

MOSCOW

Russians Woo Oil Services Firms

► Dependent on Western groups to boost their output, Russian oil companies are intent on acquiring foreign technical expertise.

Last month's acquisition of Norway's **Awilco Offshore** company by **China Oilfield Services** for USD 2.5 billion last month made a lot of people jealous in Moscow. Like their Chinese competitors, Russia's state-owned oil companies are seeking to snap up oil services groups with cutting edge technology, specially in the field of liquefying and transporting gas. **Gazprombank**, a wholly owned affiliate of the Russian gas behemoth **Gazprom**, has been given a mandate to look at potential acquisitions among Western oil services companies.

Last year the state-controlled bank **VTB** opened a credit line for the **Metalloinvest** group owned by oligarch **Alisher Usmanov** so that he could buy a stake in the French manufacturer of seamless pipe **Vallourec** on behalf of **Gazprom**. The operation was revealed prematurely by the *Sunday Times*, which didn't mention **Gazprom's** name, and fell through in the end. **Usmanov** used the money from **VTB** to instead finance his attempt to take over **Norilsk Nickel**. Yet **Gazprom** remains on the lookout for the least opportunity. The gas group has set up joint ventures with France's **Thales** and **Gaz de France** in the field of turbo pressure reducer valves, an essential component in the gas liquefaction process. Up to now the oil services sector in Russia has been dominated by **Schlumberger**, particularly through its affiliate **Siberian Geophysical**. The group had previously worked with private Russian oil firms **Yukos** and **Sibneft** before they were respectively acquired by state-owned **Rosneft** and **Gazprom**.

PARIS

Co-Decision's Intelligent Agents

► Developed by a former researcher at **Dassault**, the **Decider Track** software package developed by **Co-Decision** enables the user to conduct research into highly disparate data bases.

Founded in 2003 by the mathematician **Martine Naillon**, the **Co-Decision Technology** software program publisher will shortly complete rounding up money to finance construction of its first online prototype of its *Co-Mining* technology.

**Co-Decision** has already built three off-line prototypes for its government and financial services customers. The scenario developed for future government customers of its *Co-Mining* technology - which primarily targets intelligence agencies - involves monitoring the movements of a person suspected of being a **Jihadist** militant.

The fictional activist travels to **Chechnya**, the **United Kingdom**, **Spain** and other countries. On each occasion his trace is picked up (by the police, immigration service, tax authorities or intelligence agencies) but never for the same reasons nor by the same government services. He skips between the raindrops and isn't apprehended before he actually acts. The technology developed by **Co-Decision** aims to plug those gaps. It consists of two elements: cognitive agents embedded in the data bases of various security services, and the *Decider Track*, a mobile system which queries cognitive agents, in the instance concerning the profile of a wanted militant. Each piece of information found is integrated into the search parameters.

Before founding **Co-Decision Technology**, **Naillon**, who penned her thesis on mathematics applied to neurophysiology at the **Pierre and Marie Curie Institute**, worked for **Philips** and then specially for **Dassault Electronics** and **Dassault Aviation**. When working for the French aeronautics group she set up a distributed computing system for military intelligence and aerospace surveillance. Between 1996 and 1997, she was an advisor to then defense minister for intelligence technologies.

Backed, among others, by **COFACE** and the **Oseo** fund, **Co-Decision** has worked with several government services and financial institutions which will eventually become its customers. Among its many potential clients are the American banks **JP Morgan Chase** and **Merrill Lynch**, the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security, the German intelligence agency **Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND)**, Spain's **Guardia Civil** and London's **Metropolitan Police**. In France, the organizations which officially work with **Co-Decision** are the **Police Judiciare**, the French gendarmerie and the police intelligence agency **Renseignement Generaux**.

SIGNPOSTS

● **LONDON - TONY BLAIR'S FORMER RUSSIA ADVISER MOVES TO PRIVATE SECTOR.** A Labour member of the House of Lords who advised former prime minister **Tony Blair** on his relations with Russia (IOL 563), **Peter Truscott** (now Baron Truscott of St. James), has just joined the board of the British company **Eastern Petroleum Corporation**. Run by the controversial Romanian businessman **Vasile Frank Timis**, the company's affiliate **North Caspian Petroleum** owns 50% of the **Alakol** block in eastern Kazakhstan. **Truscott** is also a director of another firm owned by **Timis**, **African Minerals**, which is active in **Sierra Leone**.

PARIS

Splitting Duties between DAS and DGA

► The French authorities have made their final decisions on a debate that began in 2007 on reorganizing arms sales procedures at the defense ministry.

The shakeup at the defense ministry following publication of France's new White Paper on defense and security has led to a makeover of organizations that keep tabs on arms exports.

The armaments board **Delegation Generale pour L'Armement (DGA)** was successful in getting 60 of its civil servants involved in looking into sales issues transferred back to its **Direction du Developpement International (DDI)** headed by **Jacques-Emmanuel de Lajugie**. They had been working with the **Delegation aux Affaires Strategiques (DAS)** (IOL 560) and its two sub-departments specializing in control and information systems. The **DGA** never really swallowed losing its prerogatives when its functions of controlling arms sales and promoting them were separated in 1999.

The **DAS**, headed by **Michel Miraillet**, retains control over vetting contracts and deciding the defense ministry's position on a sale before the question is put to the **Commission Interministerielle d'Etude des Exportations de Materiels de Guerre (CIEEMG)** through the **Secretariat General de la Defense Nationale**. Likewise, an ad-hoc sub-committee of the **DDI** will manage the **SIEX** information system, acting as an interface between the government and companies (IOL 563) regarding authorizations to export it.

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