



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Military Innovation; Caucasus; North America; Russia

August 6:

The Moscow City Court has sentenced former Yukos security chief Alexei Pichugin to life in prison for three murders and four attempted murders, RIA Novosti reports. Pichugin is accused of ordering the 1998 killings of Nefteyugansk Mayor Vladimir Petukhov and Moscow businesswoman Valentina Korneyeva, as well as two failed attempts on the life of Andrei Rybin, an executive with the East Petroleum oil company, which Yukos took over in 1998. Pichugin was sentenced to 24 years in prison last year after being convicted of organizing two murders and two attempted murders, but the Supreme Court ordered a retrial after prosecutors appealed the sentence for being too light. Pichugin has denied all of the charges.

August 7:

Georgia has charged that a Russian jet violated its airspace and fired an air-to-ground missile on its territory, NEWSru.com reports. According to Georgian Interior Ministry officials, the missile, which landed unexploded near the village of Tsitelubani just south of Georgia's breakaway South Ossetia region, appears to be a Russian N-58 "Raduga" tactical missile and has Russian writing on it. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili called on the international community to condemn Russia over the incident. Russian air force spokesman Colonel Alexander Drobyshevsky denied Georgia's allegations, insisting that no Russian planes were in the area at the time of the alleged incident.

Oleg Deripaska, the pro-Kremlin tycoon who owns Russia's GAZ automaker, has bought a stake of slightly less than 5 percent in General Motors, *Vedomosti* reports. A 5-percent stake in the U.S. automaker is currently worth around \$905 million. Bloomberg News reported earlier this month that Deripaska, who plans to invest \$1.5 billion in Canadian auto-parts maker Magna International, had his U.S. visa revoked. In April, Deripaska denied a Wall Street Journal report that he had lost permission to enter the United States when the accuracy of statements he made to the FBI was questioned.

A Russian court has sentenced Alexander Shabalin to 12 years in a high security prison for his role in the November 2005 murder of anti-fascist activist Timur Kacharava in St. Petersburg, Reuters reports. Shabalin was part of a group of skinheads aged between 17 and 20 who stabbed Kacharava to death and seriously injured his friend, Maxim Zgibay.

August 8:

Moscow's Basmanny Court has issued an arrest warrant for Boris Berezovsky on charges that he stole \$13 million from SBS-Agro bank in the late 1990s. *Kommersant* reports that the Prosecutor General's Office made its decision to charge Berezovsky with the theft on July 20th, just a day after the British press reported that an attempt to murder him had been foiled in London and the suspected assassin deported from the UK. Berezovsky is currently being tried in Russia in absentia for the alleged embezzlement of millions of dollars from the state airline Aeroflot in the 1990s. He is also wanted in Brazil on money-laundering charges in a case involving a Brazilian soccer team. Berezovsky has dismissed all the charges as part of a Kremlin campaign against him.

August 9:

Russian bombers have reportedly buzzed a U.S. military base for the first time since the Cold War, flying over the Pacific island of Guam. According to Britain's *Telegraph*, Moscow said that U.S. jets were scrambled to intercept two Tupolev-95 warplanes on August 8th as they resumed the Soviet-era practice of flying over Western offshore military installations. "It was always the tradition of our long-range aviation to fly far into the ocean, to meet (U.S.) aircraft carriers and greet (U.S.) pilots visually," Major General Pavel Androslov, commander of the Russian air force's long-range aviation, told a Moscow press conference. "Yesterday we revived this tradition."

