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Russian General Staff denies disbandment of GRU special-task brigade in Berdsk

The Russian General Staff denies disbandment of special-task troops brigade of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, located in Berdsk, radio Ekho Moskv reports, referring to the chief of the General Staff Nikolai Makarov. The officers will be offered posts in a unit of constant operational readiness in the structure of the Siberian Military District, according to Makarov. He said that officers of the 67-th brigade were "elite of our troops, their golden stock and no one has intention to refuse their invaluable fighting experience received in the most extreme situations".

"There is no question about any "exclusion of professionals from army ranks", especially without observance and performance by the state of the social obligations and guarantees before them, contrary to hastened reports of some newsdealers and politicians. According to perspective shape of the Armed Forces, it is planned to have one unit of constant operational readiness among the troops of the Siberian Military District. The officers of the Berdsk brigade will be offered posts in this unit", said General Nikolai Makarov.

The chief of the Russian General Staff added that today in structure of the Siberian Military District there were two special-task brigades of reduced structure, that is, they are completed by staff by 50 % on the average

Exposed Russian spy stripped of Estonia's honors

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has signed a resolution stripping Herman Simm, the former senior Estonia's Defense Ministry official sentenced to 12.5 years in jail for spying for Russia of the Order of the White Star, Class 4, the Baltic Times reports.

The paper says the Defense Ministry and the Information Board have also announced that they will strip Simm of further medals and honors. "The minister of defense has prepared the draft of an order whereby Herman Simm will be stripped of the right to wear the service badge of the Defense Ministry," news agency BNS the ministry's spokesman Martin Jasko. Simm has been awarded Class II Service Badge of the Defense Ministry.

The Director General of the Information Board, Tarmo Turkson, has already stripped Simm

of the service badge of the agency responsible for foreign intelligence in Estonia, the paper adds.

Murder suspect Lugovoy likely to run for city mayor of Olympic Games city of Sochi

According to the leader of the Russian State Duma faction of Liberal-Democrats (LDPR), Igor Lebedev, party member Andrei Lugovoy, the State Duma member, will be nominated by the Liberal-Democrats the candidate to the Sochi city mayor elections to take place on April 26, news

agency RIA Novosti reports.

Lebedev said the LDPR considers Andrei Lugovoy's candidacy the most preferable to the party. He noted that the party still had two weeks for acceptance of the final decision.

Lugovoy is a member of the Russian State Duma security committee. He was elected to the State Duma in 2007 from the federal list of the candidates been put forward by the LDPR.

Lugovoy is wanted by British police on suspicion of the poisoning murder of the ex-officer of the Russian Federal Security Service Alexander Litvinenko in London and the British authorities

demand his delivery for trial to the UK. Russia has refused to give out its citizen.

Lugovoy considers nomination to the post of city mayor of Sochi as serious political activity and it is ready to solve the problems of this city, according to his interview to radio Ekho Moskvyy. He declared that if he became the mayor of Sochi he was ready to go to London to learn its experience of preparation for the Olympic Games.

Meanwhile Litvinenko's widow Marina released a statement saying that should Lugovoy win, she would call for a boycott of the 2014 Winter Games. "I would personally go from country to country to country urging people not to go to an event hosted by a murderer", BBC News reported.



Andrei Lugovoy

SBU consider declassifying of KGB documents mutually useful for Russia and Ukraine

The Director of department of archival maintenance of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) Vladimir Viatrovich considers that signing of an agreement between the SBU and the Federal Security Service of Russia (FSB) on declassifying of archives of retaliatory bodies of the USSR would be mutually advantageous for Ukraine and Russia, daily Ukrainski novony reports, referring to Viatrovich's press conference.

«This agreement, its realization will be mutually advantageous both for Ukrainians, and for Russians as both peoples have suffered from [the Soviet] totalitarian regime», he said.

According to Viatrovich, a meeting between the Ukrainian representatives and a representative of the Russian FSB took place in Kiev on March 12. He expressed hope that this had been the beginning of negotiations about signing such agreement.

The Director of the SBU department of archival maintenance emphasized that optimism in signing such agreement with the FSB of Russia had been added by the fact that Ukraine already cooperated in an exchange of archival documents with Poland, Germany and Lithuania. The SBU suggested the FSB of Russia to agree on declassifying of the archives of retaliatory bodies of the USSR, the paper marks.

Former Czechoslovak Communist secret police agent given prison sentence for insurance fraud

A Czech court sentenced Pavel Minarik, a well-known former agent of the Communist secret police (StB), to 4.5 years in prison for an insurance fraud, news agency CTK reports.

In 1996, Minarik had an overpriced consignment of optical fibres, belonging to his company, set on fire in Ukraine in order to claim insurance money worth many millions of crowns from the Kooperativa insurer. Minarik, who pleads not guilty, has appealed the verdict. This is why the High Court in Olomouc, north Moravia, will deal with the case, CTK notes.

The Communist regime in Czechoslovakia presented Minarik as a hero in connection with his plan to carry out a bomb attack on the Munich headquarters of the Radio Free Europe (RFE) station. Czech courts have dealt with the bombing attack after the 1989 collapse of the Communist



Pavel Minarik

regime, but they acquitted Minarik in the end.

AIA already wrote that after 1989 Minarik launched business along with his two friends, former colleagues from the Soviet secret service KGB. Thirteen years ago, his firm Mink was to supply some 900,000 metres of glass optical fibres to the Ukrainian company Invest Commercial Consulting. While signing the insurance contract with Kooperativa, Minarik set the consignment's price at 41 million crowns, while the real price was about 2 million crowns. After the consignment was destroyed by fire,

Minarik received 6.5 million crowns from Kooperativa. He rejected the insurers offer to provide new fibres to him.

The police in 1997 shelved the burnt-down consignment case as the driver transporting the fibres, Miroslav Valenta, said the fire broke out as a result of a road accident. However, Valenta changed his testimony five years later. He said Minarik's friends stopped his lorry near the town of Khust, threw him out, set the lorry on fire and forced him by threats to report an accident. Further investigation proved that the lorry was set on fire.

Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service reformed in framework of continuous process

The Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) is a rejuvenated structure, reformed simultaneously with a change of generations, head of the SIE Mihai Razvan Ungureanu said in an interview to the daily newspaper Jurnalul National. "The leading structures have been renewed. Legitimate leaders, in terms of professional skills, came in thanks to their merits," Ungureanu explained.

Asked about the institution's reform, Ungureanu explained "the institution's reconstruction was made after a set pattern, able to yield and guarantee results, in the context of an optimal use of the human, logistic, financial and time resources, allowing for the institution's professional evolution in a different political context, generated by Romania's presence in the European Union and NATO."

According to Ungureanu, SIE is undergoing a continuous process of adapting its capacities to the exigencies and responsibilities it has to cover.

"The base is a more flexible system, built on a Western pattern, with Western reflexes that operates in various contexts, by itself or involved in partnerships, with a very good image," he explained. After Romania's accession to NATO he says, SIE entered a network of similar services that serve the national interests and back the Alliance's common goals. "This network where the partner communication is horizontal, among equal partners, would have been impossible unless SIE had not been dismantled and rebuilt," the Romanian official says.

When asked to mention the possible threats facing Romania, Ungureanu answered that "a

prospective proliferation of some foreign terrorist nucleuses was rather unlikely." However, drug, human and gun trafficking and terrorism were more likely. That is, "cross-border organized crime, more adaptable to technological advance and to the legal context of the states where they operate that it used to be 20 years before."

"The good results of SIE cannot be made public. Failure stands more chances to be surfaced," Ungureanu told the paper. The Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) is the state body specializing in foreign intelligence related to safeguarding national security and protecting Romania and its interests. SIE's objectives are to collect relevant intelligence for the national security of Romania, which provides the basis for the decision-making process, provide early warnings regarding risks and threats, develop strategic assessments of the international security environment and conduct operations so as to protect and promote Romania's interests.

The activity of the service is classified as state secret; therefore the intelligence sources, the tradecraft methods and means cannot be disclosed to anyone under any circumstances. Mihai Razvan Ungureanu, historian, diplomat and politician, has been heading the Foreign Intelligence Service since December 2007. He was Romania's Foreign Minister between 2004-2007.

Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan prevented few dozen of organized drug trafficking groups in 2008

The Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan prevented 16 organized and 6 transnational organized groups, as well as separate criminals dealt with the drug trafficking, news agency APA reports, referring to the Azerbaijani government 2008 report to the parliament. According to APA, more than 970 kg of narcotic drugs, including 74.461 kg heroin, 843.147 kg hashish, 53.773 kg opium and 95.781 g MDMA psychotropic agent were confiscated totally. 25 criminal cases were launched on those facts. 82 citizens of Azerbaijan, 6 citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran, two of Russian Federation and one Turkish citizen were summoned for questioning. One of the criminal groups (3 Azerbaijani and 8 Russian citizens) was rendered harmless in Russia with the support of Russian secret services and 88 kg of narcotic drugs was confiscated from them, APA says.

The security services of Azerbaijan have also found 15 tons of sturgeon smuggled to the country. In the field of combating illegal migration and human trafficking, preparation and using of fabricated documents, the fact of human trafficking for sexual exploitation of women in Turkey was found out. An Iranian citizen using the fabricated documents and Azerbaijani citizen swindling money from the people were arrested and charged under the relevant articles of the Criminal Code, APA adds.

President of Azerbaijan presented standard to military unit of National Security Ministry

Azerbaijani President, Supreme Commander-In-Chief Ilham Aliyev attended a ceremony to inaugurate nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev's monument in a military unit of the National Security Ministry and to present a standard to this military unit yesterday, Azer Taj state news agency reported.

Minister of National Security, Colonel-General Eldar Mahmudov reported to the Supreme Commander-In-Chief, the agency adds. President Aliyev was informed about creation of conditions to organize military service at demonstrative level, Azer Taj says, noting that apartments for the ministry's personnel were constructed at high level and necessary conditions for rest of personnel have been created.

Ilham Aliyev viewed photo exhibition at the military unit headquarters, visited the canteen and familiarized with conditions there. He also got informed about improvement of the unit's surroundings and all necessary equipment for physical training of soldiers at high level, Azer Taj adds.

[Kazakh President and Russian foreign intelligence chief discussed exchange of information](#)

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev discussed with the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation Mikhail Fradkov the questions of further cooperation of the two countries in area of exchange of information, news agency KazTAG reports, referring to the press service of the Kazakh President.

“The head of the state N.Nazarbaev received the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation Mikhail Fradkov. At the meeting questions of cooperation between the two countries in the area of exchange of information was discussed,” the press release says.