

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. October 18, 2019

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: Daniel Rubin, Chairman;
Aleksander Smukler, President;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

Please see below for the links to this week's news updates. We wish you a happy upcoming Simchat Torah.

Chag Sameach,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. October 18, 2019**

Netanyahu requests pardon from Putin for Israeli-American woman jailed in Russia **Mary Oster** **JTA**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent an official request to Russian President Vladimir Putin to pardon an Israeli-American woman sentenced in Russia to 7 1/2 years in prison after being convicted of smuggling marijuana into the country.

The request submitted on Sunday to pardon Naama Issachar, 26, and return her to Israel is on behalf of Netanyahu and Israel's President Reuven Rivlin.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukrainian-Jewish billionaire's effigy doused with red paint outside synagogue **Cnaan Lipshiz** **JTA**

(JTA) — An effigy of a Ukrainian-Jewish billionaire covered in red paint was placed at the entrance to a synagogue in Kiev.

The life-size puppet of Igor Kolomoisky was found Monday at the entrance to the Brodsky Synagogue, Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, wrote on Twitter. The puppet had a portrait of Kolomoisky on its head.

As president of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, Kolomoisky has poured millions of dollars into Jewish causes in the country. He has also financed nationalist causes and bought equipment for the Ukrainian army in its conflict with Russia

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russian Spies Are Recruiting MGIMO Students - Proekt **The Moscow Times**

Russian intelligence services are actively recruiting students from the prestigious Moscow State

Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), the independent Proekt online outlet reported in an investigation Thursday.

MGIMO is considered one of Russia's elite academic institutions, training future government leaders and diplomats, as well as businesspeople, journalists and thinkers. Its alleged ties to Russia's secret services came into focus last year when Poland's foreign ministry said it had fired hundreds of MGIMO graduates as part of a large-scale overhaul.

"It's no secret that they recruit into the security agencies at MGIMO," Proekt quoted an unnamed graduate, who reportedly attended a recruitment drive in 2010, as saying.

Another student recounted a 2015 meeting with a recruiter who drew attention to his "unique" knowledge of the Montenegrin language and urged him to think about "the future, the motherland and a career."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia Disputes Travel Plans of U.S. Diplomats Near Test Site

Ann M. Simmons

WSJ

Russia's Foreign Ministry said three U.S. diplomats who were stopped near the restricted zone of a recent deadly nuclear explosion had declared a different destination for their trip.

The American foreign service personnel requested permission from the Defense Ministry to travel to the northern city of Arkhangelsk, but "instead, they arrived in a rented car with Russian license plates in Severodvinsk," a city that foreigners need special permission to enter, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters Thursday.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Last Soviet leader Gorbachev urges Russia, U.S. to hold nuclear talks

Reuters

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, warned on Friday that the world was drifting into a dangerous era of militarised politics and appealed to Moscow and Washington to sit down for urgent nuclear arms control talks.

Gorbachev, whose 1980s arms control push and democracy-oriented reforms helped end the Cold War, made the comments to the daily newspaper Izvestia two months after the demise of a landmark nuclear pact he signed in 1987.

"There are dangerous trends - they are all in plain sight. I would single out two. They are the disregard for international law and the militarization of world politics," Gorbachev said.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Moscow Celebrates as the US Military Pulls Away from Northern Syria

Pavel Felgenhauer

Jamestown

Military forces of the United States are in retreat in portions of Syria, relocating and airlifting service personnel and Special Forces that were operating together with Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against the remnants of the Islamic State (IS). Other anti-IS coalition special forces contingents from the United Kingdom, France, Norway and other allied countries deployed in Syria together with the US are also hurriedly disembarking. US troops are abandoning their bases and reconnaissance outposts without much dignity or ceremony. The US Air Force actually bombed the abandoned former US headquarters in the semi-independent Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (a.k.a. Rojava) to destroy a munitions depot and "make the facility unusable." The US military is apparently retreating without much preparation or any solid plan, possibly just after receiving a sudden tweet from President Donald Trump.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Kremlin to Ukraine: Steinmeier Formula is Far From Enough

Vladimir Socor

Jamestown

On October 1, in the Minsk Contact Group, Ukraine agreed with the Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" (DPR, LPR) to incorporate the "Steinmeier Formula" into Ukraine's legislation. Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy directed his envoy, former president Leonid Kuchma, to co-sign the letters of acceptance along with the DPR's and LPR's envoys, themselves accredited to the Contact Group by the "presidents" and "parliaments" of those two "people's republics." Steinmeier's Formula (originally proposed by then-German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier) would facilitate the international validation of "elections" that would, by definition, be unfree and unfair in the Russian-controlled DPR and LPR. That validation would, in turn, legitimize the Russian protectorate in this territory of Ukraine.

The letters of acceptance, moreover, envisage negotiations on a co-equal footing between Kyiv and Donetsk-Luhansk, with Moscow as facilitator in the Minsk Contact Group, toward a constitutional „special status“ of the Donetsk-Luhansk territory, under the terms of the Minsk "agreements": nominally within Ukraine, de facto under Russia's control, so as to undermine Ukraine from within. The centerpiece of this process will be the "special status"; whereas the Steinmeier Formula would simply put a democratic cover on a Kremlin protectorate in Ukraine's east (see EDM, October 3). Ukraine's former president and parliament had maneuvered out of this trap during four years.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Here's Why Romanian Politics Are Blowing Up Yet Again

Irina Vilcu and Andra Timu

The Washington Post

No Eastern Bloc country marked the end of its communist epoch quite as decisively and brutally as Romania, where dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena were executed by firing squad on Christmas Day in 1989. The president's death brought hopes of a fresh start, but Romania has been plagued ever since by corruption and revolving-door governments -- despite having joined NATO and the European Union in the interim. The latest round of political turmoil has brought down yet another government and could lead to Romania's first-ever snap election and a new ruling coalition.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Nearly 140 thousand Russians resettled to Crimea over five years

Ukrinform

Russia is trying to change the demographic map of the illegally annexed Crimea by resettling its citizens to the peninsula. Thereby, Moscow wants to increase the number of supporters of the occupying power.

"This is a practice of an occupying power when it replaces the population of an occupied territory with its population in order to change the demographic map of the area. By resettling its citizens to the peninsula, Russia is certainly violating the Fourth Geneva Convention which protects civilians during the war. But, in fact, it is also a war crime within the meaning of Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. So we can talk about the responsibility of Russia as a state for such actions and possible criminal liability for Russian citizens who approve such decisions in the future. It is clear that such resettlement aims to change the composition of the Crimean population in order to have more supporters of the occupying power," Anton Korynevych, the representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, said on the air of UATV channel.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Whistleblower law passes the Rada

Igor Kossov

Kyiv Post

The Parliament on Oct. 16 passed at second reading a law that would protect and reward corruption whistleblowers.

The fight against corruption is the most-wanted reform for Ukrainians, according to a July survey by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Center. Ukraine's international lenders, chief among them the IMF, also made reducing corruption the main priority for the country.

A majority of 252 lawmakers voted for the legislation at second reading, primarily lawmakers from Servant of the People and Voice. A majority of Opposition Platform deputies voted against, while other parties' majorities abstained or did not vote.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Servant of the people or servant of the oligarchs?

Diane Francis

Atlantic Council

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he will stay out of the legal battle waged by oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky to get back the bank that he looted. In 2016, Ukraine nationalized PrivatBank, the largest commercial bank in the country, that Kolomoisky co-owned at the time.

The president's response is appropriate in a country with an operating rule of law. Courts should remain independent from politics. But in Ukraine, with an unreformed judiciary, this is a complete cop out.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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About NCSEJ

Founded in 1971, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

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