

## Weekly Top 10

**WASHINGTON, D.C. May 22, 2020**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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

Dear Friend,

Wishing you a happy Memorial Day Weekend and Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

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### **NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 Washington, D.C. May 22, 2020**

**I Expected War. I Didn't Expect Trump's Impeachment or a Pandemic.**

**Volodymyr Zelenskyy**

**The New York Times | May 20, 2020**

KYIV, Ukraine — Last year on May 20, I was surrounded by crowds of people shaking hands, high-fiving and leaning in for selfies as they gathered to watch my inauguration. Ukrainians had elected me with 73 percent of the vote, pinning their hopes on me to clean up a corrupt government and bring stability.

I never thought being president would be easy. My previous job was as a comedy writer and producer; the team that I brought in was full of smart, energetic, capable and dedicated people, but many lacked political experience. We had high hopes and a fierce commitment to improving our embattled country, both at home and on the world stage.

Then the past year happened.

**[Read the full article here.](#)**

**Despite Demise of Insurgency in North Caucasus, Russian Authorities Still Wary of Its Remnants**

**Valery Dzutsati**

**The Jamestown Foundation | May 20, 2020**

On May 13, Russian special forces launched a search operation across the Assa River, in

Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district, which borders Chechnya. The authorities warned local villagers not to visit the area. The security forces were combing the forest for a group of militants led by Aslan Byutukayev (Amir Khamzat), sources said. Byutukayev (45) is the commander of the "Riyad-us Saliheen" ("Gardens of the Righteous") Brigade of Martyrs and was a close associate of the deceased Caucasus Emirate leader Doku Umarov. According to Russian investigators, Byutukaev was one of the organizers of the January 2011 suicide bomb attack at Domodedovo airport, in Moscow, which killed 37 people (Kavkazsky Uzel, May 16). Later the same year, Russian officials claimed that both Umarov and Byutukaev were killed in a special operation near the Ingushetian village of Upper Alkun. Rebels at that time confirmed that Umarov's aide and designated successor, Supyan Abdullaev, was indeed killed in the airstrike. But apparently, neither Umarov nor Byutukaev were affected by the attack (see EDM, May 20, 2011). In June 2015, after the Russian security forces killed the Caucasus Emirate's then-leader Aliaskhab Kebekov, Byutukayev pledged allegiance to the Middle Eastern Islamic State on behalf of all Chechen insurgents (Kavkazsky Uzel, June 13, 2015).

Today, the North Caucasus insurgency is almost nonexistent. However, according to some experts, positive sentiment toward the militants continues to linger among locals. A veteran of the Russian special forces, Sergei Goncharov, has claimed that the present situation in Ingushetia allows rebels to find support among the locals in the republic, unlike in Dagestan or Chechnya. Goncharov was apparently referring to political protests in Ingushetia in 2019 and subsequent imprisonment of the movement's leaders. Repressions against activists have angered many Ingush and alienated them from the authorities (Fortanga, May 13).

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **The Russian coronavirus test**

**Vladimir Gel'man**

**Riddle.io | May 20, 2020**

The global COVID-19 pandemic has become a stress test for all countries. It clearly exposes both their strengths and weaknesses. For many, including developed countries, the condition of the national health care systems turned out to be the weakest link. Hospitals across Europe and America have struggled to cope with excess pressures during a surge of infections. Unfortunately Russia, which has been undergoing an ill-designed and unjustified "optimisation" of the medical sphere in recent years, was no exception. However, the main reasons Russia came second in the world in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases lied elsewhere. They are to do with the singularities of its political regime and the mechanism of governance of the Russian state. As I have previously described, it comes back to "bad governance".

Today's Russia is an example of electoral authoritarianism: an undemocratic political regime that regularly holds elections (not fair, but not 100% fictitious, either). The regime builds its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens on the basis of voters' support for an undemocratic leader. Such regimes are generally not suited for the successful implementation of any political course. They are less effective than democracies and "classic" dictatorships. Another reason Russia's case became special was that the pandemic spread there, and the rest of the world, just as the regime was getting ready to take the most decisive step towards consolidation. On 10 March, the constitution was amended to allow Vladimir Putin to retain power in Russia until 2036. A "popular vote" was set for 22 April to formalise these amendments with a show of citizen approval.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **As Russia exits the first wave of its coronavirus epidemic, officials risk new outbreaks by basing decisions on bad data**

**Dmitry Kuznets**

**Meduza | May 19, 2020**

Based on multiple mathematical models, Russia's coronavirus outbreak peaked on May 18 (several days after the epidemic peaked in Moscow). In this context, "peaking" signifies that the number of new cases has fallen below the number of patients recovering or dying from COVID-19. In other words, pressure on the medical system is gradually easing. This welcome news makes it tempting to begin lifting painful containment measures, but in most regions across Russia that likely remains premature. At the same time, unfortunately, the quality of the statistical data needed to make decisions about weakening quarantine restrictions has deteriorated in recent weeks, due to the flawed methodology proposed by federal regulators for calculating the epidemic's most important indicators. As a result, many regions of Russia risk unleashing a second wave of coronavirus.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Chechen leader flown to Moscow suffering from coronavirus**

**Cmmonsplace.eu | May 22, 2020**

Head of the Russian region of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov has been delivered to Moscow as he is suspected to have contracted coronavirus, a source in medical circles told TASS.

"Ramzan Kadyrov has been brought to Moscow with suspected coronavirus infection [He] is now placed under medical observation," the source noted. According to him, the head of Chechnya is in stable condition. TASS could not officially verify this information.

The Russian English language newspaper, Moscow Times, said that earlier, Baza Telegram channel reported that Kadyrov could allegedly have contracted the virus and was transported to a Moscow hospital yesterday.

Kadyrov, 43, was reportedly flown to the Russian capital Wednesday, a few days after reporting flu-like symptoms, the Baza Telegram channel reported earlier Thursday. Chechen doctors recommended that Kadyrov seek treatment there after his "condition began deteriorating rapidly," Baza said.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Trump Administration Confirms U.S. Is Leaving Open Skies Surveillance Treaty** **Bill Chappel** **NPR | May 21, 2020**

President Trump's administration will give official notice of the U.S.'s intent to exit the Open Skies treaty, officials announced Thursday. The 34-nation agreement allows the U.S., Russia and other countries to fly their aircraft over each other's territory - increasing transparency and reducing the chances for perilous miscalculations.

"Russia didn't adhere to the treaty, so until they adhere, we will pull out," Trump said, adding that there is "a very good chance" to reach a new deal. "We're going to pull out, and they're going to come back and want to make a deal."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that "it has become abundantly clear that it is no longer in America's interest to remain a party to the Treaty on Open Skies."

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Indigenous voices and security in the Russian North** **Kara K. Hodgson & Mario Giagnorio** **The New Eastern Europe | May 19, 2020**

Indigenous peoples have become increasingly active in the international community and have a prominent role in Arctic governance. Understanding their issues and their claims is crucial for inclusive and thorough governance of the region.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Warsaw Jewish community sending care packages for righteous among nations** **Jeremy Sharon** **The Jerusalem Post | May 21, 2020**

Polish Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich together with the Jewish community of Warsaw, Poland has initiated a program for sending care packages to the 31 residents of the Polish capital recognized by Yad Vashem as righteous among the nations.

The new initiative stems from a care package program already in place for needy members of the Jewish community in Warsaw, and has been expanded due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has led many elderly people in Poland, as in many other countries, to self-isolate due to the virulence of the disease among the aged.

"Many of these people don't leave their houses because of the epidemic, and we wanted to help and make sure they were taken care of," Schudrich told The Jerusalem Post.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **150 rabbis commemorate 75th anniversary of Jewish liberation from Nazis** **Jeremy Sharon** **The Jerusalem Post | May 21, 2020**

More than 150 rabbis around the world, including chief rabbis and senior community leaders, participated in an online celebration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Jews from Nazi control at the end of the Second World War.

The Day of Salvation and Liberation, as it has been designated, marks the Jewish calendar date of 26 Iyar, which in 1945 was May 9, the day marked by the Soviet Union as Victory in Europe Day.

The commemorative event, which took place this week, began with a collective prayer at the Western Wall led by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, former chief rabbi, and new Religious Services Minister Ya'akov Avitan.

Chief Sephardi Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef, Chief Rabbi of France Haïm Korsia, chairman of the Council of European Rabbis Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Rabbi Shimon Baadani of the Shas Council of Torah Sages, together with dozens of other rabbis and senior rabbinical judges from 20 countries, also took part in the prayer through an online video conference. The ceremony was also attended virtually by outgoing UN Ambassador Danny Danon and interim Ambassador to Russia Eli Belozerkovsky.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Tajikistan strains credibility with apparent COVID-19 turnaround Eurasia.net | May 22, 2020**

Tajikistan is claiming major strides in containing its coronavirus outbreak. The figures may prompt some to cock an eyebrow, however.

The Health and Social Ministry said that as of May 21, a little more than 1,000 people had recovered from COVID-19. That is nearly half of the 2,350 confirmed cases to date.

This huge spate of recoveries was reported over a two-day period. It is especially remarkable considering that Tajikistan only admitted it had coronavirus cases on April 30. Around 1,200 cases out of the total number were confirmed as recently as between May 15 to May 21, amounting to around 200 daily.

Recovery times for coronavirus tend to vary on average from two weeks for mild cases to anywhere between three and six weeks in more serious situations. That would in theory make Tajikistan's claim slightly more credible, although it is probable, given the extreme weakness of testing capacity, that many of the known cases incline to the more serious end of the scale. No information has been made public about what protocols doctors are using to treat COVID-19 patients. It is unclear whether the negative diagnosis for purported carriers is based on tests or assumptions by the medical staff. Tajikistan has, in contrast with neighbors like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, refrained from providing detailed breakdowns of the epidemiological situation and has limited itself to once-daily updates on the total number of cases.

According to the latest available information, Tajikistan only has capacity for carrying out 250 PRC-based tests daily.

[Read the full article here.](#)

1120 20th Street NW, Ste. 300N Washington, DC 20036-3413

Telephone: +1 202 898 2500 | [ncsejinfo@ncsej.org](mailto:ncsejinfo@ncsej.org)

#### 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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