



Biographic Sketch

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RUSSIA
General-Lieutenant Aleksander Ivanovich *LEBED*
August 1994

(U) **NAME:** General-Lieutenant (U.S. major general equivalent) Aleksander Ivanovich *Lebed* (LEH-bed).

(U) **POSITION:** Commander, 14th Army, Moldova (since June 1992).

~~(CONF)~~ **SIGNIFICANCE:** Aleksandr Lebed, the fiery and controversial commander of Russian forces in the Transdnestr region of Moldova, continues to retain his post despite a public stance that regularly tests his superiors' tolerance for insubordination. Although senior Russian officials largely credit him with bringing an end to the hostilities between Moldova and the breakaway self-declared Transdnestr Republic in 1992, he has repeatedly angered President Boris Yeltsin and Defense Minister Pavel Grachev by making public statements that undercut Moscow's initiatives in Moldova and by voicing disapproval of the Russian government's leadership in the national security and military reform arena. Lebed's penchant for controversy almost cost him his job in August 1994 after the publication of an interview in which he characterized Yeltsin as a "minus" and endorsed the Pinochet model of military rule. After an abortive attempt to oust the rebellious general, Grachev was forced to backtrack and allow Lebed to remain in place, albeit with a commitment to rename the 14th Army an Operational Group of the General Staff and reduce its central staff somewhat. It is believed that Lebed has been able to retain his post because of his support in the officer corps, local backing, and strong command abilities:



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- Lebed's decisive style of leadership and support for Transdnestr autonomy has earned him considerable popularity among local Russian military personnel and residents of the Transdnestr region, who overwhelmingly elected him to the Transdnestr legislature in September 1993. The attempt by the Russian high command to remove Lebed as 14th Army Commander unleashed a storm of protest from Lebed's officers, who threatened to ignore Moscow's orders to abolish the 14th Army.
- Lebed is highly regarded among many members of the Russian officer corps for his command experience, success in preserving peace in Moldova, and willingness to voice his frustrations with the political leadership in Russia publicly. Many officers probably agree with Lebed's assertions that without his leadership, the situation in Moldova might rapidly disintegrate into chaos. Yeltsin and Grachev may believe that firing Lebed would cost them support among a military already angered by the military's loss of societal status, privileges, and cutbacks in personnel and funding.

~~(CONF)~~ Lebed's defiant stance puts under considerable strain his longstanding career ties with Grachev, his onetime patron. The two served together in the 1970s as training officers at the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School, in the same paratroop regiment in Afghanistan in the early 1980s, and as leading officers of the Airborne Forces during the early 1990s. During the August 1991 coup attempt, Lebed and Grachev were in close contact, deciding how and where to deploy paratroop units in Moscow and remaining on the sidelines until it became clear which side would win.

General-Lieutenant Aleksander Ivanovich *LEBED*

~~(CONF)~~ Although Lebed has been a prominent advocate of sovereignty for the Transdnestr Republic, he has regularly clashed publicly with the Transdnestr leadership since 1993; he says the leadership is corrupt and incompetent and has called for its resignation. In October 1993, he resigned his seat in the local legislature in protest over allegations that the Transdnestr government supported the hardline opponents of Yeltsin in the showdown between the executive and legislative branches in Moscow during autumn 1993. Lebed has, while stepping up the war of words with the Transdnestr leadership, moderated his rhetoric against the Moldovan government.

~~(C)~~ **PERSONAL DATA:** Lebed was born 20 April 1950. A native of Novocherkassk, he once told a Western journalist that he witnessed the violent suppression of food riots in that city in 1962. According to a U.S. official, Lebed is a persuasive speaker who gives the impression that he is fully in control and who is experienced in dealing with the press. The same official states that Lebed has a sense of humor and likes to tell jokes. Lebed and his wife, Inna, have two sons and a daughter. Lebed - whose father served in World War II as a sergeant - has two younger brothers also in the military, including Aleksey, who, as of 1993, was a paratroop regiment commander serving in the 14th Army. The general's English language ability is unknown.

(U) CAREER: Lebed has spent most of his career in the Airborne Forces. After failing to gain admittance to the Armavir Flight School in the 1960s, he joined the Airborne Forces and graduated from the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School in 1973. Lebed subsequently remained at the school for an additional 8 years to train officer cadets; for part of this time, his superior was Grachev, who was also an instructor at the Ryazan School. From 1981 until 1982, Lebed served as a paratroop battalion commander in Afghanistan, then returned to the Soviet Union to attend the Frunze Academy, which he completed in 1985. He then commanded a paratroop regiment (1985-86) and was deputy commander of an airborne formation (1986-88). From 1989 until 1990, Lebed commanded the 106th Guards Airborne Division; he led this unit into a variety of ethnic hotspots during this period, including Georgia and Azerbaijan. The general was deputy commander of Airborne Forces during 1991-92.

PREPARED BY: 