit via Ukraine.

Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko calls upon Ukraine to reduce gas consumption and stop solving its problems at the expense of its European neighbours and Russia.

The head of Gazprom, Aleksey Miller says Ukraine is continuing to siphon off gas which is intended for export to Europe.

**25 January 2006** The Russian PACE delegation objects to the PACE resolution on human rights violations in Chechnya.

**25 January 2006** Vladimir Putin attends the Eurasian Economic Community summit in St.Petersburg. He says Uzbekistan has signed the protocol on joining the treaty on the establishment of the EAEC.

**25 January 2006** Rosatom head Sergey Kiriyenko says Iran "is studying seriously and in depth" the Russian proposal to set up a joint venture for the production of nuclear fuel.

Vladimir Putin proposes an initiative to create a system of international centres that offer nuclear fuel cycle services, including enrichment.

**25 January 2006** Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, presidential aide and special representative of the Russian president for the development of relations with the EU, says the agreements between Russia and the EU on simplified visa procedures and readmission have been devised and are being examined.

**25 January 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov visits Azerbaijan.

Chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Yuriy Baluyevskiy says that Russian-Iranian military-technical cooperation is not aimed against third countries and it complies with international legal standards. He says that Russian military bases will be withdrawn from Georgia before the end of 2008.

Yuriy Baluyevskiy says the Western countries have still not ratified the adapted CFE Treaty because they seek to redeploy their military units in Europe.

**26 January 2006** The FSB shows the rock allegedly used by British spies in Moscow.

**26 January 2006** Mikhail Margelov, head of the Federation Council's international committee, says Hamas pressurised voters in the Palestinian parliamentary election.

**26 January 2006** The chairman of the Audit Chamber, Sergey Stepashin, says that "there are no problems from the Russian side in the area of financing the construction of the nuclear power plant in Bushehr". Stepashin says that Russia will have more weighty grounds for not agreeing to the handover of the Iranian dossier to the UN Security Council if the Iranian side goes along with Russia for a joint enterprise for uranium enrichment and the salvaging of spent nuclear fuel.

**26 January 2006** The commander of the North Caucasus Military District, Army Gen Aleksandr Baranov, says the bulk of the military hardware to be withdrawn from two military bases in Georgia will be taken to the 102nd Russian military base at Gyumri, Armenia, in 2006-07.

Defence minister Sergey Ivanov visits Armenia. He says the 102nd Russian military base in the Armenian town of Gyumri is ready to receive military hardware which is to be withdrawn from two Russian military bases in Georgia. Ivanov discusses Nagorny Karabakh with Armenian President Robert Kocharyan.

The president of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoiti, says "the peacekeeping operation in the area of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict that is carried out by Russia is unique

and does not require correction." He rejects the Georgian proposal for other peacekeeping forces.

UES trebles power supplies to Georgia, whose populated areas have found themselves almost completely without electricity following a recent terrorist act on the power transmission line and a hurricane.

Gazprom says new damage has been detected on the Mozdok-Tbilisi natural gas pipeline.

Georgian prime minister Zurab Noghaideli says Russia has imposed an energy blockade on Georgia. He also says that Russia is stalling on the South Ossetia peace plan.

**26 January 2006** The secretary of the Security Council, Igor Ivanov, says that sittings of the subcommittees of the Yushchenko-Putin interstate commission on the Russian BSF and international, economic and humanitarian cooperation between Russia and Ukraine are scheduled for the end of February. Ivanov addresses a joint news conference with secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Anatoliy Kinakh in Kiev. Ivanov says that a sitting of the subcommittee for the BSF was scheduled for 14 February. A sitting of the subcommittee for international cooperation, which is headed by the foreign ministers of the two countries, will be held after 20 February.

Gazprom says the amount of gas drawn off by Ukraine over and above its quota during the cold weather has reached 80m cu.m. a day. Gazprom says that from 19 to 2 January there was a shortfall of 326m cu.m. in the amount of gas reaching Europe as a result of this.

**26 January 2006** A Roskosmos delegation headed by its director, Anatoliy Perminov, discusses issues of space cooperation during talks with Kazakh Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov in Astana.

**26 January 2006** The Economic Development and Trade Ministry says trade between Russia and China increased by 37 per cent in 2005 and exceeded 29bn dollars. In 2005 the volume of Chinese investments in Russia nearly doubled while the total number of projects involving Chinese capital reached 700.

**26 January 2006** Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev visits Russia. Nazarbayev and Vladimir Putin adopt a joint statement on the development of cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy and sign a new document on the oil and gas sector.

**26 January 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meets current OSCE chairman, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht. Moscow wants to see the OSCE become "truly strong and effective, working in the interests of all the members of the organization". He says it must be an organization "with its own rules, which are transparent, clear and the same for everyone; an organization which can and does contribute to the development of economic cooperation, humanitarian cooperation and democracy in Europe; and, of course, an organization which ensures that the principle of equal security is applied universally".

**26 January 2006** *Kommersant* reports that Putin proposed at the Eurasian Economic Community summit that an international uranium enrichment centre be created in Russia. Vladimir Putin reaches an agreement with the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan that Russia would extract the raw material - scarce non-enriched uranium - in Central Asia.

**27 January 2006** Minister of Industry and Energy Viktor Khristenko has talks with Italian Minister of Industry and Trade Claudio Scajola.

**27 January 2006** Gazprom head Aleksey Miller and Kyrgyz Prime Minister Feliks Kulov sign a memorandum of intentions regarding the creation of a joint oil and gas enterprise.

**27 January 2006** The Interbank Currency Council say the single currency of the Russia-Belarus union state will be introduced on 1 January 2008.

**27 January 2006** Ingushetia prosecutor Makhmud-Ali Kalimatov says the office of a British organization, Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development, has been closed down because it lacks a licence.

**27 January 2006** The "quartet" of international mediators on the Middle East, Russia, the USA, the EU and the UN, issues a statement on the results of its consideration of elections to the Palestinian parliament and has called for renunciation of violence and terror and for recognition of Israel.

Aleksandr Kalugin, the MFA's special Middle East representative says Russia "may have contacts with Hamas representatives if this movement adheres to a policy of political settlement".

Mikhail Grishankov (Yedinaya Rossiya), first deputy chairman of the State Duma's security committee, says the new Palestinian parliament must make every effort to prevent the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. He says that "if Hamas pursues an aggressive policy, the UN will have to take control in that situation and impose all the necessary sanctions."

**27 January 2006** The MFA says that Moscow "is forced to note that no noticeable improvement in the security field is discernible in Afghanistan." It says terrorist actions are becoming more daring.

**27 January 2006** The general secretary of the CSTO Nikolay Bordyuzha is interviewed in *Rossiyskiye Vesti*. He says the CSTO sees China as one of the closest allies of Russia. The CSTO comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

**27 January 2006** Gazprom deputy chairman Aleksandr Medvedev visits Serbia.

**28 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni speak by telephone. They say that all participants in the Palestinian election process must respect the principle of a peace settlement in the region.

**29 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov has a telephone conversation with Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas.

**29 January 2006** It is reported that Russian gas supplies to Georgia and Armenia are fully restored. The gas supply was interrupted on 22 January when a blast in North Ossetia damaged the Mozdok-Tbilisi pipeline. Almost 20 metres of damaged pipe had to be replaced.

**29 January 2006** The commander-in-chief of the navy, Admiral Vladimir Masorin, states that Russia will take part in NATO's Active Endeavor antiterrorist operation in the Mediterranean.

**30 January 2006** Deputy Finance Minister Sergey Storchak says Russia is ready to annul Afghanistan's debt of 10bn dollars. The MFA says that Russia will continue to assist in post war reconstruction in Afghanistan.

**30 January 2006** Head of the Duma international affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev says that deputies of the Duma "consider it counterproductive to hand over the nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council with undue haste and impose various sanctions on Iran". He says this "would inevitably narrow the possibilities for dialogue and would drive Iran into a corner". He is commenting on the tabling of a resolution in the US Senate on stepping up sanctions against Iran.

The MFA says Moscow is studying the possibility of involving China in the Russo-Iranian talks on setting up a joint uranium-enrichment venture in Russia.

**30 January 2006** Vladimir Putin says that Russia intends "to achieve universal approaches to settling the Kosovo problem". Putin says:

At present we are on an important stage of the settlement and talks have begun on agreeing the final status of Kosovo...Our position will be guided by the necessity to find a solution that would be acceptable to both Belgrade and to Albanian leaders...one should try and ensure that the world community galvanizes the sides into finding a negotiated mutually acceptable settlement.

Putin points out the importance of the issue "not only from the point of view of adhering to the principles of international law but also proceeding from the practical interests of post-Soviet space". He says all possible solutions "should be of a universal nature...For post-Soviet space this is very important...Unfortunately, here not all conflicts on post-Soviet space have been settled and we cannot follow a path, according to which we will apply one set of principles in one place and a different one in another."

**30 January 2006** Russia's permanent envoy in the OSCE Aleksey Borodavkin has told a meeting of the OSCE Council in Vienna that Moscow believes the USA and the EU are not objective in their assessment of the new law which regulates the work of Russian NGOs. He says there is no doubt that the law which was passed by the State Duma fully meets the Council of Europe's guiding principles which regulate the status and work of NGOs as well as the relevant OSCE standards.

**30 January 2006** Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Duma international affairs committee and head of Russia's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of Europe, says Russia must remain a member of PACE, despite the criticism it directs at Russia.

**31 January 2006** The separatist Chechen minister of foreign affairs appoints a representative to Poland, Salambek Amayev.

**31 January 2006** Georgian Minister of State for Settlement of Conflicts Giorgi Khaindrava expresses concern that Vladimir Putin may be giving de facto support for the idea of giving independence to Georgia's autonomous regions. This follows Putin's comments about Kosovo.

**31 January 2006** The MFA condemns attempts to present Belarus as a problem area for democracy and under this pretext to exclude it from international cooperation.

**31 January 2006** Former Yukos banker Igor Babenko is granted political asylum in Lithuania.

**31 January 2006** Foreign ministers of the Quartet meet in London to discuss the Palestinian elections. Sergey Lavrov says he does not rule out contacts with Hamas. He states:

When Hamas was elected to parliament, when it got a majority in the Palestinian parliament, the quartet came out quickly with a reaction, welcomed the results of democratic, free and genuinely safe elections and stressed three elements: that the MPs should be people that reject violence as a means of resolving political disputes, that they should recognize Israel as a state and should act in accordance with the road map plan.

He says Russia is in favour of full disarmament of the Hamas movement and believes that if that happened, Hamas could take part in the work of the parliament.

**31 January 2006** Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Army General Yuriy Baluyevskiy, visits Syria.

**31 January 2006** Sergey Lavrov discusses Iran with other foreign ministers of the UN Security Council in London. He makes the following statement:

After the meeting of the IAEA governing board in the beginning of February, the Security Council will be only informed about its results and will not take any decisions. This measure, I hope, will attract everybody's attention to the fact that the problem is very serious, that we want the Iranian nuclear dossier to stay within the peaceful frame and that the questions related to the Iranian nuclear programme that remain unsolved should be dealt with as soon as possible.

Lavrov says that Russia and China have a common position on the Iranian nuclear problem.

The MFA says it favours a diplomatic way of resolving the Iranian nuclear problem.

Sergey Lavrov attends a donor conference on Afghanistan in London. He says Russia "is inclined to use its chairmanship of the G8 to help the Afghan leadership to move forward towards stability and a flourishing economy and also to mobilize

corresponding efforts of the donor community". He expresses concern about Taliban activity in Afghanistan.

Sergey Lavrov says Russia "is against establishing an artificial deadline for completion of talks on the status of Kosovo." He says Russia "does not share the position of its partners in the Contact Group calling for completing the negotiating process before the end of 2006."

**31 January 2006** Presidential envoy for relations with the EU Sergey Yastrzhembskiy says he fears that the multiformat admission of Lithuania into the Schengen zone may "devalue a very important agreement on passenger transit" from Kaliningrad to mainland Russia. He says "we seek to preserve the existing preferential regime for the passage of citizens by railway from Kaliningrad to mainland Russia and back".

**31 January 2006** Vladimir Putin congratulates Finnish President Tarja Halonen on her re-election.

### ***February***

**1 February 2006** Vladimir Putin and US President George Bush discuss the situation concerning the Iranian nuclear problem and also the international community's nonproliferation efforts by telephone.

The MFA says that Russia is not going to put any pressure whatsoever on Tehran regarding the Iranian nuclear problem. A Russian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak is currently visiting Tehran, to "explain the situation and convince Iranian colleagues". He says:

Our friendly advice to Iranian colleagues is cooperation with the IAEA on the basis of the resolution of the IAEA ruling council and therein lies the key to removing all existing disagreements and concerns which will make it possible to ensure Iran's energy requirements for a long time and the confidence of the international community that the norms of the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons are being observed here consistently.

Kislyak says that the Russian proposal to set up a joint venture for uranium enrichment will remain in force provided Iran restores the moratorium on nuclear activities.

The chairman of the Duma international affairs committee, Konstantin Kosachev says that possible sanctions against Iran will not solve the problem with the nuclear programme of this country and may have the opposite effect. He says that the threat of sanctions could be removed from Iran if talks on setting up a Russian-Iranian joint venture for uranium enrichment are successful.

**1 February 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin and South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoiti condemn Georgian actions against Russian peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia. Two Russian soldiers were beaten up by Georgian soldiers.

The Georgian MFA condemns the Russian MFA for calling South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoiti, "the president of South Ossetia".

**1 February 2006** The Russian Council of Europe delegation asks the CE to re-examine the law on non-governmental organizations.

**2 February 2006** Grigoriy Berdennikov, Russia's representative at the IAEA, says that for 18 years the Iranians in general have been violating their agreement with the agency on guarantees. "It seems to us - and in fact the Board of Governors fully agrees with this - that a moratorium is needed." He also says:

At the moment it is planned in the draft resolution to inform the Security Council. What will happen afterwards will depend a great deal on the nature of the report that the director-general should prepare by the March session of the IAEA Board of Governors. We very much hope that this will be a report that will not require any action from the Security Council and everything will be settled here within the IAEA. This would definitely be the best outcome...Russia is in favour of Tehran resuming the moratorium on uranium enrichment.

**2 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that the presence of the Joint Peacekeeping Force in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone "is the only way of preventing armed confrontation between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali from restarting". Lavrov meets with South Ossetian president Eduard Kokoiti in Moscow.

The president of Abkhazia, Sergey Bagapsh, says that the Abkhaz side will not agree to a withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone.

**2 February 2006** It is reported on Ukrainian TV that a joint venture between Naftohaz Ukrayiny and Rosukrenergo has been set up. It is called Ukgazenergo.

**2 February 2006** The director of the Russian Foreign Ministry department for security and disarmament, Anatoliy Antonov, says that the settlement of the situation concerning the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea "will remain on the agenda of the G8". He is interviewed in *Vremya Novostey*.

**2 February 2006** The chairman of the board of directors of the National Bank of Belarus, Pyotr Prapakovich, says 1 January 2008 is the most optimal date for the introduction of the single currency of the Union State of Belarus and Russia.

**3 February 2006** Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler meets chairman of Gazprom's Management Committee Aleksey Miller. He says Turkey and Russia plan to extend a gas pipeline to Israel and Lebanon. Israel requires over 6bn cubic metres of Russian natural gas a year.

Gazprom head Aleksey Miller says the unauthorized taking of Russian gas by Ukraine shows the need for a new pipeline to be built under the Black Sea, to run parallel to the Blue Stream gas pipeline.

**3 February 2006** Spiritual leaders of Russia's Muslims join the protests about Danish newspaper cartoons mocking Muhammed.

**3 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says the Iran nuclear dossier must remain at the IAEA.

Sergey Lavrov describes as not serious the statement by the Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinezhad, who had doubted the honesty of Moscow's proposal to set up a uranium enrichment enterprise outside Iran.

Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna Grigoriy Berdennikov, who is representing Russia at the emergency meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, says the possible submission of the Iranian dossier to the UN Security Council will not end Russian construction work at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

**2 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that the secretary-general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu will visit Russia soon.

**3 February 2006** Chairman of the Duma international affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev expresses bewilderment in connection with a statement by Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad on uranium enrichment (Iran's refusal to accept Russia's proposal to establish a uranium enrichment joint venture on Russian territory) at a time when the IAEA is looking into the possibility of the Iranian "nuclear dossier" being handed over to the UN Security Council.

**3 February 2006** Vladimir Putin and Viktor Yushchenko welcome the setting up of the Ukgazenergo joint enterprise.

**3 February 2006** Vladimir Putin has called on Moldova and Estonia to lift relations with the Russian Federation to a higher level.

**3 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says that Russia does not use the export of its energy resources to exert pressure on its neighbours.

Sergey Ivanov says he is not bothered by Georgia's decision to leave the Council of CIS Defence Ministers.

**3 February 2006** It is reported that the majority of the Russian military units deployed at the Baykonur cosmodrome will be disbanded by 1 December 2006.

**5 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says the Russian offer to Iran on the formation of a joint venture to enrich uranium in Russia remains in force, Russian He added that if it was put into practice, it would give Tehran a lawful right to develop its civilian nuclear power industry. He says the problem of Iran's "nuclear dossier" and the construction of a nuclear power plant by Russia in Bushehr are not in any way linked with each other.

**5 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says that if a number of states fail to ratify the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in the near future, Russia intends to raise the question of the future of the document. "If the state of affairs does not change, we shall evidently have to hold a difficult debate about the future of the CFE treaty at the third conference to review its operation scheduled to be held in Vienna in May this year."

Ivanov also says that the raising of prices for Russian gas is not an attempt to bring pressure to bear on Russia's neighbours but a transition to market-economy principles. He says that Russia will raise gas prices to Belarus in 2007.

**5 February 2006** Economic Development Minister German Gref visits India. Gref says that Russia and India intend to bring trade up to 10bn dollars by 2010. In 2005 trade between Russia and India was 2.9bn dollars. Gref adds that a memorandum on cooperation between the Russian Ministry of Economic Development and India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry will be signed in Delhi on 6 February. Representatives of companies including Gazprom, Tekhnopromeksport and the Sistema joint-stock finance corporation are accompanying Gref.

**5 February 2006** The BSF press service says that a group of fighting ships has set sail for the Mediterranean to carry out missions as part of NATO's Active Endeavour antiterrorist operation.

**6 February 2006** Anatoliy Safonov, the Russian president's special representative for international cooperation in the fight against terrorist and transnational organized crime, says that Russia deems 15 organizations to be terrorist. The Russian list includes the Taleban movement, al-Qa'idah, the Congress of Peoples of Ichkeria and Dagestan, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Freedom Party.

**6 February 2006** The MFA condemns the various acts of violence by Moslems carried out in certain countries in protest at the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Western media. It also condemns the publication of the pictures.

Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Duma international affairs committee says the developments as regards the Iranian nuclear programme and the anti-European protests in Arabic countries "could be linked".

Russia's Council of Muftis condemns the actions of militant Islamists in organizing mass disturbances and setting fire to European diplomatic missions in several Arab countries to demonstrate against the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

**6 February 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says it is of the utmost importance not to threaten Iran over its nuclear programme at this stage. He is speaking in response to remarks made by the US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who would not rule out the possibility of military strikes on installations in Iran. Lavrov is visiting Greece. He discusses energy cooperation, Cyprus, Kosovo.

**6 February 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak says that Russia believes that a joint venture to enrich uranium is possible if Iran reinstates its moratorium on enrichment activities. The MFA says that Russian-Iranian consultations on the establishment of a joint uranium enrichment venture in Russia could go ahead on 16 February.

**6 February 2006** South Ossetian Joint Peacekeeping Force Commander Maj-Gen Marat Kulakhmetov says: "Only a political decision by the sides can annul the peacekeepers' mandate. In case a unilateral decision is passed, the Joint Peacekeeping Force will keep on performing their duties in line with their mandate."

**6 February 2006** The MFA expresses concern that Taiwan may be abandoning the idea of unification with China and seek independence.

**6 February 2006** CSTO Secretary-General Nikolay Bordyuzha says a package of documents setting up a collective peacekeeping force for the CSTO is to be tabled at the CSTO's spring session.

**6 February 2006** The MFA says that Russia has decided to settle Afghanistan's debt to the former Soviet Union within the Paris Club framework.

**7 February 2006** Finance Minister Aleksey Kudrin says Russia plans to write off 100 per cent of the debt of 16 poorest nations. The sum in question totals slightly less than 700m dollars.

**7 February 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visits Italy. He repeats the Russian offer to Iran for the establishment of a joint venture to enrich uranium. He says that the Iran issue should remain within the IAEA framework.

Sergey Lavrov says that Russia "is hoping for the formation of a viable Palestinian government which will reaffirm Israel's right to exist".

Lavrov says that Serb refugees must be permitted to return to Kosovo.

Lavrov says diversification of gas delivery routes will be of crucial importance in providing uninterrupted supplies of Russian gas to Europe.

**7 February 2006** Head of Rosatom Sergey Kiriyyenko says that if Iran accepts the Russian proposal on the Iranian nuclear problem, Iran could become a co-founder of a joint venture for uranium enrichment but that it will not have access to nuclear technologies.

**7 February 2006** Aleksandr Kalugin, MFA special envoy for Middle East settlement, says that Russia's position as regards rendering aid to Palestine "remains unchanged so far."

**7 February 2006** State Secretary and Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin says that the current atmosphere in Russian-Georgian relations is not conducive to progress in work on a friendship treaty. He is interviewed in *Vremya Novostey*.

**8 February 2006** The MOD states that 250 Georgian troops have been brought into the Georgia-Ossetian conflict zone in violation of the 1992 Dagomys agreements.

Andrey Kokoshin, head of the Duma committee for CIS affairs and relations with compatriots, says that Western countries that supply weapons to Georgia are destabilizing the situation in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone.

Andrey Kokoshin says Russia and several other influential players on the global political arena, primarily China and India, have not exhausted the possibilities of influencing Tehran in order to settle the situation around the Iranian nuclear programme.

**8 February 2006** Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, aide to the president for the development of relations with the European Union, says the work of experts and diplomats on an agreement simplifying the Russia-EU visa regime has been completed. He says work on the harmonization of Russian and EU legislations has so far not begun.

**8 February 2006** Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Gref says Russia and India have agreed on the terms of the repayment of the one-billion-dollar Indian debt to Russia.

**8 February 2006** The interior ministry announces that joint antiterrorist exercises are to be held by the Internal Troops of the Russian Federation Interior Ministry and the People's Armed Police of the People's Republic of China in 2007.

**9 February 2006** Vladimir Putin visits Spain.

**9 February 2006** Vladimir Putin invites the leadership of Hamas to Moscow for consultations and called for "the democratic choice" of the Palestinians to be respected. He says Russia will not rush to call Hamas a terrorist organisation.

The MFA says Moscow expects the new Palestinian authorities to adhere to existing Palestinian-Israeli accords and recognize the right of Israel to exist. The MFA calls on Israel and Palestine not to abandon the road map for a Middle East settlement.

**9 February 2006** Mikhail Dmitriyev, the head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation says Russia is not in any talks at all on arms sales to Iran, apart from supplying Tor-M1 air defence systems. Within the framework of this deal, up to 30 systems will be supplied, which will provide cover for the most important state and military facilities, first of all nuclear facilities in Isfahan, Bushehr and Tehran and in the east of the country. The total value of the contract amounts to 1.4bn dollars, making it the largest arms deal between Russia and Iran.

The MFA's special representative to the Middle East Aleksandr Kalugin Russia considers that a dialogue with Iran is essential to a settlement of the problems of the Middle East. He believes this will help Iran to adopt moderate positions on vital international problems.

**9 February 2006** Eduard Kokoiti, the leader of South Ossetia, warns Tbilisi that his forces are ready to destroy extra Georgian troops in the conflict zone and Russian peacekeepers will stay despite Georgian demands for their withdrawal. Georgian State Minister for Conflict Settlement Giorgi Khaindrava calls events in Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) acts of provocation and says that Russian peacekeeping commander Marat Kulakhmetov's claims that Georgian units are present in the conflict zone are not true.

Deputy commander-in-chief of the Russian air force in charge of the CIS air defence system Lt-Gen Aytech Bizhev says Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS council of defence ministers has not had any significant impact on the efficiency of the CIS Unified Air Defence System in the south.

Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov says that Georgia is looking for an excuse to exacerbate the situation in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone.

**9 February 2006** Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov is interviewed in *La Stampa*. He says that he has confidence in the Russia-Iran talks set for mid-February and is hopeful that Iran will accept Russian proposals to work within the framework of the IAEA.

**9 February 2006** Mikhail Dmitriyev, the head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, says that Russia has completed the delivery to Syria of

Strelets air defence systems. Russia and Syria have a three-year programme of military-technical cooperation.

**9 February 2006** The head of the CIS Counterterrorism Centre, Col-Gen Boris Mylnikov, says that the production of narcotics in Afghanistan will continue to grow because the coalition command has no interest in remedying the prevailing situation.

**9 February 2006** Mikhail Dmitriyev, head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, says that Russia has no plans to expand the number of countries it supplies its weapons to. "We are no longer looking into expanding the geography of our supplies. We currently cooperate with 82 countries, and this is a very good indicator. The main task is to reinforce our position on those markets." China and India account for more than 70 per cent of Russian arms exports. Dmitriyev says that as of 2007 Russia will be exporting military equipment worth over 7bn dollars, and in 2006 it plans to export weapons to the value of more than 5.5bn dollars.

**9 February 2006** The Azerbaijani, Russian and Kazakh border services reach agreement to boost cooperation in the fight against terrorism, illegal migration and drug trafficking.

**9 February 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov rejects the Baltic states' criticism of Moscow's joint project with Germany to lay a natural gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea floor and saying it was a matter for the consortium of Russia's Gazprom and Germany's BASF and E.ON Ruhrgas to decide whether Estonia can join in.

**10 February 2006** Defence minister Sergey Ivanov says that sooner or later the whole world community will have to establish contact with the Hamas movement, which has won the Palestinian elections.

The Hamas leadership accepts Vladimir Putin's invitation to visit Moscow. Aleksandr Kalugin, the Russian Federation Foreign Minister's special representative for a Middle East settlement, says that the Russian leadership intends to call on Hamas to give up their radical policies, and accept Israel's right to exist.

**10 February 2006** Sergey Ivanov attends the NATO-Russia Council meeting of defence ministers in Taormina, Sicily. He says that multinational military exercises on the movement and deployment of a Russia-NATO contingent will be held in 2007-08.

**10 February 2006** Georgia releases three Russian officers detained by the Georgian military police for illegally crossing the Georgian state border and not having visas or passports.

**10 February 2006** A Security Council delegation visits Moldova.

**10 February 2006** It is announced that Russian peacekeepers are to take part in the UN operation in Sudan.

**11 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov has telephone conversations with US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Secretary-

General of the EU Council Javier Solana. He discusses Russia's invitation to Hamas.

**11 February 2006** Vladimir Putin addresses G8 finance ministers meeting in Moscow. He says that Russia intends to focus on ensuring energy security, fighting infectious diseases and improving worldwide education standards during its chairmanship of the G8.

**11 February 2006** Vladimir Putin meets US Secretary of the Treasury John Snow. He says Russia hopes, in a few years, to become the third or fourth biggest supplier of fuels to the USA. Russia is now in eighth place regarding the proportion of fuels on the American market.

**11 February 2006** Finance Minister Aleksey Kudrin says Russia could lift all restrictions on exporting capital by 1 January 2007.

**11 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov has talks in Italy with his Italian opposite number, Antonio Martino.

**11 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov believes the IAEA should have a positive impact on the effort to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. He also says recent controversial statements by the Iranian leadership, including in relation to Israel are unacceptable. He denies that Russia is supplying any nation with WMD.

**11 February 2006** Vladimir Dorokhin, MFA ambassador-at-large, says that the length of the deployment of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine is not subject to revision.

**12 February 2006** Sergey Ivanov has talks with Israeli defence minister Shaul Mufaz at the NATO-Russia Council meeting of defence ministers in Sicily.

**13 February 2006** Sergey Kiriyenko, the head of Rosatom, says Russia is completely ready to conclude an agreement with Iran on creating a joint uranium enrichment enterprise. "We have suggested creating a uranium enrichment enterprise on Russian territory. In exchange there will be guaranteed fuel deliveries to Iran, but without access for Iranian specialists to the technologies...In this way we will take the uranium away, enrich it here and send the Iranians ready fuel. Then we will again return the spent fuel to our country, thus guaranteeing that it is impossible to separate made plutonium from it. In this way we retain control over two most sensitive technological stages of work of a nuclear power station, excluding the threat of violating the nonproliferation regime during the development of nuclear power engineering in Iran or in any other country."

**13 February 2006** Russian UN envoy Andrey Denisov is interviewed in *Izvestiya*. He says that during forthcoming talks with Hamas in Moscow, Russia is planning to urge the Palestinians to show restraint.

It is important now to leave the door for negotiations open. At the same time, Russia must tell the Hamas leaders the following: first, they must not allow any terrorist activities; second, they should recognize Israel as an independent state, their neighbour and political partner; third, Hamas should renounce its radical views and espouse

the policy of a peaceful solution to the conflict together with the Middle East quartet and regional players, including Israel.

It is reported that Russia has suspended the consideration of the issue of delivering military hardware to the Palestinian security forces.

**13 February 2006** The Russian embassy in Georgia issues a statement expressing regret that "the Georgian parliament did not consider it necessary to consult Russia, the South Ossetian side or peacekeepers on their views while preparing the decision on the withdrawal of the peacekeeping force from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone".

**13 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov says Russia wants the files about components of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq collected by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to be passed over to the UN Security Council.

**13 February 2006** Lukoil head Vagit Alekperov informs Vladimir Putin that Lukoil is planning a number of major acquisitions on the European and American market.

**13 February 2006** Vladimir Purin says that some CIS states should have their debts written off.

**13 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov sends a message of congratulations to Fatmir Sejdiu on his election to the post of president of Kosovo.

Russian permanent representative to the United Nations Andrey Denisov says at the UN Security Council it is impermissible to use double standards in the settlement of international conflicts, including the definition of the final status of Kosovo. He says this may create a negative precedent and influence the situation surrounding other conflicts.

**13 February 2006** The MFA says in a communiqué that Russia is ready for a constructive exchange of views with Ukraine on the BSF.

**14 February 2006** Gholamreza Ansari, the Iranian ambassador to Moscow, says that Iran considers the Russian proposal on creating a joint enterprise for uranium enrichment to be constructive.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki says that Russia's proposals on Iran's nuclear programme are on the agenda for talks between the two countries. "Russia's proposal could serve as a good basis, but there still remain certain issues which need to be refined. I think the sides will soon set new timescales for continuing talks on this issue."

Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov says Russia needs a response from the Iranian side to resolve the Iran situation.

**14 February 2006** French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin visits Moscow for a meeting of the Russo-French intergovernmental commission. Russian-French trade is expected to reach 10bn dollars in 2006.

**14 February 2006** The director of 1st Asia department of the MFA, Konstantin Vnukov says that in Russia it is hoped that the six-party talks aimed at achieving a non-nuclear status for the Korean peninsula will be continued in the near future.

**14 February 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin says that Russia does not intend to review the amount of rent it pays for the BSF.

**14 February 2006** A working group is being established on an instruction of Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov to study capabilities of two Russian enterprises willing to build warships for India.

**15 February 2006** The MFA criticises the Georgian parliament's resolution which calls for replacing the Russian peacekeepers in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Sergey Lavrov says that Georgia cannot revise peacekeeping accords unilaterally. The MOD says that the resolution will not affect the current mission of Russian peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia.

A Duma delegation visits Georgia and South Ossetia.

Sergey Lavrov says that Georgia's attempts to unilaterally revise the format of the peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia are illegal. He recalls that the situation is governed by the Dagomys agreement of 1992.

**15 February 2006** The commander-in-chief of the air force, Vladimir Mikhaylov, says that discussions are in progress on setting up a Russian military air base in Belarus. Russia has an air base in Armenia, plus Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan, and an aviation group stationed in Tajikistan.

**15 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov is in Austria. He warns of a danger of a split between Christians and Muslims.

**15 February 2006** Aide to the Russian president Viktor Ivanov makes a speech entitled "Russia-EU common space of freedom, security and justice" in Berlin. He criticises some EU countries for double standards on terrorism. He refers to the presence of some emissaries of the Chechen separatist government in various EU member states.

**15 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov says he favours involving the Palestinian movement Hamas in implementing the agreement of the "quartet" of international mediators on the Middle East.

**15 February 2006** Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visits Vietnam.

**15 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov says he opposes sanctions against Iran over Iran's nuclear programme.

Aide to the Russian president Viktor Ivanov says the problem of Iran's nuclear programme is perceived in Russia in the same way as in the European Union. He is speaking to members of the German Council on Foreign Relations. He says negotiations with Iran were possible "only provided they go back under IAEA control". He says that if Iran refuses to accept the terms of the international community, then Russia will agree to the handover of the nuclear file to the UN Security Council.

**16 February 2006** Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko says that a formula for the Turkmen gas price needs to be worked out before the middle of 2006.

**16 February 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Alekseyev says Moscow is counting on close cooperation with China with regard to the Russian proposal to Iran for a joint venture to enrich uranium, and believes that this will facilitate tackling Tehran's nuclear problem within the framework of the IAEA.

Chief of the General Staff Army Gen Yuriy Baluyevskiy says Iran has limited military capabilities to strike back at aggressor countries. Baluyevskiy states that the use of force against Iran could lead to unpredictable actions by Muslims living in other countries. "Where they would be led and what their reaction to the use of force against Iran would be is hard to predict, but it is something that could shake the whole world, something that must not be allowed to happen...In this situation, reason should prevail, above all from the Iranian side."

Head of the Duma international committee Konstantin Kosachev says that Russia has many questions about the current stage of the Iranian nuclear programme. He says the problem must not be resolved by force.

The ambassador of Iran to the Russian Federation, Gholamreza Ansari, informs Duma deputies that Iran has no plans to develop nuclear weapons.

**16 February 2006** Yuriy Baluyevskiy, the chief of General Staff of the Russian armed forces, says he believes that the withdrawal of Russia's peacekeeping forces from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone may provoke a civil war.

Georgian State Minister for Conflict Settlement Giorgi Khaindrava arrives in Moscow to explain the resolution of Georgian parliament calling for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from South Ossetia.

**16 February 2006** Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov discusses energy projects in Vietnam.

**17 February 2006** Economic Development and Trade Minister German Gref says that Russia expects to join the World Trade Organization in early 2007. Bilateral accession talks are in train with 58 countries and are "virtually complete" with 57. The only country with outstanding issues is the USA, the main sticking point being the financial services market, and solutions have been found but not yet formulated. Russia could complete all its talks within months and then the formalities by the end of the year in time for accession to the WTO early in 2007.

**17 February 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov says Russia will not leave its peacekeepers in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone in trouble. He says that they are being subject to provocation by the Georgians. Lt-Gen Valeriy Yevnevich, Russian Ground Troops deputy commander-in-chief for peacekeeping troops, says that Georgian peacekeepers in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone have effectively failed to carry out orders of the Joint Peacekeeping Force commander, instead they report to the Georgian defence minister.

The MFA says that Moscow considers that the Georgian leaders' actions towards imposing a visa regime on the Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will lead to an increase in tension in relations with Russia.

Colonel Nikolay Baranov, aide to the commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Force in South Ossetia, says that the requirement that Russian peacekeepers deployed in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone must have Georgian visas will make it more difficult for them to perform their duties.

**17 February 2006** The special representative of the Russian foreign minister for the Middle East settlement, Aleksandr Kalugin, says that by starting talks with Hamas, Russia does not intend to play the role of an intermediary between the Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East settlement. Sergey Lavrov says that at the meeting with representatives of the Palestinian Hamas movement Russia will be guided by the concerted position of the "quartet" of international Middle East mediators.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov states that Russian military hardware can only be supplied to the Palestinian administration with Israel's agreement.

Sergey Ivanov sees the situation surrounding the Iranian "nuclear dossier" as "quite difficult".

**18 February 2006** The presidential special representative on international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime, Anatoliy Safonov, says that the Russian side believes that isolation of the Hamas movement on the part of Israel and a number of Western states would be unproductive.

Representatives of the Hamas movement have won the trust of the people and become a political force. It is undoubtedly absolutely right to give the new Palestinian authorities the possibility to show how they are going to behave in this specific situation, rather than closing the doors on them. Talking, helping and encouraging a path that suits all are what is needed...Hamas has two wings - political and armed. The activities of the second wing included methods and practices we do not accept.

Safonov says that the Palestinian authorities must guarantee the security of Israel and rule out unacceptable methods of reaching their goals.

**20 February 2006** Russo-Iranian talks take place in Moscow on the Iranian nuclear issue. Sergey Lavrov says "to be frank, we have limited expectations, but we will be doing all we can to prevent the situation deteriorating or moving towards the use of force." The talks, which are taking place at the level of deputy secretaries of the security councils of Russia and Iran (Valentin Sobolev for Russia, Seyyed Ali Hoseyni-Tash for Iran) with Russian Foreign Ministry representatives in attendance (Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak is in the Russian delegation), aim at trying to get the question of Iran's nuclear programme out of the current deadlock ahead of the next meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors at the start of March

**21 February 2006** The deputy secretary of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Ali Hoseyni-Tash, discusses the Russian-Iranian consultations on the nuclear issues. He states:

I assess the talks as positive. Some elements of the talks give us hope that we may reach agreement. This round of talks focused on more than just the Russian idea. We discussed frameworks within which the Russian idea was just part of the talks. We spent more time discussing the frameworks which are of greater priority to us.

He says that the "main part of the talks concerned the IAEA board of directors meeting on 6 March".

The MFA says that Russia and Iran will continue contacts in order to examine the proposal to set up a joint venture for enriching uranium in Russia. It says that Moscow urged Tehran "to return to the regime of the moratorium on all kinds of work regarding uranium enrichment, including scientific research and design work".

Sergey Kiriyenko states that a contract has been signed to return spent Iranian nuclear fuel to Russia for reprocessing.

We achieved the first part of this task by signing a contract with Iran to return spent fuel to Russia. In that sense we have lifted this threat today. Russia has achieved this task and guaranteed the security of the international community and Iran in this area.

There is still a second issue remaining. That is the issue of fuel enrichment. The Russian proposal is on the table. We are completely ready, both from a technological and legal point of view.

Head of the Duma International Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev says that he regrets that Iran is not making concessions in order to settle the situation surrounding its "nuclear dossier."

**21 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov tells the Federation Council that in talks with Hamas, Russia will call upon the Palestinians to heed the position of the international mediators. He states: "The position of the 'Quartet' of international Middle East mediators incorporates conditions which are being put forward to Hamas. These include recognizing all previous accords agreed in talks with Israel, of course, recognizing Israel's right to exist as a peaceful neighbour of Palestine and also renouncing violence as a means of achieving political ends."

**21 February 2006** Vladimir Putin visits Azerbaijan to attend the opening ceremony of the Year of Russia in Azerbaijan.

Sergey Lavrov is interviewed in Azerbaijani newspaper *Zerkalo*.

**21 February 2006** The consular department of the Russian embassy in Georgia stops issuing visas for Georgian nationals. This is because Russian servicemen based in Georgia are not being issued with Georgian visas.

The head of the press service of the Russian air force Col Aleksandr Drobyshevskiy denies Georgian claims that Russian military aircraft have violated Georgian airspace.

Head of the Duma Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relations with Compatriots Andrey Kokoshin says that the Georgian authorities are behaving irresponsibly, hoping that Western countries may lend them support during an attempt to resolve the conflict with South Ossetia by force. He thinks that should it become necessary, Russia is within her rights to take a range of measures to ensure security in the region, account having also been taken of her obligations towards her own citizens.

The Joint Control Commission (JCC) for South Ossetia meets in Moscow.

Sergey Lavrov discusses the South Ossetia situation by telephone with the current OSCE chairman and Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht. Lavrov expresses concern over the situation.

**22 February 2006** Louise Arbour, the UN high commissioner for human rights, ends her trip to the North Caucasus with a meeting with Dmitriy Kozak, presidential plenipotentiary in the Southern Federal District.

**22 February 2006** During Vladimir Putin's visit to Azerbaijan, he and the Azeri president instruct their governments to take measures to improve the legal basis of military-technical cooperation. The sides also confirmed their interest in long-term cooperation for the joint development and use of national and international transport infrastructures and ensuring favourable transit conditions on their territories within the framework of the North-South transport corridor. They also discuss Nagorny Karabakh and energy cooperation.

**22 February 2006** Vladimir Putin warns Georgia against searching for foreign enemies over its economic problems.

Georgian prime minister Zurab Noghaideli expresses surprise over Moscow's decision to postpone his visit to Russia.

The leader of Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoiti, is interviewed on Russian TV. He says that Georgia has no interest in peace in the region.

**22 February 2006** The MFA criticises the approach of the mission of the BDIHR (Bureau for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights)/OSCE to preparations to observe the coming presidential election in Belarus.

**22 February 2006** The MFA states that recent pronouncements made by Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso can be interpreted as interference in Russia's internal affairs.

**23 February 2006** Rosneft head Sergey Bogdanchikov says that Rosneft is ready to become a partner in the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China. Kazakhstan will not reveal its conditions for participation until April at the earliest. The oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China was opened in December 2005.

**23 February 2006** A delegation led by Rosatom chief Sergey Kiriyenko visits Iran to discuss the nuclear issue. It will also discuss trade ties. Kiriyenko is a co-chairman of the commission for trade and economic cooperation.

**23 February 2006** Sergey Lavrov discusses the position of ethnic minorities in Latvia and Estonia with UN high commissioner for human rights Louise Arbour. Arbour says that she hopes that the representative office of her agency in Moscow will start operating in March.

**23 February 2006** Duma International Affairs Committee head Konstantin Kosachev criticises Japanese foreign minister Taro Aso for remarks about the Kuriles. On 7 February Foreign Minister Taro Aso called on Japan to start Japanese-language television broadcasting to the islands to help persuade the residents "that they would be better off with Japan".

**24 February 2006** UN human rights commissioner Louise Arbour says that Chechnya is still ruled by force rather than by law.

**24 February 2006** The commander-in-chief of the Russian navy, Adm Vladimir Masorin, arrives in Istanbul for a three-day visit to take part in talks with top Turkish naval commanders. After the Istanbul visit the Russian squadron, led by the cruiser Moskva with Adm Masorin on board, will go out into the Black Sea on 27 February alongside Turkish warships and will conduct joint training in communications and manoeuvres.

**24 February 2006** Rosatom head Sergey Kiriyenko states that Russia continues to offer Iran the creation on Russian territory of a joint Iran enrichment plant.

**25 February 2006** Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Alvaro Gil-Robles says that the human rights situation in Chechnya has improved. He is visiting Chechnya. He says the war in Chechnya has ended.

Chechen separatist envoy Akhmed Zakayev says that European organizations should intervene in conflict settlement in the North Caucasus more actively.

**25 February 2006** Various economic cooperation agreements are signed during the meeting of the co-chairmen of the Russian-Iranian intergovernmental commission in Tehran. On the Russian side, the body is headed by Rosatom chief Sergey Kiriyenko, and, on the Iranian, by Finance and Economics Minister Davud Danesh-Ja'fari. Russia is to be given priority in the construction of new nuclear power plants in Iran and other joint projects have been taken forward, including deliveries of Tu-204 planes and the development of the Iranian Zohreh satellite.

**26 February 2006** Acting Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov says the Danish Refugee Council will be able to resume its work in Chechnya in the next two or three days.

**27 February 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that Moscow sees its offer of a uranium enrichment joint venture and the need for Iran to reinstate its enrichment moratorium as part of the international effort to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear programme.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister, Hamid Reza Asefi, meets Duma deputy speaker Yuriy Volkov. He says Iran confirms the agreement in principle to set up a joint venture to enrich uranium and is sending a delegation to Moscow to continue negotiations.

**27 February 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warns against attempts to put pressure on Belarus and attempts to bring about regime change ahead of that country's presidential poll on 19 March.

The foreign ministers of Russia and Belarus, Sergey Lavrov and Syarhey Martynaw meet in Moscow. They approve a programme of joint actions in foreign policy for 2006-2007.

**27 February 2006** Russia and Turkey begin joint naval exercises in the southwestern Black Sea.

**28 February 2006** Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, the president's special representative on questions of the development of relations with the EU, has talks in Kaliningrad with Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European commissioner for external relations and neighbourhood policy.

**28 February 2006** The MFA says that Russia intends to urge Iran to return to the moratorium regime in the nuclear field during talks with an Iranian delegation in Moscow. The MFA says that "we plan to discuss the entire range of issues at the talks with the Iranian side scheduled for 1 March".

**28 February 2006** The foreign minister's envoy for the Middle East peace process, Aleksandr Kalugin, believes that the press is overdramatizing the situation over Russia's invitation to the Hamas leadership to visit Moscow.

We know that our initiative was not met with great joy in Israel. We are not maintaining friendship with Hamas, we are playing an important role as a member of the quartet of international mediators - Russia, the USA, the UN and the EU in the peace process, in settling the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We are doing everything we can to help both sides - and not Hamas separately or Israel separately - to approach a just settlement as part of the principles laid down in the road map. On our initiative we sent a letter to acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. This letter, sent by Putin, sets forth in detail the reasons behind the move and the relevant explanations are given. So we don't see a reason to dramatize the situation.

**28 February 2006** An article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* discusses Russia's role as an energy supplier.

**28 February 2006** Vladimir Putin arrives in Hungary. He invites Hungary to participate in Blue Stream gas project. He says on 1 March:

Nobody in Europe should have any doubt about the reliability of Russian energy supplies to European countries. Russia has never disrupted the supplies, not a single time, even in the time of the biggest economic difficulties in the mid-1990s. Never. All our recent actions are aimed solely at raising the reliability of the fulfilment of contract obligations by our suppliers. I have said more than once and can repeat once again: after 15 years of negotiations we finally agreed with our Ukrainian partners to separate two issues, that of gas supplies to Ukraine and of transit to European countries.

### ***March***

**1 March 2006** An agreement is reached at the Russian-Iranian talks in Moscow to continue consultations to resolve Tehran's nuclear problem by diplomatic means and via the IAEA. Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani says Iran will not give up the enrichment of uranium even if the planned joint venture with Russia is implemented.

Sergey Lavrov says he believes that a compromise with Iran with regard to its nuclear programme problems is possible if Tehran returns to the moratorium regime and accepts the proposal to set up a joint uranium enrichment venture.

Duma deputy speaker Yuriy Volkov says Moscow is against the Iranian nuclear dossier being referred to the UN Security Council.

Aleksandr Alekseyev, the deputy foreign minister in charge of relations with the countries of Asia, says Iran's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an observer strengthens the possibility of jointly fighting terrorism.

**1 March 2006** Vladimir Putin visits the Czech Republic. He says Russia needs energy security as well as other powers. He says: "For some reason when people talk about energy security in Europe and across the world, everybody thinks this is Russia's duty. And in this context everybody forgets that Russia needs energy security as well. This can only be achieved if there is complete equality of rights in world cooperation."

Putin says that he sees one of the key tasks of the G8 in building a reliable system of energy security.

**1 March 2006** The new Russian ambassador to Belarus, Aleksandr Surikov, arrives in Minsk.

**1 March 2006** The MFA criticises the Taiwan administration's decisions on the cessation of bodies working on the island's reunification with mainland China "are not conducive to peace and stability in the region".

**2 March 2006** The Prosecutor-General's Office has opened a criminal case against Boris Berezovskiy who stands charged with carrying out actions aimed at the seizure of power by force in violation of the constitution. Documents for the extradition of Boris Berezovskiy were sent on 1 March to the Home Office in Great Britain.

**2 March 2006** The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, says Iran has proposed a "multilateral project" to Russia involving the optimization of Iran's nuclear programme. He says Iran welcomes the IAEA inspections and declares that they do not intend to obtain weapons components.

**2 March 2006** Russia and China sign a protocol setting up a joint working group on combating cross-border crime. The document was approved at the close of a joint conference between Minister of Internal Affairs Rashid Nurgaliyev and Zhou Yongkang, PRC Minister of Public Security. A protocol on cooperation between the law-enforcement bodies of the two countries for 2006-2007 is also signed.

**2 March 2006** Admiral Vladimir Masorin, the navy commander-in-chief, says the Russian navy is not planning to increase its presence in Syria. He says it will improve the maintenance of the logistical facility in Tartus.

**2 March 2006** The foreign minister's special representative for the Middle East settlement, Aleksandr Kalugin Moscow believes that it would be too early to discuss renewing the training of Palestinian military servicemen in Russia during the visit of a Hamas delegation.

**3 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov has talks with the Hamas delegation in Moscow. Lavrov says that during an exchange of opinions Moscow will proceed from the position taken by the quartet of international mediators in the Middle East settlement. The demands which have been put to Hamas remain the same: to recognize the state of Israel and to abandon armed struggle. The delegation is led by head of the political department Khaled Mash'al. He says Hamas will not recognise Israel, and peaceful coexistence is possible only if Israel withdraws from the occupied territories.

Vladimir Putin discusses by telephone with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak the situation in the Middle East in the light of forthcoming contacts with Hamas.

**3 March 2006** Navy commander Admiral Vladimir Masorin is interviewed in *Krasnaya Zvezda*. He says that the Russian navy is ready to take part in NATO's Active Endeavour and Black Sea Harmony exercises. He denies allegations that Russia planned to increase its naval presence in Syria and reiterated that the Black Sea Fleet would stay on Ukrainian territory until 2017 as envisaged by a bilateral treaty which, in his opinion, is not subject to revision.

**3 March 2006** Deputy Speaker of the State Duma Yuriy Volkov says there is readiness within the Iranian leadership to agree to a compromise plan for joint production of uranium fuel put forward by Russia. He is commenting on the results of his three-day visit to Iran as the head of a parliamentary delegation.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says Russia and Iran have not yet come to agreement about setting up a joint venture to enrich uranium. He says the work of the IAEA is a necessary condition for resolving all issues to do with Iran's nuclear programme.

A Foreign and Defence Policy Council think tank says that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons within five years.

Head of the Duma foreign affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev says that Iran is trying to drag out talks with other countries, including with Russia, so that the leadership of the IAEA will for the time being refrain from categorical conclusions about its nuclear programme.

**3 March 2006** The SVR rejects claims by an Italian parliamentary report that the KGB was behind the attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II in 1981.

**3 March 2006** The secretary-general of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, meets Justice Minister Yuriy Chayka in Moscow. They discuss the new Russian law on NGOs.

**3 March 2006** Rosatom says that the US-Indian agreement on cooperation in the atomic sphere, the implementation of which was agreed in New Delhi this week by the leaders of the two countries, "is just declaratory at the moment". Rosatom notes that "the practical implementation of an agreement of this kind requires both an amendment of US domestic legislation and a change of stance by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)".

**4 March 2006** The Hamas delegation in Moscow visits the head of the Russian Council of Muftis, Ravil Gaynutdin. The head of the Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, Mikhail Margelov, who is also the chairman of the council of the Russian society of solidarity with the peoples of Asia and Africa, also meet Hamas officials.

**4 March 2006** The MFA expresses concern over the introduction of stricter regulations for Dniester region cargo and calls for the new customs regime to be revised.

**4 March 2006** Russian permanent representative at the OSCE Aleksey Borodavkin says in response to remarks by his American counterpart Kyle Scott that Russia intends to protect its citizens in South Ossetia in spite of "US concern" over Russian policy there.

**6 March 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says the talks with the Hamas delegation in Moscow were "useful". "We wanted to make sure that the message of the 'Quartet' of mediators (Russia, the USA, the EU and the UN) would not remain unfulfilled and would start to be implemented...In this we were supported by a number of Arab countries which were visited by leaders of the Hamas movement prior to the visit to Moscow. Our message is identical to the position of the 'Quartet'."

**6 March 2006** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that Russia's proposal that a joint Russian-Iranian uranium-enrichment venture should be set up on the territory of the Russian Federation remains on the negotiating table but it is being considered in the context of Tehran going back to the moratorium on enrichment activities.

**6 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov calls for urgent measures to prevent an economic blockade of the Dniester region.

**6 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov visits Canada.

**6 March 2006** Armenian Defence Minister Serzh Sarkisyan says that Armenia wants to develop cooperation with NATO and the USA but not at Russia's or Iran's expense.

**7 March 2006** The Danish Refugee Council in Chechnya resumes its work.

**7 March 2006** Representatives of the Russian government administration, the Foreign Ministry and the Security Council go to the Dniester region to look into the so-called customs conflict on the spot. On 3 March Ukraine toughened regulations relating to transporting goods across the border with the unrecognized Dniester republic without a preliminary notification. Russian special envoy to Tiraspol Valeriy Kenyaykin says Russia will stand by its compatriots in Dniester region.

**7 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov visits the USA. He has talks with US President George Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. They discuss Iran, the Middle East and "frozen conflicts", and the WTO. Lavrov says that Russia and the USA may reach major accords in the field of nuclear energy ahead of the G8 summit.

Lavrov says that Russia has not put forward any new compromise proposals aimed at settling Iran's nuclear issue. He says that Hamas intends to back the road map for the Middle Eastern settlement.

Russian presidential aide Sergey Prikhodko says:

We have no separate interests in Iran which would be cardinally different from those of our European partners, the USA and other countries...We differ on methods for achieving this goal but the goal is the same - to ensure that Iran is a predictable neighbour and that no threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction comes from there.

**7 March 2006** Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, is interviewed on TV. He defends Russia's decision to talk to Hamas and Iran. He states:

In order to understand whether our actions were correct, suffice it to recall that the party that lost the latest Palestinian election, the Fatah party, as recently at 15 year ago was regarded by all and everybody, perhaps except the then Soviet Union, as an unequivocally terrorist organization. Its leader, Yasir Arafat, was absolutely unacceptable to Israel, the USA or the European Union as a partner for talks. But we know what progress Yasir Arafat personally and his movement made in those 15 years, and he even was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize together with Shimon Perez. I think that if the world had chosen to isolate the then Palestinian leadership, this progress would not have taken place, no doubt about that, and there would have been no advance in the Middle East. So as long as there is hope to modify Hamas and make them give up their radical positions, one has to work with Hamas, absolutely.

I believe that if, God forbid, we are wrong and Hamas will stick to its extremely radical positions of nonrecognition of Israel, propaganda of terrorist methods of struggle and so on, it cannot be ruled out that ultimately all the partners in the Middle East quartet, including Russia, will agree to cut all contacts with Hamas. However, we are not in this situation at all yet. Moreover, there is clear hope that Hamas will develop in the right direction, after all.

Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Saltanov informs Martin Vukovich, the ambassador of Austria, which currently holds the EU presidency, and Marc Franco, the head of the European Commission's office in the Russian Federation of the recent talks with Hamas.

**8 March 2006** Minister Sergey Lavrov meets with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the UN in New York.

Sergey Lavrov notes that there are unanswered questions over the Iranian nuclear programme.

From the point of view of the economy, Iran won't require the fuel it will need for nuclear power for a very long time to come. For a start, its first and so far only nuclear power station is only just being built, at Bushehr. And as far as Iran's future needs are concerned, it will happen in years, closer to the end of the [or "a"] decade perhaps, at best. I cannot speak with absolute certainty about the motives that lie at the basis of these actions by the Iranian leadership, but, at the same time, we cannot fail to take into account the unanswered questions that support the suspicion that the programme could have a concealed military aspect.

**9 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov discusses the decision to refer the Iranian nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council. He says that “our Iranian counterparts are doing nothing to enable the problem to be examined calmly and professionally”.

**9 March 2006** The head of the MFA delegation, Valeriy Kenyaykin, says that the Dniester region, Moldova and Ukraine should be brought back to the negotiating table as soon as possible to avoid a large-scale economic crisis.

**9 March 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov meets Serbian Coordination Centre for Kosovo-Metohija chairwoman Sanda Raskovic-Ivic in Moscow to discuss Kosovo.

The head of the Duma international committee, Konstantin Kosachev, says that Russian parliament members believe that at present it is premature to tackle at the international level the issue of Kosovo's independence.

A delegation of our committee visited the Balkans last May, and we could see for ourselves that the problem of standards has not been resolved absolutely, and therefore it is too early to move on to the issue of Kosovo's status. It seems to us that the attempts of the international community to speed up the issue are politicized and can only aggravate the situation.

**9 March 2006** The MFA says that reviewing the mechanisms for controlling the use of UN resources requires an extremely cautious approach. This is in response to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report on reforming the way the organization is run.

**10 March 2006** The MFA criticises the US State Department's annual report on human rights practices with regard to Russia.

**10 March 2006** Russia and the EU sign a joint declaration and a statute on dialogue in the space sector which set out the main areas and structure of cooperation in this field. The documents were signed by the European commissioner responsible for enterprise and industry, Guenter Verheugen, and the head of the Russian Space Agency, Anatoliy Perminov.

**10 March 2006** ARMS-TASS reports that Russia will complete the delivery of 60 BTR-80 armoured personnel carriers for the Bangladeshi Ground Troops in March.

**10 March 2006** Vladimir Putin visits Algeria. An intergovernmental accord on trade and economic and financial relations, is signed. Arms and energy deals are signed, and Putin writes off Algeria's debt of 4.7bn dollars.

**10 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says he believes it is essential that representatives of Russia, the USA, the Eurotroika (the UK, France and Germany) and China hold a meeting with the participation of the IAEA to work out a new strategy on the Tehran nuclear problem.

Sergey Lavrov denies US media reports that Moscow has made a secret proposal to Tehran to carry out uranium enrichment research on Iranian territory.

**11 March 2006** The MFA, commenting on the death of Slobodan Milosevic, says that it regrets that the Hague tribunal refused to allow the former president of Yugoslavia to undergo medical treatment in Moscow, despite the guarantees Russia gave.

**12 March 2006** The MFA says Moscow will study the statement by the Iranian Foreign Ministry about the creation of a joint venture for uranium enrichment in Russia (Iran says it is no longer considering Russia's proposal to process nuclear fuel for it) and will adjust its position accordingly. The Iranian National Security Council later says that Iran has not rejected Russia's offer.

Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, Konstantin Kosachev, says that radical sanctions should not be applied against Iran following the Iranian decision to reject Russia's offer of uranium enrichment on Russian territory.

**12 March 2006** Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu'allim visits Moscow. He will discuss the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1595, 1636 and 1644 with regard to the international investigation into the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

**13 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that Russia had the right not to trust the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia in The Hague after the latter did not let Slobodan Milosevic undergo medical treatment in Russia despite official guarantees that he would return to The Hague afterwards.

**13 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that Russian-Iranian consultations on Tehran's nuclear programme will be held soon.

To be honest, I can't comment on Iran's rejection of our proposal on setting up a joint venture because there are conflicting signals from Iran - first they refuse to do it and then they don't.

I would like to say yet again that we are very disappointed at how Iran has been conducting itself during these talks, absolutely not helping those who would like to ensure that peaceful ways of settling the situation in connection with the Iranian nuclear programme are found.

Sergey Lavrov is interviewed in *Vremya Novostey*. He says Russia "is not sure about Iran's activities during those years when it did not disclose the contents of its nuclear programme".

Sergey Kiriyyenko, head of Rosatom, says creation of a joint Russian-Iranian uranium-enrichment enterprise within Russia is only possible if Tehran complies with IAEA demands. He also says Russia "does not see any grounds for even talking about sanctions against Syria".

**13 March 2006** An Interior Ministry delegation visits Israel to discuss fighting terrorism.

**13 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that Russia is proposing to adopt a joint strategy for global energy security at the forthcoming G8 summit meeting in St Petersburg. He is speaking at an international conference on energy security.

**13 March 2006** Grigoriy Karasin, deputy foreign minister and state secretary, says he fears the conclusions of the mission by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) on the presidential election in Belarus on 19 March and parliamentary election in Ukraine on 26 March will be ideologically coloured.

**13 March 2006** Russian Foreign Ministry roving ambassador Valeriy Kenyaykin says he opposes the inclusion of the EU and USA in the Dniester settlement process. The 5 plus 2 format is Dniester, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and OSCE, with the EU and the USA as observers.

**13 March 2006** Nikolay Bordyuzha, secretary-general of the CSTO says the Russian military base in Armenia does not threaten the states of the region.

**14 March 2006** NTV reports that Sergey Lavrov and his Syrian counterpart Walid al-Mu'allim agree that Israel and Palestine should co-exist in peace and security and that the Hamas movement that has come to power in Palestine should observe international agreements achieved earlier.

**14 March 2006** Vladimir Putin says he is concerned about the state of affairs in Russia's nuclear industry and has warned that its share in the energy balance could fall. Putin says the share of nuclear energy in the country's energy output should rise to at least 20 per cent. The share of production at nuclear power stations in 2006 will be about 16 per cent.

**14 March 2006** Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko says ratification of the Energy Charter by Russia is impossible until a transit protocol to the charter has been prepared and signed.

**14 March 2006** The Duma issues a statement on the death of Slobodan Milosevic. It says The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is conducting a policy of double standards and cannot cope with the tasks it faces.

**14 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov opens the 20th session of the special working group on Caspian problems consisting of representatives of five Caspian states: Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. He says:

The principle of non-presence in the Caspian region of armed forces which do not belong to the Caspian littoral states is becoming more topical owing to efforts made by extraterritorial countries in terms of military and political penetration in the Caspian region, pursuing goals which are not quite clear. We will lose a lot if we open doors to

someone else's military presence in the Caspian region. Experience shows that it is easy to let foreign forces in while it is much more difficult to make them go out afterwards.

**14 March 2006** Talks take place in Moscow on the Iranian nuclear problem between Security Council secretary Igor Ivanov and the Iranian delegation headed by the deputy secretary of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Ali Hoseyni-Tash.

IMEMO expert Georgy Mirskiy writes on the Iranian crisis in *Rossyiskaya Gazeta*.

**15 March 2006** The Duma calls for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to cease its work.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Duma international affairs committee, says he believes that the ICTY is carrying out the orders of the NATO countries.

**15 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan discuss on the telephone the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. Lavrov also discusses the crisis with Javier Solana, the secretary-general of the EU Council and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy in the EU.

The MFA "expresses profound concern at the latest dramatic events in the Palestinian territories".

**15 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov and his French counterpart Philippe Douste-Blazy speak on the telephone. Moscow and Paris believe that they must draw up a joint strategy to deal with the most important contemporary problems, including Tehran's nuclear problem.

**15 March 2006** MFA ambassador-at-large Mikhail Bocharnikov visits Abkhazia.

**15 March 2006** Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council Secretary Anatoliy Kinakh is interviewed on Russia TV on Russo-Ukrainian relations.

**16 March 2006** G8 energy ministers meet in Moscow. Vladimir Putin attends the meeting. He says Russia's volumes of gas, oil, coal and electricity production have been steadily rising. In 2005, oil production had reached a record level since 1991 and totalled 470.196m tonnes, which was 2.4 per cent up on 2004 levels. Gas production was also at a record level and its export in 2005 totalled 152.477bn cubic metres, which was 8 per cent up on 2004 levels.

Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko says that Russia and G8 nations intend to give each other more information about the volumes and consumption of energy resources.

**16 March 2006** Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visits India. Russia and India plan to "triple trade turnover between the two countries and raise it to 10bn dollars by the end of 2010".

**16 March 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Yakovenko says "Russia will cooperate with the USA within the framework of the new United Nations Human Rights Council regardless of the fact that the USA has voted against the UN General Assembly's resolution to set up this structure."

**16 March 2006** A Duma delegation led by Andrey Kokoshin, the chairman of the Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relations with Compatriots, visits the Uzbek parliament's Legislative Assembly.

**16 March 2006** Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukov says Russia has sold weapons worth over 10bn dollars to India over the last five years and contracts worth another 9bn dollars are currently being worked on.

**16 March 2006** Vladimir Putin attends the meeting of G8 energy ministers in Moscow. He calls for a worldwide energy partnership.

As you know, our country is the world's largest exporter of gas and the second largest exporter of oil and petroleum products, and is already making its contribution, substantive and substantial, to the ensuring of global and regional energy security. We value our well-deserved reputation as a serious and responsible partner on the market of energy resources.

Over the next few months the State Duma would consider and, I hope, endorse crucial draft laws on taxes on the extraction of natural resources and new rules for using mineral resources, including conditions for the participation of foreign capital. They are intended to make conditions for energy businesses in Russia as convenient, transparent and predictable as possible.

We believe in the good prospects that our initiative to build an international network of uranium-enrichment centres has. Its implementation would not only help make progress to resolve the problem of energy poverty but also consolidate the nuclear nonproliferation regime, which in our view is extremely important from the point of view of international security.

Measures that guarantee the reliability of supply must be consistently supported by steps to ensure the stability of demand. In our view, that path is the optimum one for the interests of all the energy-market players to be harmonized.

For that, appropriate instruments must be developed, in particular long-term contracts between producers and consumers...We have today a unique opportunity to turn a new page in global energy supply. Its meaning is to move from discrete projects and bilateral dialogues to relationships of a world energy partnership, and the St Petersburg G8 summit gives us a good opportunity to begin precisely this work - together to look for and find common approaches to building an effective energy foundation for our civilization for the long term.

Vladimir Putin meets European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso in Moscow.

**17 March 2006** First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev states that economic relations between Russia and China are on the rise now and the most promising domain for cooperation is the energy sector. Deliveries of Russian oil to

the Chinese market will total 15m tonnes in 2006. In 2005 the Unified Energy System of Russia signed a protocol on a long-term cooperation setting the goals of exporting to China 50bn kWh of electric power by 2015. Russo-Chinese trade is now worth 29bn dollars.

Rosatom head Sergey Kiriyyenko visits China.

**17 March 2006** The Public Chamber issues a statement calling on the state and all the political forces of Belarus to show "restraint and observe the law" in connection with the country's presidential election on 19 March.

**17 March 2006** The president of the Russian Railways company, Vladimir Yakunin, says a delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea agrees to the creation of an international consortium to reconstruct the Trans-Korean Railway.

**19 March 2006** Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is interviewed on Russian *Ekho Moskvy* radio and RTVI television.

Gazprom head Alexey Miller visits Israel. Gazprom will supply gas to Israel via Turkey.

**20 March 2006** Vladimir Putin welcomes Alyaksandr Lukashenka's re-election to the post of the president of Belarus. The MFA says there is no doubt over the legitimacy of the election result.

**20 March 2006** Yuliy Kvitsinskiy, first deputy chairman of the Duma's Committee on International Affairs says the EU's intention to introduce sanctions against Belarus "is pure policy of double standards".

**20 March 2006** Duma speaker Boris Gрызлов has talks with the chairman of the Transdnestrian parliament, Yevgeniy Shevchuk. The Dniester region authorities ask Russia to render humanitarian aid to the region.

**20 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov visits Mongolia.

A Siberian Military District official delegation visits Mongolia.

**20 March 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin and Georgian Deputy Speaker Mikheil Machavariani meet. The MFA says Russia is "ready to develop comprehensive and mutually beneficial cooperation with Georgia in the interests of the peoples of our countries, and peace and stability in the region".

**20 March 2006** Mikhail Margelov, the chairman of the Federation Council's international affairs committee expresses concern over the composition of the new Palestinian government. He says the new government appears to have no interest in seeking talks with Israel.

**20 March 2006** The MFA criticises some aspects of the new US National Security Strategy section on Russia.

**21 March 2006** The vice-speaker of the Armenian National Assembly, Vaan Ovanesyan, says that a rise in Russian gas tariffs for Armenia from 54 to 110 dollars per 1,000 cu.m. will cause anti-Russian feelings in the republic.

**21 March 2006** The lawyers of the former head of Yukos, Mikhail Khodorkovskiy, file a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights. Lawyer Karina Moskalenko declined to comment on the substance of the complaint, in keeping with the wishes of her client.

**21 March 2006** Vladimir Putin visits China. Chinese President Hu Jintao makes a four-point proposal on enhancing strategic coordination and substantial cooperation between China and Russia. Those proposals include:

To regard deepening substantial cooperation as a focus, push forward cooperation in trade, energy, hi-tech industry, infrastructure construction, utilization and preservation of cross-border water resources by improving trade structure, stimulating cooperation in large projects and promoting two-way investment;

To regard the institution of concerted economic strategies for the two countries as a goal to achieve and to regard exchange and cooperation in humanities sector as an important foundation for the generations of friendship between the two peoples.

to regard promoting political mutual-trust as a long-term task in the development of bilateral ties, strengthen support on issues concerning each other's core interests;

China-Russia trade volume hit 29.1bn US dollars in 2005, up 37 per cent year on year. China and Russia sign three deals on oil and natural gas cooperation. The three documents include a principled agreement between the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and the Russian oil company Rosneft for forming joint ventures on further oil cooperation, a memorandum of understanding between CNPC and Russia's natural gas company Gazprom for natural gas supply to China, and a summary of negotiations between CNPC and Transneft, a pipeline transport company of Russia. Twelve other agreements are signed.

Both Russia and China state that the Iranian nuclear issue should be resolved by diplomatic means.

**21 March 2006** The MFA rejects the OSCE ODHIR's criticism of the presidential election in Belarus.

Russian human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin says the presidential election in Belarus was not free.

**21 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, that the UN Security Council should "at the current stage confine itself to supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency and it should work with the Agency to elucidate the remaining issues...Our position is that the UN Security Council should assist the IAEA to restore a normal process with Iran for compliance with the decisions taken by the IAEA's governors."

**22 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov states that a set of restrictive bills regarding foreign investment in strategic industries will not bar foreign investors from the development of Russian natural resources.

**22 March 2006** The Emergencies Ministry sends aid to the Transdnestr regime. The humanitarian aid was collected by the governments of Moscow and Moscow Region on the initiative of the One Russia party following an appeal for help by the president of the Dniester region, Igor Smirnov.

**22 March 2006** The governments of North and South Ossetia have a joint session in Vladikavkaz.

**22 March 2006** Deputy prime minister Dmitry Medvedev states on energy cooperation with China:

Both sides have an interest in cooperating on energy and, just as our Chinese partners have an interest in expanding the supply of energy from Russia, we have an interest in keeping this market and moreover, as our president said yesterday, in diversifying energy supplies to include not only supplies to Europe, which is a traditional and extremely important market for us, but also developing supplies to the Far East and Asia.

**22 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that the US-proposed draft statement by the UN Security Council chairman on Iran does not suit Russia. "In fact, it is an ultimatum. The draft document contains some formulations which actually prepare the ground for sanctions against Iran. We can hardly support the draft statement in its present version".

**22 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov is certain that "there are possibilities for strengthening nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime not only in the solution of the Iranian nuclear problem and the North Korean nuclear issue, but also along the path of modernization of the non-proliferation regime itself". He is speaking of Vladimir Putin's initiative to create international uranium enrichment centres that "will be certified by the IAEA and meet the demands of all countries".

**22 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says Russia is in favour of "finding ways of allowing Egypt and Jordan not simply to cooperate with the quartet of mediators on a Middle East settlement but to take part in working out the quartet's position". He says: "I am sure this collective work would only benefit if the members of the quartet were to consult countries in the region, particularly, Egypt and Jordan".

Federation Council Chairman Sergey Mironov says he does not rule out the possibility of a meeting between Russian senators and a Hamas parliamentary delegation.

**22 March 2006** Russia has made an inquiry to the United Nations Secretariat concerning the conditions of keeping inmates in the pre-trial detention centre at the International War Crimes Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

**22 March 2006** Federation Council Chairman Sergey Mironov criticizes the USA's new national security strategy. Mironov says that only two paragraphs of the document concern Russia, and the strategy says nothing about Russia's and the USA's partnership in the fight against terrorism and the energy dialogue.

**23 March 2006** A member of the Duma CIS Affairs Committee, Konstantin Zatulin says Ukraine is now putting the life of people living in Moldova's Transdnestr region under threat.

**23 March 2006** The MFA says Gennadiy Bukayev, an aide to the Russian prime minister, took part in a joint meeting of the governments of South and North Ossetia in Vladikavkaz on 22 March at which the creation of a special economic zone including the two republics and Georgia's Gori District was discussed. According to some media reports on Bukayev says at the meeting that the Russian leadership had decided in principle on the incorporation of South Ossetia into the Russian Federation. The MFA says the media misquoted Bukayev.

**23 March 2006** Sergey Kislyak, deputy foreign minister, says Russia is counting on the fact that consultations in the UN Security Council on Iran's nuclear programme will lead to the adoption of a balanced decision that will promote cooperation between Tehran and the IAEA.

Sergey Lavrov and his British counterpart discuss the Iranian nuclear problem by telephone.

**23 March 2006** The head of the US Missile Defence Agency, Henry Obering, says a decision has been taken to deploy a base of interceptor missiles in a European country as part of the creation of a missile defence system. Sergey Ivanov says Russia will study US missile defence plans in Europe before reacting.

**23 March 2006** The ex-chief of the Russian navy general staff, Admiral Viktor Kravchenko, says Russia and the United States maintain rough parity in the naval strategic nuclear forces. He says Russia faced certain problems, pertaining to the missile attack warning system, in particular, the north-east and the north-west directions, due to the shutdowns of cutting-edge radars in Krasnoyarsk and Skrunde, Latvia. Kravchenko says the problems will be solved in the near future as Russia hopes to field new radar stations in Belarus, and reorient a radar in Azerbaijan.

**24 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov criticises the OSCE over the Belarusian presidential election.

**24 March 2006** The Russian Emergencies Ministry states that Ukraine has stopped further progress of the Russian Emergencies Ministry convoy with humanitarian aid for the Dniester region.

**25 March 2006** The Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) denies US media claims that it provided intelligence to Iraq about US troop movements at the start of the operation in 2003.

**25 March 2006** The commander-in-chief of Russian Ground Forces, Col-Gen Aleksey Maslov, visits China for talks with the chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army, Col-Gen Liang Guanglie.

**27 March 2006** The MFA says Russia "is concerned about reports of members of Chechen illegal armed formations in Denmark as refugees".

**27 March 2006** Konstantin Kosachev, the chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, accuses the West of attempts to influence the results of the parliamentary election in Ukraine.

**27 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that the Russian proposal for enriching uranium for Iran in Russia is still on the negotiating table but in the context of settling all outstanding issues regarding the peaceful purpose of Iran's nuclear programme.

**27 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says he does not rule out a political agenda behind the appearance of reports in the USA that Moscow passed intelligence material to Baghdad in 2003.

The MFA expresses surprise over US media claims that Russia supplied Iraq with information about US troops movements in 2003.

**27 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov meets Rene van der Linden, the chairman of PACE. They discuss the Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia.

**27 March 2006** Yuriy Popov replaces Valeriy Kenyaykin as Russian representative in the four-party Joint Control Commission for settling the Ossetian-Georgian conflict.

**27 March 2006** Vladimir Putin calls for closer links with the Islamic world. He addresses the group "Strategic vision: Russia - Islamic World". Putin's address is read out by Yevgeniy Primakov, head of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

**27 March 2006** Viktor Khristenko, industry and energy minister, says that in this week Russia will have completed all work on the Baltic pipeline system. From April onwards, the schedule of oil deliveries via the Baltic pipeline system will be based a yearly capacity of 65m tonnes.

**28 March 2006** Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov denies reports that Russia passed information on the movement of US troops in the initial phase of operations in Iraq to Saddam Husayn's regime.

**28 March 2006** Sergey Ivanov accuses unspecified countries which criticize Russia's arms trade of trying to compete with Russia using unfair methods.

We regard such criticism as competition that is not quite fair or else as an attempt to replace real competition with policy. As far as our relations with any state are concerned, not just with Syria or Iran, we act on the basis of international law. I often hear criticism that Russia sells arms to countries and regimes which it ought not to. If you follow this logic, we ought not to sell anything to anyone. The USA sells twice as many arms as Russia, and, believe me, it sells these arms not just to democratic countries which are purer than the driven snow, far from that. Some of them have nothing at all to do with democracy.

Sergey Ivanov says that Tehran must give a meaningful response to Russia's offer to set up a joint uranium-enrichment enterprise.

Sergey Ivanov says the issue of supplying military hardware to Palestine has to have Israeli consent.

As for aid via the Defence Ministry - I can't say anything definite. These questions have been worked on and studied and should be transparent. As a subject for agreement, they have to take the opinion of all the conflict parties into account. Now the situation has changed. There has been regime change in Palestine, an election in Israel. Once the situation becomes more stable, perhaps we can return to this issue and discuss it transparently rather than behind anyone's back.

He says any supply of hardware to the Palestinian territory has to go through Israeli territory. He also says that Russia will continue to provide the Palestinian administration with financial assistance.

**28 March 2006** The MFA says that it is ready for a dialogue with the new prime minister and parliament of Ukraine following the parliamentary elections there on 26 March.

**28 March 2006** Deputy head of the international cooperation department of Rosatom Vitaliy Ryabov says China is ready to cooperate with Russia in implementing a Russian project for the construction of floating nuclear power plants.

**28 March 2006** Defence minister Sergey Ivanov says Russian armed forces now have a right to smash terrorist bases anywhere in the world. He says this “right is now enshrined in a law recently adopted by the Duma. The law officially allows the use of the armed forces beyond the confines of our national territory to fight terrorism.”

He says Russia has no plans to withdraw its troops from the Dniester region in Moldova, and the Black Sea Fleet would remain in Sevastopol to 2017 at least and explains that now there are no big rebel gangs left, the only MOD unit left in Chechnya is the professional 42nd Motor Rifle Division.

**28 March 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Alekseyev addresses the opening of the 7th Russian-Korean forum. He says “Russia invariably favours a nuclear-free status of the Korean peninsula and believes that the six-party talks is the best format to search for a just and peaceful solution to the nuclear problem, which would take into account the interests and concerns of all sides involved.”

**28 March 2006** Vladimir Putin sends an address to the Arab League summit in Khartoum.

**29 March 2006** Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Saltanov and head of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmud Abbas meet at the Arab League summit in Khartoum (Sudan).

**29 March 2006** Konstantin Kosachev, head of Duma committee on international affairs, states that Kadima’s electoral victory in Israel will increase Russia’s role in the Middle East. “It is clear that the new coalition government of Israel of any composition will reject talks with Hamas. This, in turn, means that the role of Russia as an intermediary and a participant of the international Middle East quartet will definitely grow and there is more need for this.”

**29 March 2006** The MFA welcomes the outcome of the Israeli elections. The MFA says it hopes that the new government of the Palestinian National Authority "will conduct a policy that meets the fundamental interests of all Palestinians and acts on their desire for peace and statehood". It says that the Palestinian government should reject violence, recognise Israel's right to existence and respect for previous agreements and obligations, including the road map.

**29 March 2006** The MFA rejects US claims that Russia passed on intelligence information about US troop movements to Iraq in 2003.

**29 March 2006** Sergey Lavrov says that Russia is in favour of political and diplomatic methods of settling the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear programme.

Iranian ambassador in Moscow Gholamreza Ansari says he expects the nuclear power plant in Bushehr, which is being built with Russian assistance, "to be made operational on schedule". Deputy head of the construction directorate for the NPP installation Igor Kruz says that "the main body of installation work at the NPP in Bushehr is 85-90 per cent complete, and the installation of the automated control system has begun".

**29 March 2006** Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visits Norway.

**30 March 2006** Aleksey Miller, the head of Gazprom, says Gazprom is ready to consider proposals from any country in the Baltic region on the construction of branches to the North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP).

Aleksey Miller announces during talks with a delegation from Belarus that in 2007 the supplies of Russian gas to Belarus should be made at prices that correspond to the European level.

**30 March 2006** The Russian ambassador to the UN, Andrey Denisov, says that the draft statement of the UN Security Council chairman on Iran's nuclear problem takes account of Russia's position. Denisov says there is no evidence of an Iranian nuclear threat, only suspicions.

The MFA says it is calling on Iran to heed the requirements of the UN Security Council presidential statement of 29 March.

**30 March 2006** Vladimir Ivanov, the deputy head of the MFA's Information and Press Department, says Russia will put forward new initiatives on combating terrorism within the G8 during its chairmanship of this organization.

**30 March 2006** The MFA rejects US claims that the Russian ambassador to Baghdad passed on intelligence data to the Iraqi leadership on the eve of the US attack on Iraq in 2003.

**30 March 2006** The chairman of the presidium of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, Sergey Karaganov, says the possible secession of Kosovo would obviously threaten the territorial integrity of Russia and other post-Soviet countries. He says "the capitals of non-recognized states in the former Soviet Union will receive a strong message that they can demand the same. Moreover, they have a bigger moral right to this than Kosovo because they have been de facto independent for as long as 15 years."

**30 March 2006** Head of the Duma International Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev says that the USA is "fairly deliberately" accelerating Ukraine's accession to the WTO and holding up Russia's entry.

**30 March 2006** Representatives of special services of the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meet in Tashkent to discuss fighting terrorism.

**31 March 2006** Gazprom says it will continue to supply gas to Moldova on current terms during the second quarter of 2006.

**31 March 2006** Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaymiyev meets Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and Syrian Prime Minister Muhammad Naji al-Itri in Damascus. They discuss trade ties.

**31 March 2006** Russia and Georgia sign an agreement in Sochi on the withdrawal of military equipment from Georgia. Under the agreement the majority of heavy equipment from the Akhalkalaki military base will be withdrawn in 2006 and the base will completely close in 2007 and most of the equipment from the Batumi base will be removed in 2007 and the base will close in 2008. There still remains the Gudauta military base in Abkhazia.

**31 March 2006** Ilya Rogachev, Russia's deputy permanent envoy at the UN, says that the ICTY "has not justified the hopes that were pinned on it, its activities are biased, and its anti-Serb accusatory slant could be seen from the very start of its work because 80 per cent of the tribunal's defendants are Serbs".

**31 March 2006** The Transdnester region is to hold a referendum on independence, following a decision taken at a congress of Dniester region deputies. Sergey Lavrov states:

We are very concerned about this. We are against accords on the settlement of this or that situation - whether in Dniester region, South Ossetia or Abkhazia - being broken and replaced by unilateral actions in the hope of undermining the situation and achieving goals not through dialogue but through pressure.