

Another stage of the consolidation of the Russian law enforcement system?

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On 19 September, the *Kommersant* daily newspaper published an article entitled 'Ministry of extraordinary powers'. The article is a controlled leak, suggesting a large-scale reorganisation of the Russian law enforcement system. A Ministry of National Security is to be established already before the presidential election in 2018. It will be in charge of the Federal Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service and the Federal Protective Service. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation will again be made part of the Prosecutor General's Office. The Ministry of Emergency Situations will be liquidated, and its responsibilities will be taken over by the Ministry of Defence (civilian defence) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (rescue services). The Presidential Security Service will remain an independent structure. According to *Kommersant*, the reorganisation will be preceded by a staff reshuffle among the heads of the existing services (for example, the dismissal of the head of the Investigative Committee, Aleksandr Bastrykin).

Commentary:

- There are three main institutions which are at present in charge of internal state security: the Federal Security Service, the Federal Protective Service and the newly established Federal National Guard Troops Service. The competences of the Ministry of Internal Affairs have been reduced to supervision over police structures in charge of protecting public order and combating common crime. Due to its competences (for example, counter-intelligence protection to other law enforcement agencies, including the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Federal National Guard Troops Service), the Federal Security Service has a dominant position.
- The information provided in *Kommersant's* article fits in with the series of leaks seen since the beginning of this year pointing to a restructuring of the Russian law enforcement system. This has been accompanied by increasing activity of the Federal Security Service, which has recently taken a number of operational actions against corrupt officers of such institutions as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Investigative Committee and the Federal Customs Service, and this has been accepted by the Kremlin. These moves prove that the Federal Security Service is beginning to play the main supervisory role in the state security system and wants to reinforce its structures. The economic crisis which forces budget cuts and institutional changes will make it easier

for the Federal Security Service to fulfil these ambitions. The changes so far include the creation of the Federal National Guard Troops Service (FSVNG), and incorporating the Federal Drug Control Service and the Federal Migration Service into the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- The variant of how the situation will develop which *Kommersant* puts forward appears probable as regards restricting the independence of the Investigative Committee and the takeover of the Ministry of Emergency Situations by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A major reshuffle seems very likely in the coming year (for example, a new head of the Foreign Intelligence Service will be appointed, and changes among the senior officials of the Federal Security Service are possible). More unlikely scenarios include depriving the Foreign Intelligence Service of its independence and a radical weakening of the Federal Protective Service; although, considering the process of strengthening of the Federal Security Service as an agency tasked with guaranteeing the stability of the political system, it cannot be ruled out that it will take over the Special Communications Service (which is now part of the Federal Protective Service).