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## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

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### Crackdown in the Baltics: Objectives and Prospects

- **The Intelligence Community believes that Gorbachev will soon declare presidential rule in Lithuania and possibly in Latvia and Estonia as well. This action almost certainly will lead to the closure of local legislatures and perhaps even the arrest of some Baltic leaders.**
- **Enforcement of the USSR conscription law is a stalking horse for Moscow to establish the primacy of union authority over challenges by the republics to the center's writ.**
- **The Baltic governments will not assist the center in filling the military draft and rounding up deserters. There probably will be widespread passive resistance by the Baltic peoples that could escalate and become violent--particularly in Lithuania.**
- **Although the Soviet military is taking a leading role in pushing for and implementing the center's tougher policies, it is almost certainly acting under Gorbachev's general direction.**
- **INR believes that while presidential rule in Lithuania--and perhaps Latvia--is a distinct possibility, it is not as certain as this Brief contends.**

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*This Executive Brief was requested by Condoleezza Rice, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Soviet Affairs, National Security Council. It is based on a video conference among Intelligence Community representatives. This Brief was produced by the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and informally coordinated with NSA, DIA, and CIA. INR has an alternative view (above and on page 4.)*

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Today's seizure of facilities in Vilnius, Lithuania, by Soviet troops marks the beginning of a new, much more dangerous stage in Moscow's effort to reassert control over independence-minded republics. The center has chosen the Baltic republics as the test bed for the 7 January announcement by the Defense Ministry that military forces would be used to enforce compliance with the draft and arrest deserters in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, Georgia, and western oblasts of the Ukraine. The Lithuanians had been given a deadline of 11 January to comply with the draft, the Latvians and Estonians 13 January.

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### Objectives

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These are the most dramatic in a series of moves toward an authoritarian course that Gorbachev has made in the past few months. We believe that they are designed above all to draw a line against disintegration of the union and reestablish central authority.

Noncompliance with the draft is a keen concern of the military, but it is also a key center-republic issue. By choosing to move forcibly on the draft, the central government is able to address a crucial military concern and, at the same time, use it as a vehicle to show the republics that the union's writ still holds sway.

Gorbachev is taking action in the Baltics first because the populations there are much less likely than those in the other regions singled out to react violently. He probably calculates that if the center can show that it is able to enforce its authority there, this will convince the other republics to adopt a more cautious strategy in seeking greater autonomy or independence.

### *Who's Calling the Shots?*

*The Ministry of Defense is taking the lead in enforcing compliance with the draft. Gorbachev has not commented publicly on the draft issue: his press spokesman has said only that the decision to use the army to enforce conscription was taken by the Minister of Defense on the basis of presidential directives. A few analysts believe Gorbachev has lost a degree of control over some actions of the military and security services.*

*Most analysts, however, believe Gorbachev is firmly in charge. They see his 10 January warning to Lithuania of presidential rule as clear evidence that he is directing moves in the Baltics. They also believe that Gorbachev has been, and is, determined--without any prodding from hardliners--to prevent republics from leaving the union except through the onerous secession process stipulated in current Soviet law.*

As Gorbachev strongly hinted in his public statement of 10 January, he is prepared to declare presidential rule in Lithuania--the most defiant of the three Baltic republics. His complaints against the Lithuanian leadership went far beyond the draft issue and focused on Vilnius' refusal to abide by union law. We believe he will also impose presidential rule on Latvia and Estonia unless the governments there comply fully with the military's efforts to fill the draft and round up deserters.

Gorbachev has backed off in the past but is not likely to do so this time. Failure to react strongly to Baltic noncompliance after giving such prominence to the issue would, in our view, be a devastating blow to the central government's credibility.

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**How Will Things Play Out?**

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The Ministry of Defense has said that Soviet troops will begin actions to enforce conscription and round up deserters after the deadlines have passed. There are not enough troops in the region for comprehensive house-to-house searches. Thus, they are likely to do this selectively but in a highly publicized manner to make sure the message comes across clearly. Such actions, along with troop movements, building seizures, and tough rhetoric will be designed to create fear, intensify pressure on Baltic governments, and provoke confrontations to justify even sterner measures.

The Baltic governments have already declared that they will not comply with the Ministry of Defense statement, although Estonian and Latvian leaders show some willingness to reach a compromise. There is likely to be widespread passive resistance and could also be isolated incidents of violent resistance. The center probably will arrest, at a minimum, lower-level officials who refuse to aid conscription.

Although the center could stop here, it is more likely to go further and declare presidential rule in at least Lithuania. Indeed, the difficulties of actually rounding up those avoiding the draft and Gorbachev's failure to mention conscription in his warning to the Lithuanians make it likely that this issue

***A Defiant Georgia***

*Tension is also brewing beyond the Baltics. Georgian leaders have warned that any effort to enforce Gorbachev's 7 January decree, which ordered the republic to withdraw its internal troops from the republic of South Ossetia and to comply with the USSR Constitution, would be an "act of war."*

*Although additional military units apparently have not yet deployed to Georgia in line with Defense Minister Yazov's order, Soviet MVD units are currently patrolling the Ossetian capital. A clash between these units and the recently reinforced Georgian police in South Ossetia would force Gorbachev to decide whether to commit large numbers of military forces to Georgia. Such a step entails a high risk of provoking civil war there.*

is being used as a pretext for asserting the central government's supremacy. Presidential rule probably would entail:

- The dissolution of the local legislatures.
- The installation of a presidential plenipotentiary to rule by decree.
- The eventual formation of pliant governments to give the appearance of local participation.
- Perhaps the arrest of republic leaders.

Such steps would greatly increase the likelihood of widespread acts of civil disobedience, such as strikes, and limited acts of violence against the central authorities. Additional troops would be

sent in to control the protests and to perform basic economic functions. Despite the prospect of spiraling violence, the center has the capability to maintain control of the Baltics.

The steps Gorbachev is taking now, however, will not squelch the Balts' drive for independence, and it is not clear what Moscow intends to do after imposing presidential rule. Gorbachev will have to be prepared to keep an enlarged military presence there for the long haul.

Moscow took similar moves in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan in 1988, when it declared a local "state of emergency." The immediate violence between Azeris and Armenians was contained, but Gorbachev's pleni-potentiary was ineffective and local rule was turned back to Azeri authorities a year later. There could be a similar outcome in the Baltics.

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### Foreign Policy Calculations

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The timing of Gorbachev's move seems purposefully chosen to constrain the United States' ability to react. There was no pressing urgency to move in the Baltics now. By getting tough there virtually on the eve of the UN deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and only a month before the Moscow summit, he probably calculates that Washington will be too preoccupied with war in the Gulf to respond strongly.

He may also believe that the summit would have been postponed in any event by the Gulf situation or by failure to come to closure on a START treaty, and that the fallout for US-Soviet relations of a crackdown in the Baltic would be less damaging now than at some future date.

Gorbachev's increasing reliance on the military at home suggests that the military's recent more prominent role in national security decisionmaking and arms control negotiations is likely to continue. Coupled with Shevardnadze's imminent departure, the United States will find it more difficult to close on arms control negotiations where the Soviet military already believes it is making most of the concessions. Nevertheless, Gorbachev probably will maintain the broader thrust of Moscow's cooperative policy toward the West.

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### INR Dissent

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INR believes that while presidential rule in Lithuania--and perhaps Latvia--is a distinct possibility, it is not as certain as this Brief contends. Gorbachev is clearly intent on intimidating the Baltic leaderships, but INR believes he understands that dismantling the current republic governments and possibly arresting some of their members would have serious repercussions for Moscow's relationship with the US and the West in general. In this regard, INR believes the Brief overstates the extent to which Gorbachev might feel the Gulf crisis has so preoccupied Western attention that a strong response to presidential rule would not be forthcoming.