

Security Matters

Newsletter from the Centre for European Security Studies • December 2007

Issue

18

Starlink in Armenia and Azerbaijan

After fact-finding missions to Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2006, we began running Starlink training courses on democratic governance in the security sector in those countries in February 2007. The first was in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, and our partner was Dr Leila Aliyeva. We took the opportunity to officially open the Starlink programme with a high-level meeting, after which we ran the first training event.

Senior representatives of various ministries and members of parliament participated in the high-level meeting, as well as the OSCE presence in Azerbaijan. The interest of the media was lively and spawned several newspaper articles and bulletins on national television. The first Starlink course on defence took place on the following days with an enthusiastic, pro-active and diverse group of participants.



Starlink Law Enforcement course in Armenia

One month later we travelled to Armenia to run the same course in a small town called Tsaghkadzor, in the middle of Armenia's ski region, about one hour's driving distance from Yerevan. Thanks to the efforts of our local partner the International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), we were able to attract high-ranking military officers as well as journalists and parliamentary staff and engage them in productive dialogue. This certainly contributed to a first-rate start in Armenia and paved the way smoothly for the next two training courses.

Those events took place in June and September 2007, and dealt respectively with law enforcement and intelligence. The same courses were implemented in Azerbaijan in April and September. One notable facet of this course cycle in Armenia and Azerbaijan was the changing composition of the instructors' team. In the first Starlink programme in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine we usually invited the writers of the training modules to act as instructors in the training courses. However, bringing in new instructors was always one of the basic principles of the Starlink programme. We started doing this after the kick-off of the extension of the Starlink programme to Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Training at a high level in Georgia

Experts whom we invited at a later stage include Edwin Bakker and Cees Homan from Clingendael – Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Guenther Freisleben and Peter Heepen, two police experts from Germany and Grzegorz Polak, an official from the Polish Ministry of Interior.

Last Visit to Croania

The first half of 2007 was dedicated to the final Starlink course cycle, this time dealing with democratic governance in the intelligence sector. A final course cycle also means a final role-play, again set in Croania, our fictitious post-Soviet republic located somewhere south of Russia. This time the topic dealt with a peace support mission to Kushdara, another fictitious country, which the Croanian government wants to carry out. However in Croania it is common practice for parliament to authorise such dangerous overseas missions. For the parliamentarians to be able to carefully consider their decision, they need additional information about the mission and therefore they request access to a secret report, composed by the Croanian military intelligence service. This report describes the security situation and dangers of the mission in great detail. Not surprisingly, the government refuses to share this classified document with the legislators because it would jeopardise foreign intelligence sources. In the role-play the participants acquaint themselves with the oversight function of parliament in the field of defence and intelligence and also with the duties and behaviour of parliamentarians, ministers, civilian and military personnel and journalists in an effort to hold the executive accountable.

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The first course of this sequence was organised in Kiev in March 2007 at the prestigious Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine, which is responsible for educating the ministers of foreign affairs in post-soviet Ukraine. After the Kiev course, we immediately travelled to Georgia where we visited the beautiful mountain resort Gudauri for the last time in the Starlink programme. A month later the course was taught in Moldova. We opted for a similar approach as in Georgia, which is to teach in a remote place instead of in the capital. This adds to the cost of the event, but the benefits are considerable. Not only does it insulate the participants from their offices and families, enabling them to give their full attention to the course, but it also contributes to an excellent atmosphere during and after the sessions because all participants and instructors are together for the full three days. The last event in the 'old' Starlink countries took place in Odessa, Ukraine in June 2007. But we have no intention of turning our back on Starlink work in the five countries in which we have so far operated. We are proposing new Starlink projects in new regions, as well as support activities for the five countries in which the first Starlink projects operated.

Starlink Conference at MFA

On Thursday 13 December 2007 CESS will officially conclude the Starlink programme with an international conference called Democratic Governance in the Security Sector: Lessons of the Starlink Programme in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This conference will be held at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, the leading sponsor of Starlink.

For more information on this event, please contact CESS programme manager Merijn Hartog at merijnhartog@cess.org or +31-50-3132529 and/or CESS intern Marleen Kuijs at marleenkuijs@cess.org or +31-50-3133360.



Instructors Bauke Snoep (left) and Mark Galeotti (right) with Erik Sportel

New Turkey Programme Underway

Since 2004, CESS has been helping Turkey to better understand the requirements of EU accession in the field of civil-military relations. It has also been promoting a better understanding within the EU of the challenges that Turkey faces in this regard. Given the special role of the armed forces in Turkish politics and society, civil-military relations have always been a delicate issue, but in the last few years, the topic has become extremely

sensitive as tensions grew between the ruling AK Party and its secularist opponents, including the leadership of the military.

Under these difficult conditions, the Netherlands government in late 2006 decided to fund a new CESS programme on Turkey. This is being carried out in co-operation with the Istanbul Policy Centre and several other Turkish partners such as Bilkent University in Ankara. In a multi-track effort, CESS and its partners are documenting, analysing and promoting a better understanding of EU norms and practices as well as Turkey's institutional arrangements as defined in its constitution. Suggestions for further alignment of Turkish civil-military relations with EU standards and practices will be made and assistance will be offered to help Turkey enhance its capacities for good civilian governance in the defence sector.



Starlink trainees in Odessa

Programme manager Ritske Bloemendaal used the first half of 2007 to develop co-operative relations with two institutes abroad. The first was the Advanced Research and Assessment Group at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham, UK. Next came Sweden's National Defence Academy in Stockholm. Both agreed to take part in the compilation of a book on civil-military relations. Its objective is to describe the state of the art of civil-military relations in the European Union. No such description is available today, and therefore when candidates for EU accession are told they must comply with EU standards and policies on civil-military relations, there is no way for them to find out what those standards and policies are. We hope the new book help shed some light.

In 1999, the European Union recognized Turkey's candidacy for EU membership. Negotiation talks began in 2005. However, relations between Turkey and the EU deteriorated. The European Union saw Turkey slowly moving towards European accession and still had doubts on the potential difficulties that may arise from religious and cultural differences between the two. For its part, Turkey lost much of its confidence in the EU's desire to see Turkish accession succeed. To speak of accession fatigue is to underrate the problem. Today, Turkish-EU relations are in crisis.

Together with a newly formed Turkish Institute in The Hague, CESS plans to organize a conference to address this question. The conference will take as its point of departure the premise that deep trends and problems cause the current crisis in Turkish-EU relations. It will identify these obstacles and address the underlying problems and trends. After addressing these broad socio-political obstacles, the participants will suggest ways forward and solutions to the problems identified.

In collaboration with Bilkent University, CESS also organised a conference, held in Ankara on 12-13 November, on the topical subject of Peace Support Operations. Turkey and the Netherlands are both contributors to the ISAF force in Afghanistan, and keenly interested in such peace operations.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, new conflicts erupted, often with an ethnic or religious background. While in the past attention was focused on conflicts between states, today we are confronted with internal violence and fragile states. This results in a pressure on the international community to intervene. However, such interventions raise difficult legal and moral issues. A clear mandate from the United Nations Security Council can provide a basis for such interventions, but often the mandate is lacking, unclear or unrealistic.

In the last few years we have seen the necessity of operating multinational forces in a more robust way. Therefore all major international organizations are undergoing significant changes in the way they operate. In order to elucidate the problems that these organizations and the governments involved are facing, four key questions were addressed during this seminar:

1. Is there a common understanding of Peace Support Operations and the way they should be prepared and organized?
2. What are the current approaches of the UN, NATO and the EU towards Peace Operations?
3. Do governments approach Peace Support Operations differently? If so, what are the consequences for Command and Control?
4. What is the relationship between Security and Development?

The next Issue of Security Matters will report on this conference.



Second parliamentary Seminar in Moldova

Moldova Parliamentary Programme

On 21 February the Moldova Parliamentary Programme was officially launched in Chisinau. In the stately main hall of the Moldovan Parliament, Sami Faltas and our Moldovan partner Viorel Cibotaru of the European Institute for Political Studies explained the aim of the project. It is a capacity-building and good governance programme on strengthening legislative oversight of the security sector and is sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The Mission has been very supportive of the project and has contributed on several occasions. In the first and third seminar Head of Mission Ambassador Louis O'Neill gave a keynote presentation which proved an excellent starting point for discussion. Since the start in February we organized three seminars in



Seminar in Stately Hall of Moldovan Parliament

the Moldovan Parliament. They first discussed the role of parliament in reviewing, assessing and evaluating defence-related documents. The second seminar brought us back to Chisinau in the spring and dealt with financial accountability and budgetary transparency. In a presentation to the seminar, the Swedish National Audit Office, which is helping to reform the Moldovan audit office, addressed practical problems and the needs and options for reform in this regard. September's seminar was on institutional renewal and gave Moldovan parliamentarians and their staff some interesting suggestions. The presentation by an associate of the German Military Ombudsman set a discussion in motion on the need for such a body in Moldova. We hope that the project can provoke more of such insights in the future.

The next seminar will be in December and will deal with the issue of the implementation of policy, with a special focus on the relationships that Moldova has entered into with the West. It will look, amongst other things, at the Individual Partnership Action Plan and the EU-Moldova Action Plan. Sometime in March 2008, a Moldovan delegation will attend a seminar in The Hague. After the event, we will take our Moldovan visitors to visit relevant institutes in the Netherlands, such as Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Court of Audit and the Clingendael Institute for International Relations. In the course of 2008, we will publish an expert report on efforts to enhance the capacity of the Moldovan parliament to oversee the security sector. The recommendations of this report will serve as the basis for the training courses, which will be the core of the second half of the project.

OECD Leads on Security System Reform

In May 2007, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published the OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform. This provides guidance to donors on how to support the reorganisation of the security sector in countries that need foreign assistance. OECD DAC uses the wider term 'security system' to make the point that security and justice are not the sole responsibility of state security forces.

In order to familiarise the officials of donor countries with its new doctrine on SSR support, OECD DAC commissioned the development of training programmes. Working with the German-based organisations InWent and BICC, CESS compiled a training workbook based on the Handbook on SSR. The three groups went on to teach pilot courses for practitioners, with Sami Faltas as

one of the main instructors. In June 2007, the European Commission hosted the first of these courses, attended by EC officials working in Brussels or in 'the field'. In October 2007, the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Stockholm hosted a second pilot course, for the Nordic countries. Some of the material that CESS developed, with Dutch government support, for the Starlink programme was incorporated in the OECD training handbook on SSR.

Now OECD DAC wants to ensure that SSR training programmes can reach all the officials that need them. So it has invited organisations that can provide SSR training on the basis of its handbook to join forces in an international network. This consortium is now being formed. It will probably include CESS, InWEnt, BICC, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR) in the UK, and other organisations working in this area.

Surplus Small Arms

Governments have various ways of dealing with military equipment they no longer need. They sell it, give it away, destroy it, or store it indefinitely. The US State Department wants to know what governments around the world do with surplus small arms and light weapons, and has commissioned a study on the subject by the Small Arms Survey in Geneva. CESS is in charge of the chapters on Bulgaria and Romania. In late January 2007, Sami Faltas travelled to Sofia and Bucharest, where he interviewed various policy-makers and experts. In Bulgaria, he was assisted by Ana Rudico and Dimitar Dimitrov, whereas in Romania, several staff members of EURISC helped out. The results of the study are to be published by Oxford University Press.

DDR Training in Sudan

Now that the long war between the southern and the northern part of Sudan is over, both sides are downsizing and reorganizing their armed forces. The Government of Southern Sudan has ordered a series of training courses on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), which are delivered by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). Sami Faltas was one of the instructors in a DDR training course for staff of the Southern Sudan DDR held in Juba from 22-26 October.



Our former colleague Jos Boonstra joined the Starlink team in Baku

NATO Advanced Study Institute in Bansko, Bulgaria

In April, a NATO Advanced Study Institute was held for the second year running in Bansko, Bulgaria, organised by the Bulgarian Centre for South East European Studies (CSEES) and CESS. After last year's successful event, which led to the publication of a book entitled *Establishing Security and Stability in the Wider Black Sea Area. International Politics and the New and Emerging Democracies*, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division decided to sponsor a sequel. Our Bulgarian counterpart CSEES succeeded in bringing together for two weeks academics from the wider Black Sea region in the beautiful ski resort of Bansko, to discuss security sector transformation in the wider Black Sea area. CESS's founding director Peter Volten, one of the initiators of the project, was present for the whole two weeks and contributed to the programme. Like all the other participants, he especially enjoyed the afternoon of skiing.

Winter Course Belgrade

From 21 January – 1 February 2008, a two week Winter Course called 'New Challenges in Security: Trends, Lessons and Developments' will be held at the Security Studies Faculty of the University of Belgrade. CESS will organise it in co-operation with the University of Groningen. In these two weeks a mixed audience of students from Belgrade University and the Military Academy will attend lectures on, amongst others, International Military Cooperation, Humanitarian Intervention, Civil Military Relations, the European Security and Defence Policy and NATO. The idea is to widen the present scope of Serbian educational culture within the security sector and introduce students and cadets to relevant study topics on an international academic platform, using interactive teaching methods. The course is being developed in close co-operation with Dr Sipke de Hoop of the University of Groningen and is sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Embassy to Serbia. The programme is ready and comprises lecturers from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations 'Clingendael', the Netherlands Defence Academy and CESS.

Motives, Means and Opportunity: Targeting Political Violence

Sami Faltas

Why do groups sometimes engage in armed violence? There is a lively debate among scholars about motives such as 'greed' and 'grievance.' Another explanation for group violence is fear, but this possibility has not received much attention yet. Discussions about the root causes of armed violence are important, because if we better understand the emotions and ambitions that drive such behaviour, we will be able to devise more effective ways of preventing and limiting armed violence by non-state actors. I do not mean to suggest that armed violence exercised by governments is not problematic, but it is different. I will focus here on non-state actors.

The point I wish to make is that motives are not the only factors that determine armed violence. When investigating a crime, detectives look at three major factors—motive, means and opportunity—and we can usefully apply this checklist to political violence as well. To understand such violence, we must not only find out what drives it, but also what facilitates it. And if we want to discourage and suppress political violence, we again need to look at motive, means and opportunity.

It is often more fruitful to target the means and the opportunity than the motives of political violence. Motives are difficult to establish and influence. It is easier and more useful to limit the access to the tools of political violence, and to reduce the opportunities for such violence. Let us imagine a group with a strong motive to engage in political violence. If they do not have access to the requirements for such violence, that is to say, leaders, fighters, money, arms and ammunition, it will be difficult for them to engage in violent action. The easier their access to the tools of violence, the greater the chance that they will indeed engage in such action, the wider the scale on which they can operate, the greater the damage they can cause, and the longer they can sustain such action. All other things being equal, of course.

Now let us imagine that our hypothetical group has all it needs to engage in political violence, but is facing an unfavourable environment. If they go ahead with their plans, they are likely to be arrested, tried and punished. They will face intense disapproval from the population, including their own communities. The public will not understand why they chose the path of violence instead of using peaceful and legal forms of political action to pursue their objectives. Such a hostile environment makes violent action difficult, unattractive, unlikely to spread, and unlikely to last long. By contrast, if there is nothing to deter or dissuade our violent activists from carrying out their plan, if they have reason to believe they will gain public approval and support, if there are few lawful opportunities for settling political disputes, and if it is considered normal and appropriate for conflicts to be settled by violence, then our violent activists will be encouraged to carry out their plans. Indeed, if they have motive, means and opportunity, they may well achieve what they are aiming for.

I think this means that if governments and civil society wish to prevent and discourage political violence, they should be looking carefully at ways of limiting the means and opportunities for such behaviour, rather than focussing primarily on motives.

Weapons control is one useful example of limiting the scope for violent action. Guns do not kill people, of course. But in disputes and in danger, people are more likely to shoot, wound and kill other people if they have easy access to small arms, light weapons and their ammunition. Therefore I think governments should strictly regulate and control the possession, transfer, transport and use of such items. However, they should acknowledge that citizens sometimes have a legitimate need for weapons to defend themselves and their families, if the police cannot provide adequate protection. In conflict-ridden countries, promoting effective weapons control can make a very useful contribution to the prevention of criminal and political violence.

The same applies to government reform. Security system reform, as advocated by the OECD, seeks to make the security agencies and the judicial system more effective, while at the same time enhancing their integrity. The police must be capable of enforcing the law, but they must also gain the confidence and support of the communities they serve. The military must have the capacity to defend the sovereignty and integrity of the country, but must be under the command of civilian politicians who are accountable to the elected representatives of the people. The law must apply equally to all citizens, high and low. It must protect their rights, and hold them accountable for any violations of the law. The fundamental freedoms and liberties of all citizens must be guaranteed against government encroachment, but citizens must also feel an obligation to participate in political life and uphold the law. This is a safe and enabling environment for peaceful political action, but discouraging to those who seek to impose their will through political violence.

PUBLICATIONS

Harmonie Papers, nr. 20
Nienke de Deugd, Ukraine and NATO: *The Policy and Practice of Co-operating with the Euro-Atlantic Security Community*, June 2007, € 19 (incl. postage).
ISBN: 978-90-76301-22-8

Establishing Security and Stability in the Wider Black Sea Area International Politics and the New and Emerging Democracies
Volume 26 NATO Science for Peace and Security
Series: Human and Societal Dynamics
Editors: P.M.E. Volten and B. Tashev
July 2007, 252 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-58603-765-9

Editorial

Georgia's First Real Test

After the Rose Revolution of 2003, Georgia was embraced by the West as the newest democratic success story. The reforms undertaken since Mikheil Saakashvili came to power were hailed by the Euro-Atlantic community, and this seemed to inspire Georgia to go full speed ahead. Indeed, Mr Saakashvili's administration has strengthened the country's democratic institutions, promoted economic growth and bravely resisted Russian interference. But Georgia's positive image has come under pressure in the last months, and its developing democracy has undergone its first tough test. The results are not encouraging.

On 7 November the world was shocked by the images of Georgian security forces severely attacking protesters under the state of emergency that the government had proclaimed. This was the preliminary climax of a period of political unrest, which saw thousands of unsatisfied Georgians taking to the streets to protest against their president and his administration, which they accuse of being authoritarian and corrupt. This attack on protesters and the events leading up to it revealed an ugly side of the Georgian leadership.

The crisis that led up to the attack on protesters began several weeks earlier. While President Mikheil Saakashvili was addressing the UN on 26 September, his country was facing its biggest political crisis since the Rose Revolution. It had all started a day earlier, when former Minister of Defence Irakli Okruashvili, who left the government in 2006, accused Mr. Saakashvili and his family of corruption, nepotism and even ordering the killing of several public figures. On 27 September, Mr Okruashvili was arrested on charges of money-laundering, abuse of power and extortion. In his slipstream, a number of officials who are believed to be supporters of the former defence minister were also detained on corruption charges. Thousands of Georgians took to the streets of Tbilisi to protest against the government and express their support for Mr Okruashvili. Like him, they accused President Saakashvili of corruption.

The fact that Mr Saakashvili was out of the country at the moment the internal situation exploded, is symptomatic. His administration seems more concerned about its image abroad than about its standing at home. The President had to rush home in order to calm the situation. But he was too late. The people demanded an immediate explanation for the disturbing accusations and handling of a former minister of the Saakashvili administration, but it took the president five days to comment. This fuelled speculation about the incident and contributed to the escalation of the situation.

The arrest of Mr Okruashvili provoked a lot of resistance. The protesters claimed that it was politically motivated. It had come soon after Mr Okruashvili had accused the government of murder, and in the absence of the president. For its part, the government insisted that the investigation of alleged crimes by Mr Okruashvili had been going on for almost a year, but the timing of the arrest was suspect. On the day that Mr Okruashvili opened the office of his newly established opposition party, he was taken into custody. This all fed the idea that the arrest of this former minister was not part of an impersonal and successful anti-corruption campaign, but an attempt to silence a political opponent.

In the second week of October the next act of the drama began. Mr Okruashvili all of a sudden retracted all the criminal accusations he had made against the President. He even acknowledged that he had made them purely for political gain. These confessions of the former minister were broadcast on Georgian TV. After this, Mr Okruashvili was released on payment of 10 Million Lari (4.2 Million Euros) in bail. With this extraordinary statement, Mr Okruashvili managed to undermine both his own credibility and that of the government. This sudden change of heart nourished the belief amongst the opposition that Mr Okruashvili had been pressured into making this testimony. This whole case is painfully reminiscent of methods used to eliminate political opponents in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia. It is ironic that the Saakashvili government, which is so emphatic in its commitment to democracy, and so critical of Russia, should invite such comparisons.

Despite the government's heavy-handed response, the accusations made by Mr Okruashvili have left their mark. The opposition, previously divided and weak, has rallied its forces. It now describes the President as an authoritarian leader posing as a democrat. Since then, the streets of Tbilisi have often been crowded with masses of protesters, an image not seen since the Rose Revolution.

These developments have tarnished Georgia's image as a democratic success story. The accusations of corruption are especially embarrassing, because it was on an anti-corruption programme that Mr Saakashvili swept to power in 2004. In an attempt to restore faith in the administration's anti-corruption credentials, the President announced the creation of a special Anti-Corruption Council, which is to monitor government ministries. The council is to report to the president and the speaker of parliament, and this has fuelled suspicions that Mr Saakashvili wants to control the process. It is hard to imagine the council effectively investigating alleged acts of corruption by the man to whom it reports.

Mr Saakashvili has also made some conciliatory moves, asserting that he is open to dialogue with the opposition and is willing to hold early presidential elections in January, so the people can decide on his fate. It remains to be seen whether this can repair the damage caused by the administration's previous actions. In response to criticism, the government claims that Russia is trying to destabilize Georgia's democratically elected regime. This may well be true, but on the basis of the information available to us, it does not justify the government's drastic actions.

The West has been eager to embrace Georgia as the newest democratic success story. Without a doubt, Georgia chose the right course in 2003, but the real test of young democracies comes when they are first challenged. Unfortunately, Georgia did not pass this first test. Friends of Georgia around the world are now hoping that this was a setback on the road to stability and democracy, not the demise of the Rose Revolution.

Erik Sportel

PEOPLE

Groningen University offers a two-year Research Master Programme on Modern and Contemporary History and International Relations. Students seeking admission must clearly show a talent for research. One of the few International Relations students enrolled in the Research Master programme is **Kars de Bruijne**, who began an internship at CESS in early October. He is especially interested in conflict studies, especially on wars within states. During his internship, his main job is to assist Ritske Bloemendaal in running our Turkey programme. Currently, he is helping to organize the Ankara seminar on Peace Support Operations, to pull together a book on civil-military relations in EU countries and to prepare a conference on political barriers to EU enlargement.



Business matters at CESS have for many years been the responsibility of Joke Venema, our business manager. In February 2007, she was joined by **Henriette Bijleveld**, who takes care of most financial paperwork and other administrative matters. Arranging trips to various destinations in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world is a familiar job to Henriette, because before coming to CESS she worked for a long time in the travel business. Currently, she is organizing an outing for the CESS staff, which is sure to be great fun and will therefore not be covered in Security Matters.



Marleen Kuijs is a master's student of Euroculture at Groningen University, who joined CESS as an intern in early September 2007. This is less exciting for her than the four months she previously spent in wonderful Krakow (Poland), but she is nevertheless happy to be back and says she finds CESS "a very interesting and friendly organization." As an intern at CESS, she can pursue her interest in public administration and European culture, while familiarizing herself with security studies. Marleen's main task at CESS is to organize the big conference in The Hague that will conclude the Starlink programme. Together with Merijn Hartog, she will bring together many security experts from all over Europe and beyond. She also looks forward to Chisinau, where she will help Erik Sportel organise a seminar of the Moldova Parliamentary Programme.



Denola Chkhartishvili

from Georgia was an intern at CESS in early 2007. As a staff member of the Center for European Integration Studies in Tbilisi, she had previously worked with Merijn Hartog and Sami Faltas in the Starlink programme. "But," she hastens to add, "I had no difficulties in relations with other staff members, as all of them were extremely friendly, especially my very loyal supervisor Erik Sportel. It was the first time I ever worked in an international environment, and a huge experience trying to understand local culture and traditions. Unfortunately, I did not learn to ride a bicycle, but I have not given up hope." Denola's main job at CESS was to organise the last Starlink training course in Georgia.



Peter Wibbeling is currently finishing his M.A. programme at Hamburg University. After a semester in Limerick (Ireland), which deepened his interest in security policy, he came to CESS for an internship. As a course manager, he was in charge of Starlink training courses on democratic governance in the security sector in Baku (Azerbaijan), Vadul-lui-Voda (Moldova), and Odessa (Ukraine). He says: "The internship met all my expectations, like managing projects, taking on responsibility and working in a team. An exciting part of the internship, among others, was to travel to so many different places. I really enjoyed travelling together with the CESS staff (e.g. borrowing Erik toothpaste), working together with our trainers and our local partners. Moreover, I liked the vivid discussions with the participants of the training courses. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work in such a great team and for the profound knowledge in civil-military relations which I gained."



22 May 2007 was a big day for CESS programme manager Merijn Hartog and his girlfriend Cristel, because their first child was born, a delightful lad called **Tomas**. At first, there were some concerns about Tomas's health, but to everyone's relief, he made a quick and complete recovery. So while Merijn used to talk mostly about football during coffee breaks at the office, he now goes on about his son. Becoming a parent, he says, is "the best thing that happened to me! It is the most significant, beautiful and joyous thing that can happen to anyone. He's growing and developing constantly and I just watch him in rapture." Most of us at the CESS office take this as a cue to talk about our own wonderful children. However the baby talk does become a bit tiresome for Erik, who is not a dad and would rather talk about F.C. Groningen. "Well," Merijn says, "he knows what he needs to do to join the mainstream."

Commentary

Promoting NATO in Kazakhstan

By Kees Lodder

In 2007/2008, the Netherlands embassy is serving as NATO Contact Point Embassy (CPE) for Kazakhstan. Lieutenant-Colonel Kees Lodder (Netherlands Army, retired) is currently in the capital city Astana carrying out a study in support of this work. From 1992 onwards, Kees Lodder worked in Moldova, Ukraine and other countries of Eastern Europe. He was the Netherlands defence attaché in Kyiv when his embassy was designated the NATO CPE for Ukraine. He is helping CESS to explore the feasibility of a Starlink programme for Kazakhstan.

There's a song in Dutch that ends with the words "Omsk is a lovely town, but just too far away." Well, it's not too far away if you are in Astana. Kazakhstan's capital is in the extreme north of that immense country, close to the Siberian border. So when I first arrived here in late October, I was surprised by the mild weather. I enjoyed walking along the river wearing a t-shirt. But in the first week of November, winter suddenly set in, and now I do feel as if I am in Siberia.

In 1997, when President Nazarbayev moved the country's capital from Almaty in the south to the small city of Astana in the North, he launched a building programme which transformed the city into a showcase of modern architecture. Travelling into town from the airport at night, I was amazed by the fantastic multicolour lighting, the shining expanses of steel and glass, and the mixture of Western, Soviet and oriental styles. There can be no doubt about the message that this display is supposed to convey. This is the proud capital of a modern and multicultural country. I soon discovered other aspects of Kazakhstan. The people are very friendly and helpful. They speak far more Russian than Kazakh, at least in Astana. They also have a complex bureaucracy. Contacting their authorities is not a straightforward matter, but the friendliness of the officials helps a lot.

Kazakhstan is close to Russia—geographically, culturally and politically. In the Nineteenth Century, seeking protection from China, the country's rulers chose to join the Russian empire. Kazakhstan is home to some 130 different ethnic communities and about 40 religious denominations. The largest part of the population consists of Kazakhs, a Muslim people related to the Turks. Nearly all minorities are represented in the Peoples' Assembly of Kazakhstan, an advisory body which soon may be given representation in parliament. As far as I can tell, relations between the various ethnic communities are good.



Kees Lodder, flanked by Erik Sportel and Sami Faltas

Equally impressive is the way Kazakhstan survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. It rebuilt both its political system and its collapsed economy, after which it had to deal with the Asian economic crisis. Now its economy is growing by 10 per cent per year, and poverty has been radically reduced. The authorities in Astana are keen to maintain close relations with Russia, remain on good terms with China, and make new friendships in the West. Trade with the European Union is lively, and the Netherlands is the largest single investor in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is an active member of the OSCE and hopes to take over its presidency soon.

Political relations with the West are friendly, but not yet close. To promote cooperation in the Partnership for Peace, there is a NATO Contact Point Embassy for each non-NATO country. In support of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), the CPE promotes a better understanding of NATO, its work and its objectives. People know very little about NATO in Kazakhstan, and Cold War stereotypes about NATO are still common. The CPE will also support Kazakhstan's efforts to implement the Individual Action Plan (IPAP) it agreed in the Partnership for Peace.

Kazakhstan has a population of some 15 million people, less than the Netherlands, in an area as large as Western Europe. I hope we will be able to extend the activities of the NATO CPE beyond the two big cities, Almaty and Astana, perhaps by working with universities. An internet site in Russian would also be useful. I learned this language many years ago in the Royal Netherlands Army. It has not only helped me in my work, but also in making friends all over Eastern Europe. I hope the same will apply in Kazakhstan.

Now CESS is trying to launch a Starlink training programme in Kazakhstan, on democratic governance in the security sector. This will facilitate the implementation of reforms that Kazakhstan announced in its IPAP, such as developing and strengthening democratic control and civilian oversight of its armed forces. I accompanied Sami Faltas and Erik Sportel during their conversations with government authorities and civil society groups in Astana and Almaty. For me, this was an excellent opportunity to learn about the situation in Kazakhstan and begin establishing a network of contacts. Supporting the CESS in their efforts to start the programme in Kazakhstan is in line with the tasks of the NATO CPE mentioned above.

Colophon

Security Matters is published by the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS).

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