



(b)(3)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 June 2003  
EID23JUN03

# Eurasia Intelligence Digest




(b)(3)

An intelligence support message  
for key policymakers

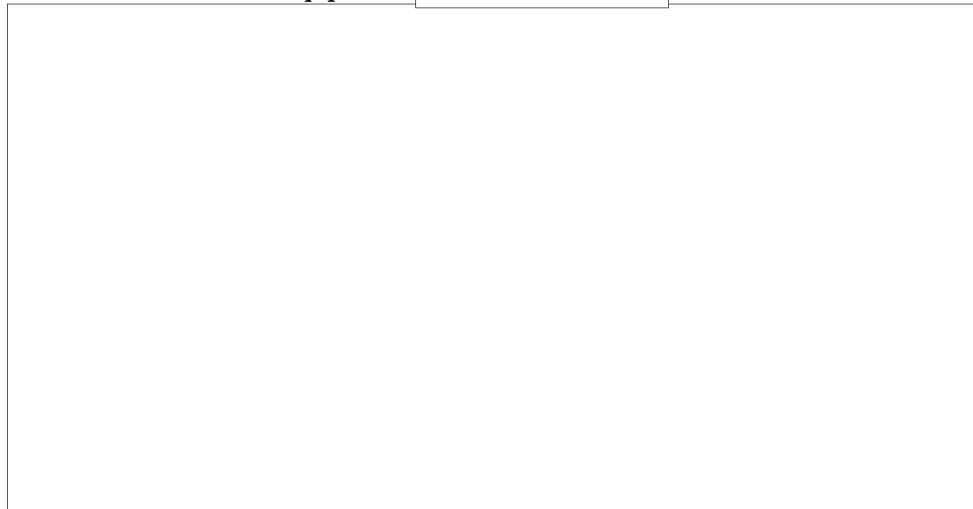




NR

- The Russian Press Ministry this past Saturday cut off broadcasting of the oligarch-owned TVS network, which was saddled with debt and an unclear ownership picture. 

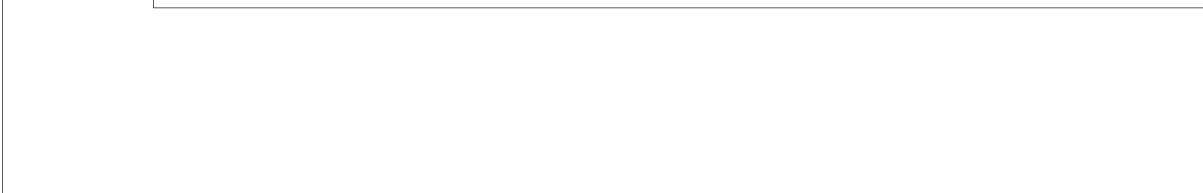
(b)(3)

NR



*The EID is prepared by analysts in the Office of Russian and European Analysis and features a first look at developing events. It is not coordinated outside of OREA.*  *Comments are welcome* 

(b)(3)  
(b)(3)

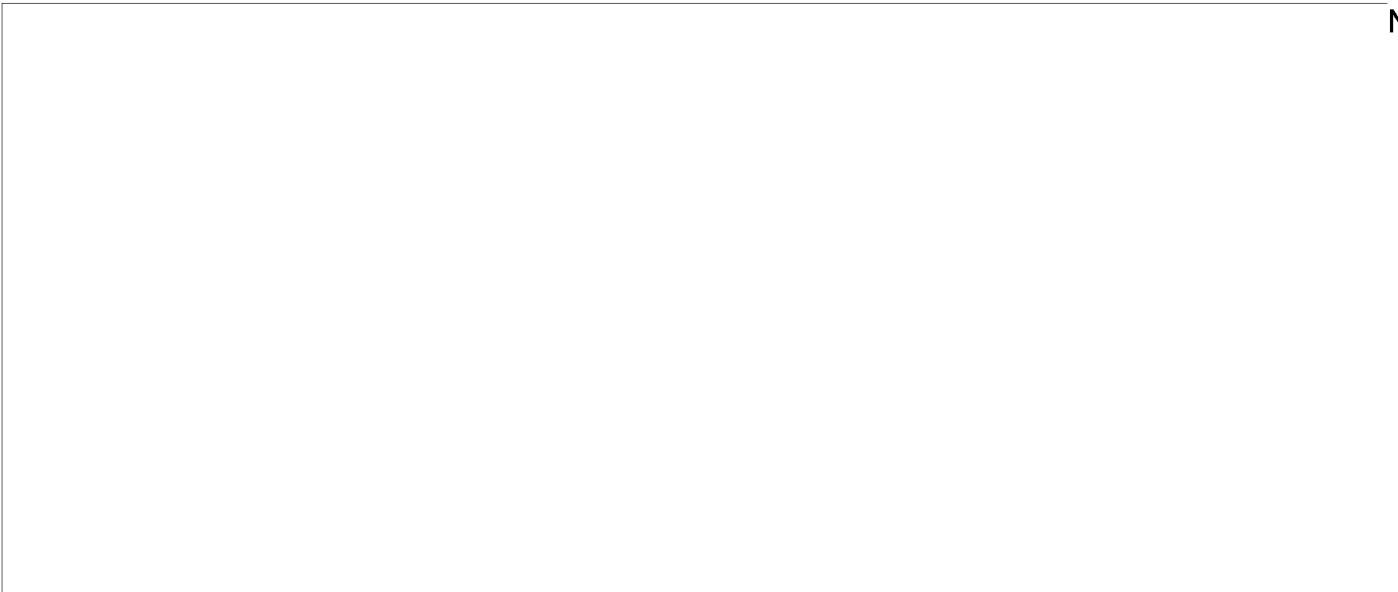



(b)(3)



(b)(3)

NR

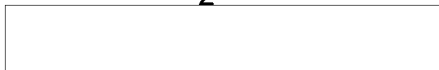


**2. Russia's TVS Goes Off the Air.** Russian Press Minister Lesin last Saturday abruptly cut off broadcasts of TVS, Russia's channel 6, replacing the broadcasts "temporarily" with a state-owned sports channel. The demise of the debt-ridden station had been expected for several weeks, and *the only surprise was Lesin's timing*--shutting off the broadcasts on Saturday instead of Sunday deprived Chief Editor Yevgeniy Kiselev of a farewell address that he had planned for his weekly news program. 

(b)(3)

TVS had been accumulating debts in the absence of a clear ownership structure. Employees had not been paid in months, and the city of Moscow earlier in June cut off cable transmissions to subscribers because of arrears. One group of owners, headed by United Energy Systems electricity monopoly CEO Chubays, had given up on plans to buy exclusive ownership rights from a rival group of owners led by Oleg Deripaska of "Base Element." Deripaska, according to press reports, dragged his feet in buying out Chubays's interests as the former held out for a lower price.


- Ownership of TVS became especially risky following a court ruling in April that essentially reinstated the channel 6 broadcast license to MNVK, a company owned by Boris Berezovskiy, the London-based political opponent of President Putin.




(b)(3)



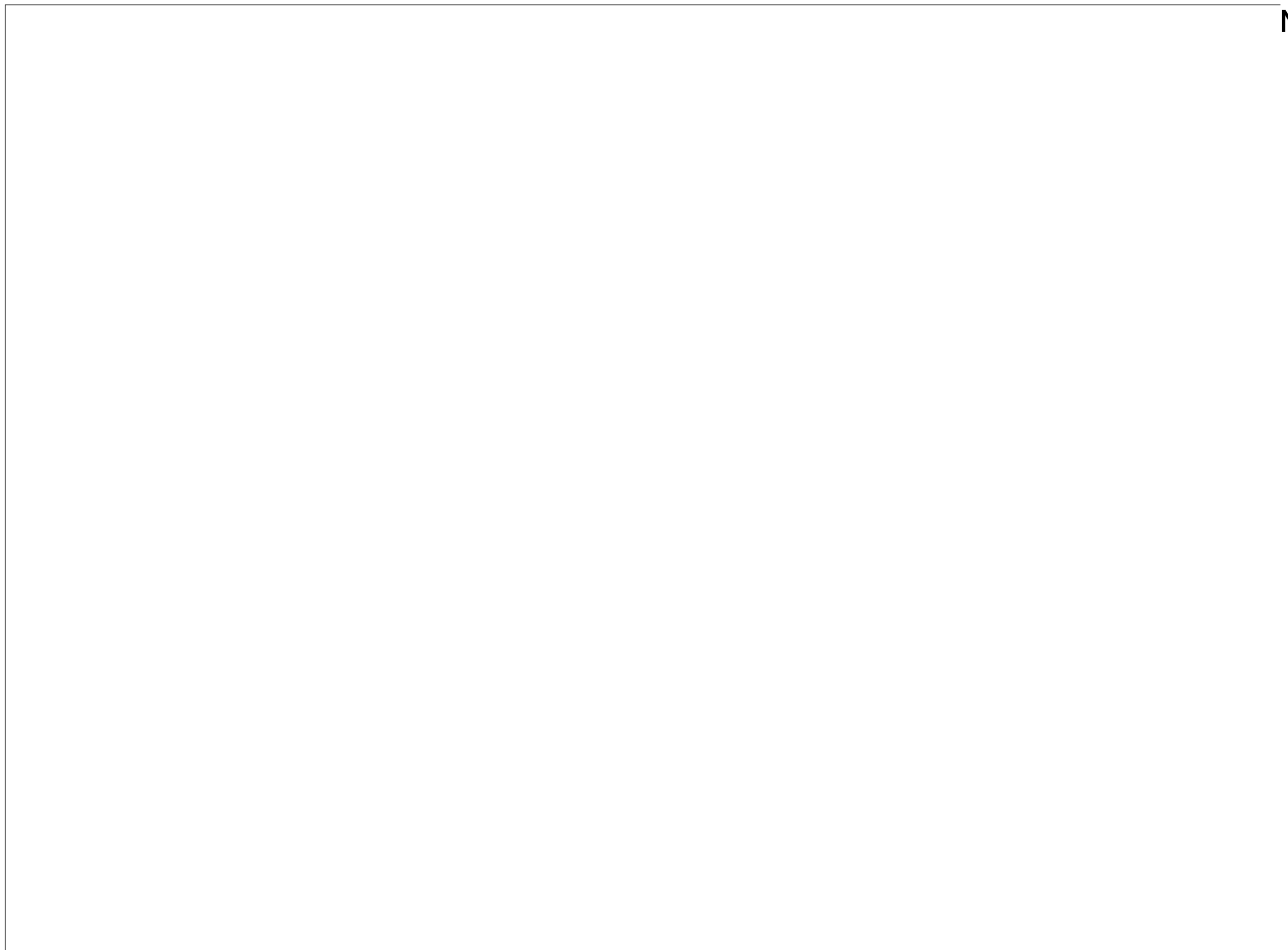
(b)(3)

- MNVK officials in Russia, however, have told the press that Berezovskiy's team is willing to sell its stake, ***evidently recognizing that the Kremlin will not stand idly by while a company owned by one of Putin's main enemies is granted access to national airwaves.***
- Journalists' sources suggest that Deripaska will buy MNVK's shares. It is too early to say whether he or any future owner will rehire Kiselev and his team. 

(b)(3)

***Putin and his Kremlin advisers over the past three years have ensured mostly docile TV news coverage, and the blackout of TVS represents more of a continuation of this status quo rather than a new state-sponsored attack on freedom of speech.*** In fact, the Kremlin arranged TVS's complex oligarch ownership structure, overseen by senior statesmen Yevgeniy Primakov and Arkadiy Volskiy, last year, and Kiselev's team since then had been careful not to press the boundaries of permissible coverage. ***Whoever obtains the license to broadcast on channel 6 will adhere to the same ground rules.*** 

(b)(3)



NR

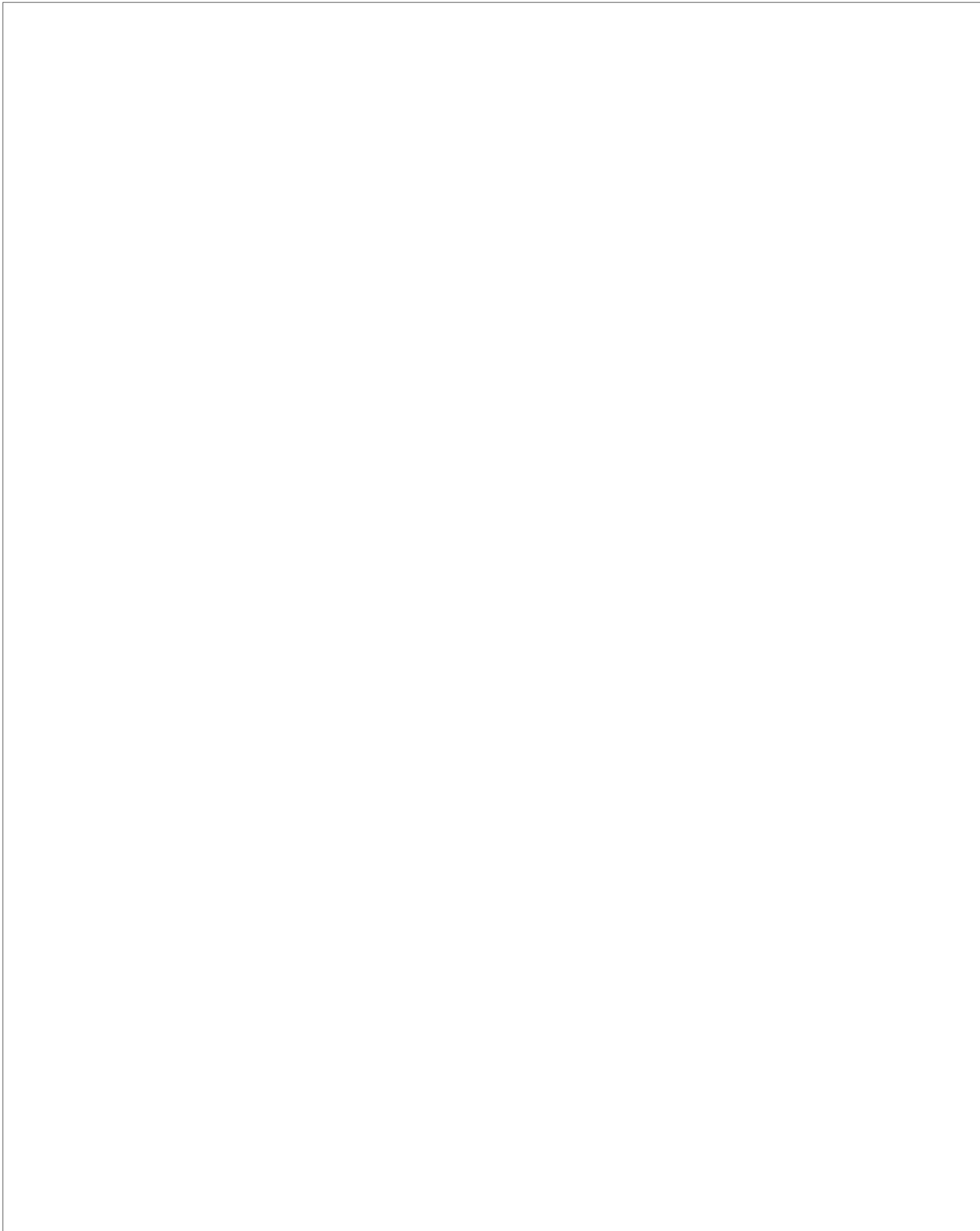


(b)(3)



(b)(3)

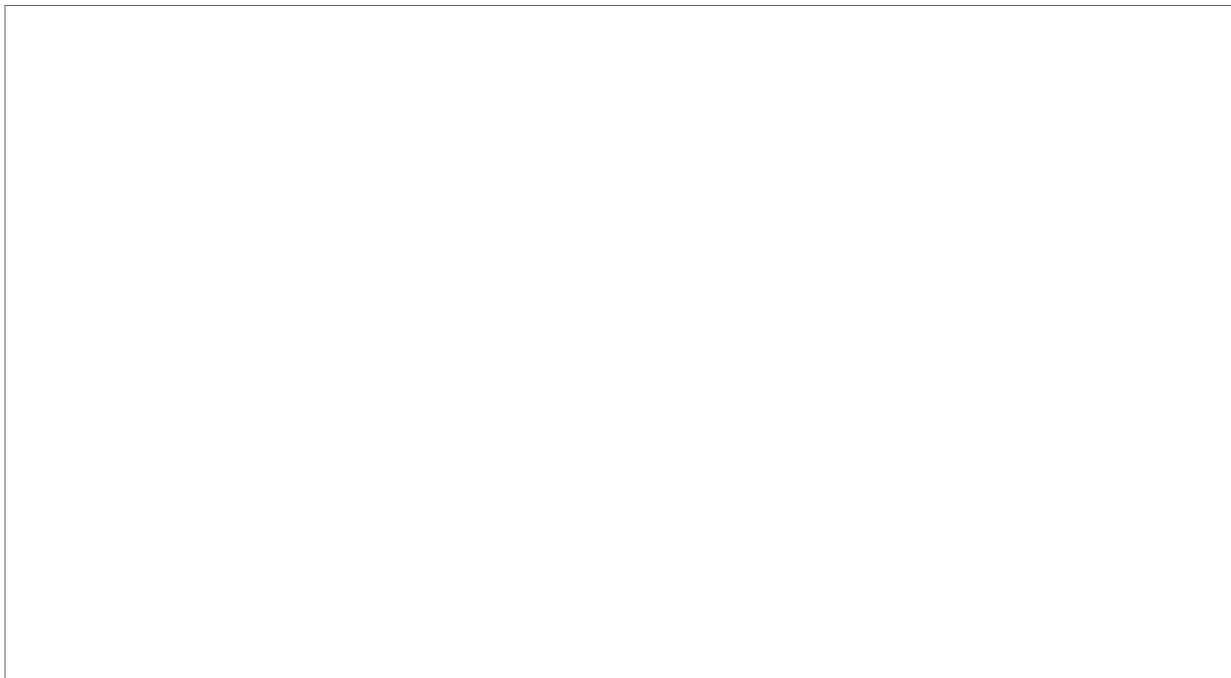
NR



(b)(3)



(b)(3)



NR



(b)(3)