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Cyber Focus, Issue 3

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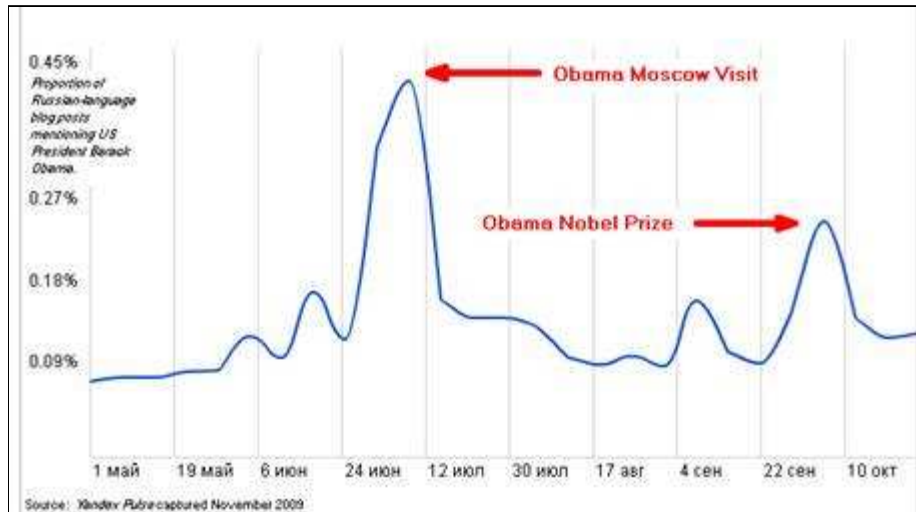
Russia: Cyber Focus, Issue 3

Cyber Focus provides an overview of developments in the Russian-language Internet (or "Runet"). This is the third of three planned pilot editions. We welcome all feedback, which can be sent to CEP-EMT@rccb.osis.gov. This edition includes the following sections:

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Snapshot

Yandex Pulse tracks word usage in Russian-language blogs. Mention of the word "Obama" peaked in the Russian blogosphere during the week 5-12 October, after US President Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize. At 4,042 mentions, it was the highest such word frequency since the President's July visit to Moscow.



Screen shots from Mission Saakashvili. (Russia.ru, 2 November).

Cyber Security/ Cyber Crime

Ufa Hackers Caught Attempting Insurance Fraud

The Bashkir division of the Federal Security Service (FSB) charged three Ufa men with attempting to steal R130 million from state institutions.

- The three young men (ages 26, 26, 30) managed to acquire passwords, encryption keys, security certificates, and electronic signatures for the republic's Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund ([Komsomolskaya Pravda](#), 2 October).
- The men arranged to transfer R130 million (approximately US\$4.5 million) to fly-by-night business accounts for conversion into cash ([Vesti TV](#), 2 October).

Election Related Hacking in Ukraine

On 6 October, non-official Rosbalt news agency [reported](#) that the website of the Pro-Russia Party of Regions (PoR) was taken over by hackers who posted an announcement stating that the attack was carried out in response to the 2 September hacking of the website of Arseniy Yatsenyuk's Change Front (Фронт перемен). The message left on PoR stated: "We carried out an independent study and the traces left by the hackers led us to the Party of Regions. This party, and more specifically its leaders, sponsored this illegal act..."

- In an [interview](#) to Rosbalt on the same day, the spokeswoman for the Party of the Regions Anna German, blamed the Yuliya Tymoshenko Blok (BYuT) for the attack. She stated: "I do not think that Arseniy Yatsenyuk's staff carried out this attack as was claimed on the [hacked] page on our website. He does not have enough political or life experience, but he was never a dirty politician. I believe that this attack was done by our other opponents." She further denied that the Party of Regions used similar methods.

- Tymoshenko's party [denied](#) any involvement in the incident, but instead blamed the Party of Regions for organizing the attack on its own site in an effort to attract attention.

Ukrainian Hackers Attack Russian Information Agency "Novyy Region"

Independent Russian news agency Novyy Region experienced the strongest attack in its history on 1 October according to Rosbalt. The results of the attack reached beyond the level of the website itself to the trunk provider Rosstelekom. The attack also created problems for many other hosts and sites that use the Rosstelekom channel. The head of the "For Cultural and Language Equality" union, Gennadiy Makarov, opined that the attack was tied to the fact that Novyy Region publishes material that is very critical of the situation in Ukraine and many politicians in Russia and Ukraine do not like it ([Rosbalt](#), 1 October).

Russia Leads World in Pirated Software

According to the Business Software Alliance annual report "Computer Piracy on the Internet," over two-thirds of software in Russia is illegal ([Gazeta.ru](#), 15 October).

State Censorship & Control

Internet Legislation Divides Justice, Communications Ministries

The Justice Ministry under Aleksandr Konovalov and the Communications Ministry under Igor Shchegolev are increasingly showing different visions of the Internet.

- The Justice Ministry announced changes to Russia's Criminal and Administrative Codes to crack down on the illegal market for information stolen from state databases such as taxpayers' personal data. The ministry wants to see a maximum jail sentence of seven years for unauthorized access to state databases ([RIA Novosti](#), 5 October).
- A Communications Ministry adviser Oleg Rykov claimed the proposals are an "encroachment" into its area, and opined that the Justice Ministry wanted to "establish censorship and limit freedom of speech in the network" ([Gazeta](#), 16 October).

The Communications Ministry often presents itself as a liberal defender of Internet rights.

- Deputy Communications Minister Aleksey Soldatov insisted that "there are no plans for carrying out screening of the Internet in Russia," when asked if his ministry had any interest in following China's example (ITAR-TASS, 7 October).

On 6 October Samara blogger Dmitriy Kirilin was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for "extremist" activity. The blogger operated under the pseudonym *mOray* on *LiveJournal* and *Samara-Hub*, and allegedly sought to overthrow the Russian government in response to the "degradation, moral decay, and extinction of the Russian people" ([Samara Today](#), 6 October).

Leading Russian INFOSEC Authority Calls for End to Online Anonymity

In an interview to ZDNet Asia, leading Russian INFOSEC authority, Yevgeniy Kasperskiy, CEO of Kaspersky Labs, stated

that user anonymity creates a major vulnerability on the Internet, and must not be allowed to continue if the net is ever to be secure. "I would like to change the Internet through the introduction of several new laws - mandatory Internet passports, Internet police, and international agreements to support these standards. If some countries do not agree to support the new agreement, they can simply be turned off." Kasperky's remarks drew a harsh reaction from some groups, such as the *LiveJournal* group *ru_marazm*, which called for a boycott of Kaspersky products ([Ruformator.ru](#), 11 October).

Russian Government Accused of Using Threat of Extremism To Collect on Citizens

As part of a joint project by intelligence watchdog *Agentura.ru* and *LiveJournal*, Irina Borogan continued her coverage of Russian Government efforts to use the threat of extremism as an excuse to collect data on ordinary citizens in order to suppress dissent. According to Borogan, the recent push to enact laws requiring biometrics in passports and other security systems is part of a government initiative to track and control ordinary citizens. She cited the efforts of biometric advocates such as Igor Spiridonov (Director of the Research and Test Center for Biometric Technology at Moscow State Technical University) to require biometrics such as fingerprinting and eye scans in security systems as an example of the campaign. However, she stated, the government will take steps to safeguard the identities of elites and civil servants ([Agentura.ru](#), 7 October).

Information Operations/Warfare

Russian MOD To Train Specialists in Cyber Warfare

According to *Securitylab.ru*, the Russian Ministry of Defense is planning to create a special information-propaganda center which will be charged with creating a positive image of soldiers. To accomplish this, the center will:

- "Defend [Russia] from critical publications in the mass media and cover the activities of soldiers."
- Be responsible for "preparing hacker attacks on the media resources of the enemy."
- Train professionals in information warfare using state of the art technology.

The leadership of the Russian Federation conceived of the center as a reaction to "extremely disadvantageous" foreign press coverage of the war with Georgia, according to [Securitylab.ru](#) (14 October).

Article Outlines Kremlin Online Information Warfare Tactics

A 23 October article in opposition [Novaya Gazeta](#) claimed the Kremlin uses paid brigades of "Trolls" or "Spoilers" to harass opposition bloggers and disrupt their online activities. *Novaya Gazeta* claimed that the brigades were set up in 2005 as part of the Kremlin's efforts to stave off an Orange Revolution and that they were formed around Gleb Pavlovskiy's Foundation for Effective Politics and sites run by Konstantin Kostin, the deputy head of the Kremlin Office on Internal Policy Management.

- The paid "Goblins" have three basic functions--adulation of Putin and his entourage, insulting and calling into question the sanity of anyone who criticizes the authorities, and agreeing with criticism to make it look absurd.
- They are particularly active around Kremlin redlines including the nation, Georgia, Ukraine, the Kremlin and its authorities, and religion.

- Anton Nosik, famous blogger and journalist, opined that it is possible to spot a "drone" by the monotony of the replies and by their origins all at the same IP address.
- Tatyana Stanovaya, a political scientist and head of the analytic department at the center for political technology, estimated that these paid bloggers receive up to \$1000 a month and that there are only several dozen of them, bringing the total cost to the government to \$100,000 to \$300,000 per year.

International Policies & Standards

First Cyrillic Web Addresses Imminent, Internal Domain Reform Mooted

At a meeting in Seoul on 25-30 October the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) endorsed IPv6, a new protocol that will allow non-Latin alphabets to be used in the global Internet address system. The Russian top level domain of .рф (.rf in Cyrillic) will be in the first batch of non-Latin domains.

- Application for the registration of non-Latin domain names will open on 16 November, and the first name in Cyrillic might appear on 25 November (Vesti TV, 30 October).

16 Nov 2009	Registration for state organizations and trade brand owners.
25 Nov 2009	First registered names may appear.
12 Apr 2010	Registration available to all.
1 Jun 2010	Deadline for browser-end functioning of Cyrillic domains. Controls over registration to be lifted.
<i>Compiled from Vesti TV, ITAR-TASS.</i>	

- Until spring 2010, only state organizations and trade brand owners will be able to get Russian Cyrillic addresses (Vesti TV, 30 October).
- Priority will be given to trademarks registered officially in Cyrillic. Owners of domains in the .ru zone will have no competitive advantage (ITAR-TASS, 7 October).
- Russia coordinated the Cyrillic protocol with 10 other European and Asian countries that officially use the Cyrillic script (Vesti TV, 30 October).

With IPv6 imminent the Justice Ministry is simultaneously pushing for reform of Russia's internal domain registration, namely an end to self-regulation.

- The ministry wants to shift responsibility for approving ".ru" and ".su" domain names from the current self-governing body (Coordinating Council of the National Domain) to the Ministry of Communications and the special services.
- The ministry also proposes that websites caught "in violations of the law" be stripped of their domain name ([Agentura, 1 October](#)).

- Many pundits expect a "powerful wave of cybersquatting," despite government plans to initially use high registration fees as a deterrent ([Daily Online](#), 19 October).

Telecoms & Mobile Telephony

Commission Outlines Plans for Telecommunications Development

At the meeting of the Commission on Modernization and Technological Development of the Economy, President Dmitry Medvedev and ministers outlined ambitious plans for the telecommunications industry. Communications Minister Igor Shchegolev proposed five projects to be financed by business to build a modern information society in Russia.

- The connection of two pilot zones in Zhukovskiy and Penza to the trunk network by 2010.
- Exchange of outdated analogue stations for the latest communicators (kommunikatory).
- The use of Russian equipment in the 2.3-3.4 Gigahertz frequency band.
- The launch of three satellites by 2013 to provide access to the Internet in hard to reach places.
- Modernizing television and radio broadcasting for the digital format.
- According to independent website [Gazeta.ru](#), experts believe this is possible if there is sufficient funding (29 October).

Shchegolev stated that the government planned to spend only 4.6 billion rubles on these projects and that the rest of the 75 billion rubles would be provided by business ([Dailyonline.ru](#), 29 October). At the same meeting President Medvedev called for the launch of 3G mobile service in Moscow. Pointing out that Russia ranks 16th in the world in mobile use and has some of the leading scientific minds, the president scolded his ministers for their lack of progress on his previous order to resolve the issue and demanded a proposal by the end of the month ([Gazeta.ru](#), 28 October). The General Director of Vympelkom Aleksandr Torbakhov explained that the military only allotted 6% of the bandwidth it owns for civilian use ([Dailyonline.ru](#), 28 October).

Communications Ministry To Discuss Portability of Mobile Numbers

Russian telecommunications companies and Communications Ministry are discussing plans to allow customers to keep their mobile numbers when switching providers. The Information Communications Union and Ministry of Informatization and Communications of the Republic of Tatarstan proposed the idea. Among the problems foreseen by all operators, providers pointed to the necessity of revisiting the procedure for billing between providers and also the purchase of new equipment. However, according to the results of an independent study, only 2% of customers planned to change mobile providers ([Kommersant](#), 28 October)

Abkhazia Added to Russian +7 International Dialing Code

Computer and Internet news website Cnews.ru reported in early October Abkhazia's telephone network dropped the Georgian international dialing code (+995), and replaced it with the prefix used by Russia and Kazakhstan (+7). This engendered a very negative reaction from the Georgian authorities, which, the website speculated, could lead to the

cutting of telephone communications between Georgia and Abkhazia. Two mobile operators with Russian roots, "Akvaфон," which belongs to Russian "Megafон," and "A-Mobayl," which has a Russian co-investor, are already active in the republic. South Ossetia has been using the Russian codes for some time and calls from Russia to the republic are inter-city calls. "Megafон" has been working in South Ossetia since 2004 instead of Georgian mobile operators. The Georgian National Commission on Communications called the act a "gross violation of international norms in the communications sphere" (*Cnews.ru*, 30 September).

E-Government

Government Publicizes Ambitious, Controversial Plans for Online Services

The Russian Government has published a detailed timetable for getting public services online that will put pressure on officials in all parts of the administration.

- Prime Minister Putin approved a plan that would see 74 government services move online, including tax returns, registering companies, customs forms, residency applications for foreigners, and court correspondences ([Gazeta.ru](#), 27 October).
- Each government service has been given a five-step timetable for implementation, divided into the following stages:
 - Publish information online.
 - Distribute forms/documents online for printing/copying.
 - Allow users to submit e-forms online, via a single state portal.
 - Allow users to track requests, via a single state portal.
 - Publish results and implement outcomes in electronic format.

All services are scheduled to be fully available online by 2015, while some are expected as early as 2010 ([Government Internet Portal](#), 17 October).

Medvedev is reportedly backing the introduction of a virtual passport to streamline the "Electronic Government" program.

- [Nezavisimaya Gazeta](#), a daily Moscow newspaper that is sometimes critical of the Kremlin, reported that the State Council will dedicate its winter session to the topic of e-government, which will include consideration of a "Universal Electronic Card" (23 October).
- Several Russian regions (including Moscow, Astrakhan, Bashkortostan) are already operating pilot "social card" projects, which carry basic personal data for municipal services.

Complementing these top-down moves toward Internet-based transparency, Public Prosecutor Yuriy Chayka has announced plans to publish a full schedule online of planned inspections of businesses. The schedule will be posted on the prosecutor's website before the end of the year ([Nezavisimaya Gazeta](#), 6 October).

New System for Electronic Document Transfer between Government Departments Approve

Vladimir Putin signed a decree authorizing the transfer of electronic messages and documents among government

agencies. The new infrastructure for affecting these transfers will be operated the Federal Protection Service (FSO). The new system is intended to ensure confidentiality of staff personal data and state secrets. On the heels of this decree, United Russia members Konstantin Shipunov and Sergey Petrov introduced legislation in the Duma that would amend tax and accounting codes to allow electronic documents and signatures to serve as primary documents of record ([Cnews.ru](#), 7 October).

Social Network

DST Begins Buying Facebook Shares from Stakeholders

The Russian investment fund Digital Sky Technologies began buying regular shares in social network Facebook directly from its stockholders at a price of \$14.77 per stock. DST previously bought \$100 million worth of regular stock from Facebook's current and former employees at the same price. This followed DST's purchase of 1.96% in preferred stock for \$200 million in the Spring. According to an unnamed source, DST can no longer purchase shares from employees and is therefore making offers to stockholders ([Cnews.ru](#), 2 October).

Communications Ministry To Promote States Interests on Social Networking Sites

The Communications and Press Ministry offered a tender for the provision of technology needed to allow bureaucrats to promote state interests on social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook. The ministry press release stated that the technology, which could consist of a computer program, should allow bureaucrats to search social networks, including specialized social networking sites, for discussion topics on professional and ordinary social networks by categories such as profession, subject, and date and research. According to the tender, the winning company would further be required to draft a concept to promote state interests through the websites and propose "methods of monitoring" the sites in order to "boost the effectiveness" of the activities of state bodies on the sites. The ministry added that it was also considering tracking discussions at social networking sites operating in languages other than Russian. The contract, which could be worth up to 5 million rubles (almost \$166,000), will be signed on 10 December ([Moscow Times](#), 23 October).

Twitter in Russia Explored at Russian Internet Week Conferenc

The session on developing microblogs was the last and most discussed session of the Russian Internet Week 2009 Conference. According to Yandex, there are 76,000 Twitter users in Russia, which represents a 10 fold increase over the past six months. Anton Volnukhin, a Yandex official, stated that the Twitter audience was mainly "geeks" and that advertising to it was only useful if you needed that kind of target audience. Others disagreed pointing out that information spreads very quickly on Twitter and that people who use it are more active and likely to repost information even on other social networks. Further, the Russian Twitter population is particularly active. According to one source, 14.6% of Twitter users in the world post every day while 33.5% of Russian Twitter users post daily ([Slon.ru](#), 28 October).

Russian Schools Block Access to Popular Social-Networking Website

Fifty thousand Russian secondary schools have blocked access to the country's most popular social-networking websites, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, and LiveJournal as part of the ongoing national project dubbed "Education," the [Security Lab](#) website reported on 26 October 2009. Under the project, a packet called "First Aid 1.0" which features a content filter that blocks access to undesirable sites, was installed in 50,000 schools across the country (26 October).

Political VKontakte Game Targets Saakashvili, Awards Cash Prize

In the "popular" game, "Mission Saakashvili," hosted on VKontakte, former US President George Bush, dressed as Uncle Sam, kicks Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili off of a roof. The user, who plays what appears to be a burly Russian soldier, uses a bat to swing at Saakashvili and, hopefully, launch him far away from virtual Tskhinvali. The game promises to award the user who bats him the farthest up to 500 rubles. Users can also link to the video through their blogs (Russia.ru, 28 October).



Runet Roundup

Russian Army Plans to Create a Military Internet

Admitting that Russia was behind the West in the move to digital technology, Lieutenant-General Yevgeniy Meychik discussed plans to create an intranet for the Russian Armed Forces. He stated "we too are trying to create an Internet that would link our armed forces so that any authorized person who needs it can find any information in any place, of course with respect to the regulations covering access to information." In 2009, 250 million rubles was budgeted for the military Internet (Svpressa.ru, 20 October).

Governments of Russia and China To Create Direct Digital Hotline

The Russian Government signed a draft agreement with the People's Republic of China to establish a secure, encrypted line that will support both emergency and normal conversations and transfer of data between the leaders of the two governments. Russia's Federal Protection Service (FSO) will take the lead on setting up and operating the connections for Russia, while State Communications Directorate Zhongnanhai will take the lead for China, with cooperation of the Foreign Ministry (Vedomosti.ru, 12 October)

Young Official Appointed to Senior Government IT Role

Prime Minister Putin appointed 31-year-old Konstantin Noskov director of the Russian Government's newly formed IT and communications department. Noskov studied strategic management before entering the Ministry for Economic Development in 2003, and entering the government apparatus in 2008. One observer remarked that Noskov is now "practically equal" in seniority to a deputy minister (CNews.ru, 21 October).

Child Pornography Data Published

Top 20 Most Commonly Used Passwords of Russian Internet Users
12345
123456
11111
55555
77777
qwerty

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) announced its cyber affairs unit Administration K has closed "about 150 Internet resources" and opened 137 criminal cases for child pornography since 1 January ([CNews](#) , 16 October).

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source: [Chaskor](#), 22 December 2008

[This item was originally filed as CEP20091104510001]

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November 09, 2009  (version 2)

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Very useful compilation of Cyber issues.

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