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RUSSIA, THE WTO, AND THE CIS

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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Analytical Articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,100 and 1,500 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: 300-450 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 300-450 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

CONCLUSIONS: 100-200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 700-800 words.

Those interested in joining *The Analyst's* pool of authors to contribute articles, field reports, or contacts of potential writers, please send your CV to: <scornell@jhu.edu> and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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IS RUSSIA STIRRING UNREST IN CENTRAL ASIA?

Nicklas Norling

Over the past few months, the Russian FSB and other state organs have been pouring out warnings on the imminence of a military conflict and insurgency in Central Asia. These warnings proved partially correct when a border post in Uzbekistan was attacked by militants in late May and a suicide bombing struck Andijan a few days later. To prevent further incursions, Uzbekistan even began digging a 10 feet wide "anti-tank" trench at its border with the Kyrgyz Republic. The FSB's history of staging terrorist acts in Russia and elsewhere, in conjunction with the geopolitical benefits it derived from the violence in Andijan in 2005, beg the question, at worst, of whether the accuracy of Russia's forecasts is a consequence of its own involvement.

BACKGROUND: "Central Asia prepares for big war!" Thus read the headline of Russia Today's report from the recent CSTO meeting in Moscow. To some, this may appear as little more than an irresponsible product of some Russian spin-doctors. To Central Asian officials, however, it merely repeated the same warnings they had heard from Russian officials for months. Already in March, the Russian Defense Minister, Anatoly Serdyukov, noted that "the military-political situation (in Central Asia) suggests an increasing likelihood of armed conflict" adding that the West's aspirations are aimed at "getting access to natural, energy, and other resources of CIS countries [and] squeezing Russia out of its traditional interests." In the same month, Aleksey Sedov, the head of the Anti-terrorism unit of the FSB, stated that Russian forecasts expect Islamic extremists to "break away" and expand as vastly as the territories of northern Russia, Central Asia, and western China.

These warnings were subsequently inked and formalized last month with the adoption of Russia's new National Security Strategy. The strategy explicitly states that "military forces" could be used in "the competition for resources" and that the Collective Security Treaty

Organization (CSTO) is the main entity in charge of any such operation. The fact that Russia is about to reinforce its military presence in Central Asia, from 5,000 to 10,000-15,000 troops, further serves to underscore the seriousness with which Moscow views current regional developments.

These concerns are echoed among the Russian analytic community. Andrey Grozin of the CIS institute in Moscow, for instance, recently noted how Central Asia "should be concerned of its security", that "more certainty will be demanded" from the Central Asian countries, and that "the fate of the countries will depend on this choice". Another analyst bluntly claimed that the "preservation of Russia's wholeness begins in the Ferghana Valley". While these Russian statements have been ignored in the West, they irk the regional countries, and Uzbekistan in particular given its recent efforts at rapprochement with the West. Tashkent's offer to the United States on May 12 to use the Navoi Airport as a forward base for the mission in Afghanistan, together with its recent defiance of Russia-led organizations, have heightened Uzbek fears of a Russian counter-reaction.

Coincidentally, exactly two weeks after the Navoi agreement, Russian forecasts of an impending

insurgency in Central Asia proved accurate. On May 26, a number of armed men attacked a checkpoint at the Uzbek town of Khanabad by the Kyrgyz border, the town's Police Department, and the local branch of Uzbekistan's National Security Service, killing at least a dozen people and thus making it the worst attack in Central Asia since 2005. A few days later, a suicide bomber struck the eastern city of Andijan in the Ferghana Valley, claiming the life of a local policeman and wounding several others.

Observers quickly held Uzbekistan responsible for these events. While Russia accused Tashkent for failing to promote stability in the region, Western observers argued that Uzbekistan's hard-line methods were fanning radicalism. Others were content merely to conclude that this upsurge of violence in Central Asia is correlated with the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, seeking no further explanation. Even if there probably is an element of truth in each of these factors, no one asked if Russia is stoking tensions in Uzbekistan deliberately and whether the recent events are but another expression of the infamous "sticks" employed against the Central Asian states.

IMPLICATIONS: The proximity between the attacks in Uzbekistan and its agreement with the United States may be a pure coincidence, or it may simply reflect effective Russian intelligence. Yet the spring of 2009 has witnessed far too many similar coincidences to ignore questions of a potential Russian involvement. The cyber-attack against the Kyrgyz Republic in January, occurring in the midst of President Bakiyev's ongoing negotiations over the future of the U.S. use of Manas airbase, is one example. The pipeline explosion in Turkmenistan, happening four days ahead of Ashgabat's meeting with the German energy company RWE, is another. But would Russia really go so far as supporting forces seeking to destabilize the region?

Given the absence of evidence binding Russia or the FSB to this (or any other similar event, e.g. the cyber-strikes etc.), one should be careful in speculating on its involvement. At the same time, Russia is likely to have acknowledged the fact that the one event which assisted its regional aspirations most in the past decade was the violence in Andijan in 2005. The West's subsequent isolation of Uzbekistan, the U.S. retreat from the country, and Tashkent's U-turn back to Russia served Russian interests more than anything it could have accomplished on its own. And, better, all of it accrued Russia at no cost.

As Uzbekistan is again tilting back to the West and the Russian economy is bleeding, Russia would indeed have the motive to provoke a similar event. A survey of history also suggests that the Russian FSB has used radical Islamic groups earlier, most notably in the apartment bombings in Moscow and Volgograd of 1999 that triggered the second Chechen War. Some have also accused the FSB of recruiting Daghestani militants to stage the attack on Azerbaijan's Abu-Bekr Mosque in 2008. Moreover, promoting incursions across the borders in the Ferghana Valley has the added benefit of sowing discord among the Central Asian states. Following intensified coordination among the Central Asian states to raise the bargaining power vis-à-vis Russia, most evidently in the recent natural gas negotiations with Gazprom, Russia likely has an interest in rekindling local border conflicts to prevent healthy ties between them, and to find an excuse to militarize the region itself.

The same preparatory gestures of a "military conflict" have also been employed elsewhere. The invasion of Georgia last summer and other interferences in the frozen conflicts throughout the past two decades have been accompanied by similar "forecasts." During the Chechen War, Russian military and law enforcement officials



RFE/RL

accused Georgia of hosting terrorist groups and threatened to intervene in the country. Even if Russia did not launch a military invasion at that time, Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan got very accustomed to hearing Putin's talk of "pursuing terrorists" in their countries and feared similar treatment as Chechnya.

Russia is today boosting its military presence in Central Asia and is for the first time explicitly threatening to use its military forces to protect its interests in the region. The West has so far failed to acknowledge these warnings but Central Asian officials are constantly attuned. Interlocutors in the region fear, indeed, a conflict brewing – albeit one launched by Russia. That Russia is consciously and selectively inventing the threats it proclaims to combat was perhaps most palpably expressed ahead of the recent SCO summit. While Sedov proposed that the SCO should launch an initiative on preventing cyber-attacks against member-states, another proposal concerned pipeline security. Kyrgyz officials must have been puzzled.

CONCLUSIONS: Given that the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan both have been targeted this spring in attacks bearing Russia's trademarks, would Russia let Uzbekistan slide to the West with impunity? If not, then one must ask what potential action Russia could undertake against Uzbekistan that would serve all of its goals at once in the cheapest possible way. Stirring instability in the Ferghana Valley and provoking the Uzbek government is a method with proven success. It fans border tensions and prevents Central

Asian cooperation, triggers violence from organs of the interior ministries which has proven so effective in deterring Western engagement, whilst simultaneously legitimizing a Russian military presence. In total, this gives Russia a *carte blanche* to dominate the region and "divide and rule" among the republics. At best, threats alone may be sufficient for Russia to strong-arm Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian states to toe Moscow's line. At worst, Russia may consider sponsoring groups that could do the work for them. So far, the West has failed to adequately acknowledge these Russian gestures and the constraints under which the Central Asian countries operate. As Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are signaling a willingness to engage with the West even in the face of these threats, now is the time to do so.

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RUSSIA, THE WTO, AND THE CIS

Stephen Blank

Russia has announced it will no longer apply for World Trade Organization membership as a single state. Rather, it would only consider joining the WTO if it came in as the head of a customs union, i.e. a trade bloc and currency union comprising Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Observers first ascribed the decision to Russia's frustrations at the slow pace of its membership talks, and as calibrated to force concessions on the part of those blocking Russia's entry into the WTO. While this explanation probably has some validity, it is by no means the whole story. Moscow's statement continues to betoken an aggressive effort to lock up the CIS as a bloc subservient to Russia and deprived by Russia of key attributes of sovereignty.

BACKGROUND: The negotiations on entry into the WTO have indeed been long and frustrating for Russia. For example, the US had demanded that it open up its dairy and meat sectors to U.S. exports that would have probably overwhelmed these sectors. Meanwhile, Georgia has long exercised and would probably continue to exercise its right of veto that all members have, making Russian entry into the WTO an impossibility. The EU had thrown up obstacles pertaining to Russian import duties on timber and cars. Understandably, these and other obstructions led Moscow to conclude that the game was not worth the candle. This conclusion may well have been reinforced by the belief that the current financial crisis is leading to global protectionism and that Russia is better off not having to answer for its trade policies to the WTO. Furthermore, this crisis has only reinforced Russia's belief that it is ascending while the US is falling and that regional blocs are the order of the day in what it believes is the multipolar world that is either coming into being or that should be emerging.

But Russian calculations go beyond these factors. First of all, the ruble has taken a beating in this crisis and Russia has been

steadily searching for ways to enhance both the ruble's value and international demand for it. Thus it has hit upon the same expedient used by the Nazi regime after 1933 to maximize the value of and demand for the scarce Reichsmark, namely by forcing Germany's neighbors in Eastern Europe to pay for German exports only in Marks, necessitating the reorientation of their exports to Germany, thus rendering them dependent upon Germany. Moscow's program for a ruble union is of a similar nature and aims to force CIS countries to buy and sell mainly to Russia, thereby increasing demand for and the value of the ruble.

IMPLICATIONS: However, this announcement also shows Russia's contempt for the sovereignty of its neighbors. It is quite unlikely that this announcement was coordinated with Minsk and/or Astana. Both of those states are in a very different stages of their negotiations with the WTO, neither have they given any warning of their desire to join the WTO only in Russia's wake, even though that could happen under the WTO's rules. Moreover, Moscow is currently waging a trade war against Belarus, blocking its dairy exports to Russia as punishment for signing the Eastern Partnership with the EU and showing signs of

inclining to the West. In return, Belarus has boycotted the CSTO summit and refused to participate in it for now. It is therefore quite unlikely that Belarus either approves of this gambit or was consulted in advance. Russia is also trying to force Kazakhstan to export its gas to Europe exclusively through Russian pipelines. Thus this gambit is an attempt to compel these states to join a customs, currency, and trade union with Russia and renounce all hope of economic and political independence as a result of that decision.

A third dimension of this Russian decision is the fact that this extends what has become the hallmark of President Medvedev's policies. Those policies represent an intensification of the path already marked out by Vladimir Putin, namely the increasingly aggressive and high-handed efforts to force CIS members into an exclusive, Russian-led sphere of influence that would close them off to European and American influence. This drive pertains to energy issues and pipelines, the creation of the CSTO and its deployment in Central Asia, the attempts to force the exclusion of U.S. bases from Central Asia, the demand for a ruble union, and now the efforts to strengthen the trade bloc and customs union. Since it is an article of faith in Moscow that only on the basis of such a bloc can Russia play a great role in world politics and ward off foreign influence, as its ties to the West deteriorate, the pressure for such a union grows.

Fourth, this decision also marks another example of Russia's strong preference for international organizations that allow it to have a free hand to do as it pleases, usually in a high-

handed manner, rather than having to answer to an international body which it cannot control. Multilateralism only makes sense to Moscow if it can control the direction of the organization that embodies that particular manifestation of multilateralism, e.g. the CSTO or SCO. Since it was clear that membership in the WTO would elude Russia, and that in any case its interests would suffer even if it became a member given all the



(Kyiv Post)

concessions demanded of it, it naturally opted for a free hand.

Finally, this episode evokes memories of the games played by the Soviet Union with respect to its international status and claims of sovereignty that were chronicled long ago by Vernon Aspaturian. Today's Russia simultaneously claims equality with the US and China, with the EU and NATO and with the leading members of those organizations. It also demands preferential status for itself in the WTO and in the CIS at the expense of the sovereignty of the smaller member states of these institutions which its officials deride. Since it publicly derides or even usurps these

states' territorial integrity, its efforts to suppress their economic sovereignty in practice should come as no surprise. In other words Russia, like its Soviet predecessor, continues to ascribe multiple statuses to itself while claiming differing levels of sovereignty to itself and to its neighbours, in an effort to enhance its status vis-à-vis foreign interlocutors and to secure critical foreign policy interests. The WTO affair is but another example of this now well-established trend.



(AP/RIA Novosti)

CONCLUSIONS: Not only are the implications of Russia's announcements negative insofar as the WTO and efforts to secure liberal trading regimes, and more globally open trade and economies, are concerned. They are also negative insofar as Russia's ties to other states are affected. The aggressive efforts to spite the West and consolidate an exclusive bloc that diminishes the sovereignty and independence of CIS states continues without letup. This is underway even

if it means irrational economic policies like the subsidizing of empire through purchases of gas at higher than market prices, or the diffusion of a predatory form of state control over economics throughout the CIS. It also reflects Moscow's belief that it need not and should not have to account for its deeds to the West, another sign of its relapse into unilateralism and even a certain form of self-imposed isolation. Of course, these policy trends also carry an explicit danger to all CIS states who

try to assert their independence, whether it be Belarus or Georgia or any Central Asian state. Naturally, such economic policies are also connected with the growing efforts of Putin's entourage to rely exclusively on energy prices going up to extricate Russia from the current crisis and their efforts to extend ever more state (i.e. their personal) control over ever more sectors of their own and other states'

economies. Closed markets and trade blocs generally accompany closed political systems and neo-imperial policies that can only end in conflict. Georgia may have been the first as we saw last year, but as Belarus shows, it probably will not be the last such example.

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE YEVKUROV ATTACK: DOES A NEW REGIONAL ROLE BECKON FOR RAMZAN KADYROV?

Kevin Daniel Leahy

Following an failed assassination attempt on June 22, Ingush President Yunas-Bek Yevkurov is current receiving treatment for serious injuries at a medical facility in Moscow. Although the attack on Yevkurov was probably the work of Islamist militants, it is an arch-enemy of the latter, Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, who stands to benefit the most from Yevkurov's misfortune. The main strategic consequence of Yevkurov's near-assassination may well be the bestowal of a region-wide mandate for counter-insurgency operations on the ambitious Chechen leader.

BACKGROUND: As he recovers in hospital from serious injuries sustained in an apparent suicide attack on June 22, it seems unlikely that Yunas-Bek Yevkurov will ever resume his duties as president of Ingushetia. Although Yevkurov managed to escape with his life, the devastating attack on his motorcade brought to mind the May 2004 assassination of the Chechen leader, Akhmed Kadyrov. Yevkurov may not have been killed on June 22, but the extent of his injuries has surely put a premature end to his involvement in political life.

A Lieutenant-Colonel in the Russian military, Yevkurov was appointed president of Ingushetia last October. As a direct replacement for the widely unpopular Murat Zyazikov, Yevkurov was enthusiastically welcomed by Ingushetia's anti-Zyazikov opposition movement. The main media outlet for this opposition platform, Ingushetia.ru, heralded Yevkurov as 'an honest and courageous person, for whom the interests of his people are not alien.' Much was made of Yevkurov's career in the Russian military, a feature of his curriculum vitae which, in the opinions of most Ingush, contrasted favourably

with Zyazikov's background in the secret services.

Yevkurov promised to adopt an inclusive approach to solving the republic's many social problems. He was praised for taking Ingushetia's security services to task for the indiscriminate tactics they had employed to combat insurgents in recent years. Predictably, Yevkurov's arrival was not welcomed by the leaders of Ingushetia's growing insurgency who, naturally, were entirely pleased with the polarizing affect Zyazikov was having on Ingush society. The attack on Yevkurov has since been claimed by the 'Riyadus Salihiin Martyrs Battalion,' a group founded by the late Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev but now apparently under the command the the self-styled Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Doku Umarov.

Arguably, Umarov and Ingushetia's insurgency have the most to gain from Yevkurov's misfortune. Yevkurov was a far more popular and artful politician than his predecessor and his attempts to build bridges with Ingushetia's civil opposition, as well as the population at large, were a direct hindrance to the insurgents' political-military agenda which is geared

towards completely destabilizing Ingushetia, both socially and politically. One might also contend that the biggest political beneficiary of the attack on Yevkurov is Ramzan Kadyrov, the president of neighbouring Chechnya, who is believed to favour unifying Chechnya and Ingushetia in a single jurisdictional entity. Although some of Kadyrov's spokespeople have spoken shamelessly about the prospect of reuniting the two republics, Kadyrov has shied away from expressing any forthright opinions on the subject. Nevertheless, these spokespeople would not be speaking on so sensitive a matter without private sanction from Kadyrov.

Kadyrov has previously stated his willingness to 'impose order' in Ingushetia: 'No problem... if we are given the order, we will impose order as surely as two times two makes four. It is only a small republic.' This is not an option that appeals to most Ingush who fear, with some justification, that Kadyrov's methods for combating the insurgents would prove even harsher than those employed by Zyazikov.

IMPLICATIONS: How will Yevkurov's unexpected incapacitation affect Moscow's policies in Ingushetia? Observers have noted with interest the arrival of Ramzan Kadyrov at the Kremlin just hours after the assassination attempt, where he was received personally by President Medvedev. Acting in unison, Kadyrov and Yevkurov had recently been coordinating a joint military operation against militants along the borderlands between Chechnya and Ingushetia. The timing of Kadyrov's visit to the Kremlin inevitably led to speculation that the Russian president was ready to grant his Chechen counterpart *carte blanche* to intervene militarily in Ingushetia's internal affairs, with a view to subduing the insurgency there. Indeed Kadyrov emerged from his meeting claiming that the Russian

president had ordered him to take charge of the ongoing security operation in Ingushetia.

The establishment of a working relationship with Kadyrov – a sometimes difficult interlocutor – was one of the principal political achievements of Yevkurov's presidency. Relations between Kadyrov and Yevkurov's predecessor had been strained, with Zyazikov clearly resentful of Kadyrov's barely-concealed designs on his sphere of influence.

With Yevkurov's sudden departure from Ingush politics, the options facing Moscow are five-fold. One possible response would be to promote someone from within Ingushetia's fractious political elite. However, given the obvious dearth of suitable candidates this may not be a particularly viable course of action. Alternatively, Moscow may decide to install a 'parachute' candidate, someone like Yevkurov perhaps who, while ethnically Ingush, would not be hindered by prior association with the corruption and clan infighting which broadly define Ingushetia's political environment. The third scenario, as discussed briefly above, would be to effectively amalgamate Chechnya and Ingushetia and grant Ramzan Kadyrov the remit to eliminate the Ingush insurgents. The fourth option would involve Moscow instituting direct rule in Ingushetia, a scenario that would probably see Yevkurov's functions assumed by Medvedev's plenipotentiary representative to the Southern Federal District or by some senior official in the Russian military.

The fifth option – what might be called 'the Swat option' – represents an appalling vista for the Russian government and for Ingushetia's ruling class. This would entail the Russian authorities brokering some kind of armistice with the insurgents, a deal which would likely involve the complete, or partial, withdrawal of

federal forces from Ingushetia followed by the introduction of Sharia law. Pakistani authorities briefly utilized this strategy in their confrontation with Islamic militants in the Swat valley earlier this year; the initiative ended in failure and the Pakistani military is currently in the process of reclaiming Swat. For now, this final option is a non-starter for Russian decision makers: negotiating with insurgents in Ingushetia or anywhere else in the North Caucasus remains a conceptual bridge too far for the Russian authorities.

CONCLUSIONS: Ingushetia's political elite is nervous. Virtually no one in this constituency wants to see Ramzan Kadyrov increase his influence in Ingushetia. This may be unavoidable, however; while it is unlikely that Kadyrov will seek to ensconce himself in the presidential residence in Magas overseeing the day-to-day functioning of Ingushetia's government, it is noteworthy that no one in the Kremlin, or the Russian White House, has moved to dispel Kadyrov's self-assumed military mandate in Ingushetia. At the very least, citizens of Ingushetia, particularly those

living along the border with Chechnya, may have to reconcile themselves to more regular incursions by pro-Kadyrov security forces. Inevitably, this practice will lead to local tensions, as it did in September 2006 when Chechen security forces became embroiled in a bloody altercation with Ingush police which left seven dead. The Chechens had been attempting to repatriate a prisoner they had detained on Ingush territory when they were confronted by Ingush border guards.

Moscow's silence on Kadyrov's presumptive 'Ingushetia mandate' suggests that the Chechen president's military – and perhaps political – responsibilities are shortly set to assume a regional character. In anticipation of Kadyrov's increased influence, should some member of Ingushetia's political elite be appointed president over the coming weeks, it would difficult to in any sense conceive of that person as the undisputed master of his appointed political jurisdiction.

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New Book:

The Guns of August 2008

Edited By Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr

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290pp

This book is designed to present the facts about the events of August 2008 along with comprehensive coverage of the background to those events. It brings together a wealth of expertise on the South Caucasus and Russian foreign policy, with contributions by Russian, Georgian, European, and American experts on the region.

BAKIYEV WINS NEW GEOPOLITICAL GAME OVER MANAS BASE

Erica Marat

To many, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's decision on June 23 to continue his anti-terrorism cooperation with the United States was expected. According to the new agreement with the United States, Kyrgyzstan will receive US\$60 million in annual rent from the U.S. government instead of the previous US\$17 million. Bakiyev seems satisfied with the deal given that he will also likely win the upcoming presidential elections. It is now time for the international community to focus on development in Kyrgyzstan and improving its democratic record as part of sustaining Kyrgyzstan's long-term commitment to anti-terrorism cooperation.

BACKGROUND: In February, Bakiyev announced that he was determined to expel the U.S. military from the Manas airport in Bishkek by mid-August. The president's announcement to shut down the base came shortly after Russia promised a US\$2 billion loan to Kyrgyzstan in return for, as many experts viewed the issue, the expulsion of the U.S. from the base. Four months later, however, Bakiyev changed his mind, allowing Manas to become a transit point for cargo to Afghanistan. The president's latest decision was anticipated, as reports that Bakiyev was conducting negotiations with the U.S. leaked already in late February. Then, the president's closest allies approached the U.S. representatives with a request to increase payment for Manas. Bakiyev gambled on the Manas base knowing that the U.S. is interested in retaining the base in the long term. From the very beginning, the president expected to increase payments from Washington.

The parliament voted to support the president two weeks after Bakiyev's trip to Moscow, where he announced his decision about the base. While the possibility of Bakiyev changing his mind on the base lingered since February, the first sign that he would do so surfaced

already in April. Then, the Kyrgyz Prime Minister said Manas might turn into a transit point. Despite official Bishkek's denial that any talks were taking place, Bakiyev's previous maneuvering around Manas pointed at the president's interest in retaining the base. Bakiyev hinted back in 2005 and 2006 that the U.S. would have to evacuate the base. Then, he was able to increase rents and boost other related compensations. This time, aside from a threefold increase in rental payments, the U.S. government's assistance to Kyrgyzstan will increase as well, while Manas airport will receive an additional US\$36.6 million for reconstruction works.

On June 25, the parliament, loyal to Bakiyev, supported the president's u-turn on Manas. Both at the February and June votes, the parliament used the same facts against and in favor of Manas, but interpreted them differently. In February, the parliament ruled that terrorism was not a threat to Kyrgyzstan, while last week the parliament concluded that terrorism in Afghanistan is an enduring problem for national security. This demonstrated that neither the president, nor the parliament, are guided by firm principles in their anti-terrorism policy. Bakiyev's decision

was opportunist, seeking higher returns from both Moscow and Washington. Bakiyev's government avoided coherent responses to either of the requests by U.S. President Barack Obama or Afghan President Hamid Karzai to retain the Manas base. Two weeks prior to Bakiyev's u-turn on Manas, Obama addressed the Bakiyev government with a letter, calling Bishkek to support international anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Similarly, Karzai had repeatedly asked Bakiyev to continue helping the coalition troops. Given Bakiyev's repeated threats to break relations with the United States, there is little guarantee that the Kyrgyz leader's wish to cooperate will last.

IMPLICATIONS: A lingering question is how much Bakiyev's negotiations with the U.S. were coordinated with Moscow. Experts are divided on whether Russia finally allowed Bakiyev to retain the base in the process of negotiations, or if the Kyrgyz president acted

unilaterally. Russian newspapers reported that the Russian government was unpleasantly surprised by Bakiyev's latest agreement with the U.S.. Yet, no clear statement has been made by Russian officials on Moscow's stance on Manas. Since February, Russian government-controlled mass media outlets have been saturated with reports suspecting that the U.S. is seeking to destabilize the region through the base. When Bakiyev changed his mind, pro-governmental newspapers in Bishkek began suspecting the U.S. of wishing to finance opposition movements in return for Bakiyev's decision to oust the base.

Time will show whether Bakiyev was playing the game around the Manas base in cooperation with Moscow. Should Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan worsen, one could conclude that Bakiyev's June decision was likely taken independently from Moscow. But unlike the Georgian or Ukrainian regimes, which both

have strong pro-Western leaders, Bakiyev's interests are limited to his wish to stay in power. The president is neither interested nor bound to cooperate with the West. Aside from the Manas base, Kyrgyzstan has no incentive to participate in U.S. or EU-led international security initiatives such as NATO. Russia's reaction to Bakiyev's maneuvering is unlikely to be harsh, but pressure to reduce the U.S. presence will remain.

Aside from securing a more lucrative contract with the



United States, Bakiyev is the likely winner in the upcoming presidential elections on July 23. Indeed, several experts in Bishkek linked Bakiyev's manipulation of the U.S. base to his decision to retain power for another term. The Russian loan helped Bakiyev to launch his election campaign back in February, starting the construction of the Kambarata-2 hydropower station as part of the campaign. Bakiyev also reportedly used the Russian funds to increase payments to the public sector and finance the campaign itself. With Bakiyev using vast funds in the run up to the elections, opposition leaders run against Bakiyev merely to remain in the headlines of political life in Kyrgyzstan. Two opposition candidates, Almazbek Atambayev and Temir Sariyev, see the elections as a long-term investment into their political careers. Neither has the ambition to win this time, but hopes to become recognizable candidates in future elections.

Although US\$2 billion (of which only a portion was delivered) and US\$ 60 million might not represent significant costs for Moscow and Washington respectively, the funds are vital for Bakiyev to strengthen his regime. Beneficiaries of the higher U.S. rent for Manas are limited to a narrow circle of business and political elites. Most certainly, this group of political entrepreneurs is disinterested in seeing the base leaving Kyrgyzstan. The masterminds behind the negotiations on Manas are part of the government and supported by the business community. The regime prefers to control freedom of speech and suppress opposition to sustain their access to foreign funds.

Given Bakiyev's gambling on the future of Manas to remain in power, it is important for the U.S. government and international community to investigate the links between the regime's financial interests and policy decisions carefully. Along with sprucing up aid, the U.S. government and international community must pressure Bakiyev's regime to increase transparency in the upcoming elections. Furthermore, instances of political assassinations, beatings of journalists and unjust trials of opposition leaders must receive stronger attention. Under the Bakiyev regime, Kyrgyzstan's democratic record has been worsening, becoming similar to those in neighboring Central Asian countries.

CONCLUSIONS: Bakiyev has shown his readiness to jeopardize international partnerships in return for higher financial inflows and the stability of his regime. He saw bargaining for higher returns from international partners as a new means to strengthen his regime. Unless the international community demands greater transparency in domestic politics, the president has all the incentives to continue this strategy after being re-elected next month. Bakiyev used geopolitics to stay in at home at the cost of suppressing opposition and free media. But now that the president won a more lucrative deal, it is time to demand from him to improve the domestic democratic record.

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FIELD REPORTS

KYRGYZ OPERATION AGAINST IMU REVEALS GROWING TERRORIST THREAT

Roman Muzalevsky

On June 23, the Kyrgyz State Committee on National Security (GKNB) conducted a special operation against members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a regional terrorist group. The event parallels numerous similar actions that have recently taken place in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The developments point to an increasing threat of local terrorist groups being driven from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas and actively pursuing their agenda in Central Asia following the intensified attacks by the ISAF in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The GKNB reported that 5 terrorists, believed to be affiliated with the IMU, were killed in the operation that took place in the Ferghana Valley in the southern city of Jalalabad. The skirmish resulted in the death of one member of the Special Forces. Weapons, instructions for making explosives, and black masks and uniforms were discovered in the one-story house which the terrorists used as a safe haven. The operation will allegedly be subjected to a special investigation by the Kyrgyz Parliament. Rashid Tagaev, a member of Parliament, underlined that the terrorists were citizens of neighboring countries. He also confirmed the KGNB's information that the terrorists were previously trained in Pakistan. According to Kyrgyz law enforcement officials, one of the killed terrorists had a relative who had been involved in a number of terrorist acts in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the "24kg" information agency reported.

Originating in Central Asia, the IMU seeks to overthrow the secular regime in Uzbekistan and establish a caliphate. Aligned with the Arab-led Al

Qaeda, it enhances Al Qaeda's potential to recruit regional Turkic people to support global jihad against the West and 'apostate' regimes of the Middle East. While the IMU emphasizes the struggle against the 'near enemies' in Central Asia, its activities threaten EU and U.S. security interests and undermine Transatlantic and EU relations with Central Asia. It is also in the position to capitalize on narcotics trafficking in the region to fund growing operations in Europe, Central Asia, and Pakistan/Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Deputy Head of the Tajik GKNB, General Abdullo Nazarov, believes that Tahir Yuldashev, the IMU's leader who had allegedly been killed during a U.S. drone attack, is still alive.

Back in May, Uzbek authorities witnessed terrorist attacks on a checkpoint and on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Security Service in Khanabad city, once home to the American airbase. The attacks were attributed to the IMU. In another case, six people sentenced on charges of membership in the regional extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir were imprisoned in Uzbekistan. And on June 23, the Tajik national security services detained more than 40 Islamic fundamentalists in a Dushanbe mosque. The arrested, many of whom had studied in Islamic schools in Pakistan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, are suspected of inciting religious strife and being adherents of the illegal Salafiyya movement.

The number of cases involving terrorism and fundamentalism illustrates both the failure of the regional states to address local political and economic grievances and, ironically, a slim success of the ISAF in Pakistan and Afghanistan that

pushes more and more IMU members back to its traditional playground. Despite the demonstrated vigilance, the regional security services are not adequately prepared to meet the growing threat. The former Secretary of the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, Miroslav Niyazov, stressed the vulnerability of Kyrgyz national security: "We are not ready to fight off external and internal threats. Frankly speaking, there is no nation-wide level system of security [in Kyrgyzstan]." In light of the recent upsurge in regional terrorist activity, MP Tagaev underlined the importance of the US-Kyrgyzstan agreement on the continuing presence of the US base in the country.

Jakypbek Azizov, the head of the Public Security Administration of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs, stressed that deployment of internal security forces to the country's south is a response to the situation in Afghanistan and to the

infiltration of militants under the disguise of businessmen and civilian experts. The terrorists apparently seek to destabilize the country during the Presidential elections scheduled for July 23.

The conducted arrests are not enough to adequately address the growing threat of terrorism and fundamentalism in the region. Economic development and democratization of the Central Asian states, reconstruction of Afghanistan and solidification of Pakistan as stable and legitimate states are required. The regional states should also actively pursue coordinated intelligence, immigration, and anti-narcotics trafficking policies. Crucial and most challenging in the overall efforts will be tilting the balance between the need for democratization of the authoritarian regimes and willingness of these states to promote regional security in favor of the former without undermining the latter.

UZBEKISTAN-KYRGYZSTAN: BUILDING A WALL

Erkin Akhmadov

On June 13 2009, the Uzbek authorities decided to strengthen security on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. Specifically, they dug ditches in the Suzak, Aksy and No'okat borderline regions of Kyrgyzstan and erected walls in the Rishtan rayon of Uzbekistan's Ferghana region. The depth of the ditches reached 3 meters and the height of the walls 5-7 meters. Moreover, the inhabitants of the borderline settlements of Uzbekistan are settled in exclaves outside the borders. The digging and construction is conducted unilaterally by the Uzbek side, manifesting its supposed urgency and utmost necessity. Several ideas of what may have caused such a harsh and abrupt policy towards neighboring Kyrgyzstan circulate in local media sources.

To start with, most of the ditches and walls on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border are located on territories still considered to be disputed, i.e. whose legal status is not decided yet. A memorandum on Kyrgyz-Uzbek

border delimitation was signed in February 2001. By 2009, only three quarters (993 km out of 1375 km) of the border was delimited, leaving about 58 disputed areas. Some sources suggest that the Kyrgyz side has already protested against such actions. Thus, it is reported that some ditches were filled up by the Kyrgyz border guards.

Among the numerous speculations on the possible reasons for Uzbekistan's switch in policy are the recent attacks in the city of Khanabad, where unknown militants attacked a border checkpoint and the National Security Service and Internal Affairs buildings. In the immediate aftermath of the incidents, Uzbek authorities claimed that the militants came from the territory of neighboring Kyrgyzstan. However, Kyrgyz authorities denied the statement and contended that there were no reasons for such accusations. Nonetheless, setting up different kinds of fenders for purposes of

national security has been a common Uzbek practice. It should be recalled that in the 1990s, Uzbekistan mined its borders with Tajikistan. Then, it was done in order to prevent the intrusion of Islamic militants and other threats that may have been expected from neighboring Tajikistan. Thus, security concerns come to the fore in the recent developments on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border.

However, another reason for such abrupt policies is economic. Huge amounts of Chinese goods of wide public use are transferred through Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. The markets where these goods are bought are located in Kyrgyzstan, in Osh and Karasu. Therefore, as stated by Uzbek authorities, the fences are designed to minimize border trade and support national commercial structures. Adjar Kurtov, an officer of the Moscow-based Russian Institute of Strategic Research, argues that "one of the primary reasons for such actions by Uzbekistan is a desire to protect itself from contraband goods in times of financial crisis." Thus, he argues that Uzbekistan's ditches and walls amount to nothing but protectionist policies. This version is supported by the deputy chairman of the Border Guard service of Kyrgyzstan, Kubanych Sarybaev, who stated that the ditches are dug primarily in areas where the major trade in fruit and vegetables takes place. Furthermore, beginning this month, it is allowed to bring goods from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan at significantly lowered duties (US\$10 from the previous US\$50).

Last but not least, one explanation for Uzbekistan's decision to build walls and dig ditches relates to

Kyrgyzstan's intention to build the Kambar-ata hydro-electric station. Uzbekistan opposes the construction of Kambar-ata as it fears that it may affect the flow of water to lands that need irrigation. Bishkek-based political scientist Mars Saryev views the current Uzbek policy as yet another sign of disapproval of such plans, and another way of raising difficulties for the Kyrgyz in realizing their energy potential.

Each of the versions presented could suffice as an explanation for the decision of the Uzbek authorities to build barriers on their border with Kyrgyzstan. More important, however, the consequences of such actions for the broader relations between the two states are likely to have a significant negative effect. Not only do they make the lives of ordinary people living in the border areas harder, they also affect Kyrgyzstan's economic situation. According to some estimates, Kyrgyzstan was annually earning about US\$1 billion on export and re-export of goods to Uzbekistan. With the barriers built by the Uzbek side now, such income has significantly declined. Thus, the Kyrgyz side is highly interested in settling any possible problems that may have caused such its neighbor's reaction. Uzbekistan, however, seems glad to take advantage of the current situation and show its power to the Kyrgyz. Nonetheless, no matter what short-term objectives Uzbekistan may seek to reach, it is clear that in the long run it will do little to help the already poor relations between the neighbors.

TAJIKISTAN CRACKS DOWN ON RADICAL RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Suhrob Majidov

On June 24, more than 40 persons were arrested by the Tajik intelligence service during a sermon in a Dushanbe mosque. Among them was the leader of the Islamic movement Salafiya in Tajikistan, Mullo

Sirojiddin. All arrested are accused of propagating "Salafi" ideas, which are officially banned in Tajikistan by a January 2009 Supreme Court decision. Furthermore, the Prosecutor General will

charge the supporters of the movement with fomenting religious animosity in Tajikistan.

Despite the ban, members of the Salafiya movement were actively conducting their sermons in a mosque in uptown Dushanbe. Law enforcement authorities decided to interfere when the leader of the movement, Mullo Sirojiddin, called upon his supporters to struggle against state authorities. As a result, it is expected that supporters of the movement will be accused of inciting national, racial, and religious hatred, with expected prison sentences of twelve years. A representative of the public prosecutor's office confirmed the group's arrest and announced that "members of banned radical Islamic movements are suspected of extremist propaganda aimed at destabilizing the situation in the country".

The Salafiya fundamentalist school rejects any forms or movements of Islam except itself, particularly condemning Shiism. For instance, supporters of the movement call Shiites, of which there are about 300,000 in Tajikistan, "infidels". It is assumed that members of Salafiya get financial support from Saudi Arabia to proselytize.

State authorities are particularly alarmed about the Salafiya, as the movement becomes increasingly popular in Tajikistan, particularly among young people. The first supporters of the movement appeared in Tajikistan in 2005. Now, they number more than 20,000 according to state authorities, are mainly 25-35 years old, and wear long beards and shortened pants.

Nevertheless, whether the Salafiya movement is dangerous is a subject of debate. For several years, supporters of the movement were not detected to be engaged in any illegal activities. Some experts on religion claim that their ideology is harmless. At the same time, others argue that the movement is not as inoffensive as it looks. For instance, a member of the Parliament of Tajikistan, who requested to remain anonymous, considers the development of the Salafiya movement to be "a dangerous tendency for Tajikistan" as the supporters of the movement "deny any other movements in Islam and consider Muslims of the Hanafi schools, which constitute the

majority of the population in Central Asia. 'erroneous'. Moreover, they argue for the extermination of the Shiites and Ismailis. Furthermore, he argues that the supporters of the Salafiya conduct active missionary work not only in Tajikistan but also among the Tajik labor migrants in Russia.

Another member of Tajikistan's Parliament and a cleric, Haji Akbar Turajonzoda stated that most members of the Salafiya are young people who got their education in large Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other countries where supporters of the Salafiya are particularly strong. He argues that those students were financed by different public organizations in Arabic countries. Furthermore, according to him, the movement in Tajikistan is also financed from abroad. Turajonzoda believes that the Salafiya threatens stability in the country.

Nevertheless, many experts are against oppressive actions, claiming that repression can worsen the situation. "It is necessary to debunk their ideology. One cannot be imprisoned because of religious beliefs. It gives the reverse effect. For instance, supporters of the radical Islamic movement Hizb ut-Tahrir actively propagate their ideology in prisons and successfully enlarge their movement with prisoners, argues Turajonzoda.

While experts and religious figures disagree on whether the Salafiya movement threatens the stability of the country, state authorities banned the movement and started a crackdown against its supporters. For instance, besides supporters of the Salafiya, law enforcement authorities arrested 93 members of different radical Islamic movements only over the last three months. The question is whether the repressive actions of the authorities can be effective against rapidly spreading radical Islamic movements. Perhaps mild regulation of the activities of such religious movements would be sufficient in the early stages of their development, in order to avoid perceptions of oppression on the basis of religious affiliation among the people of Tajikistan.

CHINA BOOSTS INVESTMENT IN TAJIKISTAN

Alexander Sodikov

In mid-June 2009, the Tajik government signed four new deals with China aimed at considerably boosting Beijing's investment in the cash-strapped country. Under the new deals signed amidst the global economic recession, Chinese companies will invest more than a billion dollars over the next two years to build power stations, power transmission grids and roads in Tajikistan. The investment package includes US\$650 million for the construction of a hydroelectric power station on the Khingob River in eastern Tajikistan, and US\$400 million for the construction of a coal-fired power plant in Dushanbe. In addition, the Tajik government has secured US\$61 million of Beijing's investment for the construction of two major electric power transmission lines and US\$51 million for the rehabilitation of an important road from Dushanbe to Dangara in Tajikistan's south. Analysts say that Dushanbe is also close to securing Chinese investment for the construction of a new cement plant in southern Tajikistan.

The deals raise Beijing's already significant presence in Tajikistan. China has become a key investor in the country, funding major infrastructure projects and investing in key sectors. In 2008, Tajikistan received a US\$172 million loan from a US\$900 million preferential export credit line given by China to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states. Bilateral trade between China and Tajikistan is expected to rise from US\$524 million in 2007 to US\$1.5 billion in December 2009. Chinese companies have slowly sidelined competitors from Russia, Turkey, Iran and other countries, effectively monopolizing the Tajik market's supply of goods ranging from toys and clothes to personal computers and heavy trucks. Beijing has also increasingly strengthened its military-to-military ties with Dushanbe and security cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Experts say that the newly signed deals fit with a broader pattern of rising Chinese investment in

Central Asia, as China seeks to use its massive cash reserves to secure key strategic advantages for years to come. Tajik political analyst Abdugani Mamadazimov suggests that Beijing's enormous foreign currency reserves enable China to gain superior economic and strategic positions in the region at a time when other great powers have little means to do anything about it. According to the scholar, Beijing uses the opportunity presented by the global financial crisis to maximize its power and influence in Tajikistan vis-à-vis other great powers, particularly Russia.

The global economic downturn has strongly affected Tajikistan through declining remittances and falling prices for its key exports, cotton and aluminum. In spring, the country's resources were strained further by multiple floods and mud flows which displaced over 15,000 people and greatly damaged agricultural land across the country. The economic difficulties have by tradition led the Tajik elites to look towards Russia for assistance. As it became increasingly evident that Moscow was not prepared to offer much-needed economic assistance, Beijing moved in, using its large dollar stockpiles to raise China's presence in Tajikistan and secure stability along its volatile western border. Tajik political expert Rahmon Ulmasov, quoted by the Khuroson radio on March 19, suggested that Chinese aid at the time of economic recession will have a long-term psychological effect. "The Chinese are investing in Tajikistan in the most difficult period for the country," says the scholar. "Tajiks will long remember this help."

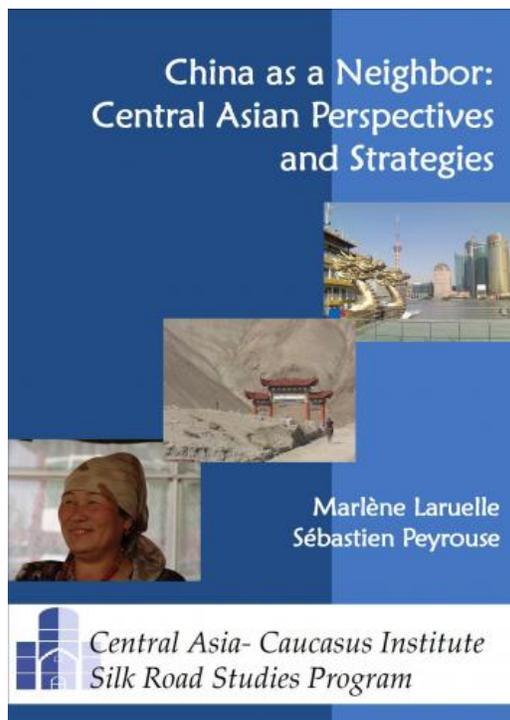
Another Tajik analyst, Holmamad Samiev, believes that the Tajik elites particularly welcome Chinese loans because they come without a political conditionality attached to them. According to him, western governments and international financial institutions closely link aid to the country's human rights and good governance record. Russia's aid is also conditional upon political favors and unquestionable support for Moscow's security

agenda in the region. Chinese aid, according to Holmamad Samiev, is free of a political conditionality.

Tajik experts suggest that the growth of China's economic and commercial influence in Tajikistan is followed by a rising popular interest in Chinese culture and language. The three largest universities and a growing number of language centers in the country offer Chinese lessons. Beijing is also building a large pool of local Chinese-speaking professionals by giving them scholarships to study the language in China. The Tajik elites are also increasingly looking towards China for a model of

achieving economic development without an accompanying political liberalization.

Beijing's growing power and influence in Tajikistan is likely to confront increasing resistance from Moscow which is quickly losing ground in what long used to be its stronghold. Much will now depend on what Russian leaders choose to do to counter China's pursuit of dominance in Tajikistan. Unless Moscow recognizes the rising importance of economics and long-term effort in securing influence in Tajikistan, Beijing is likely to emerge victorious in this competition.



New Book:

*China as a Neighbor: Central Asian
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The book can be downloaded free at
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NEWS DIGEST

KAZAKH LEADER SACKS HIS DEFENCE MINISTER

18 June

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev on June 17 fired the Central Asian nation's Defense Minister Danial Akhmetov, the presidential press service said. Nazarbaev's decree gave no reason for the sacking of Akhmetov, a long-term devoted loyalist of the veteran leader whose previous posts included that of prime minister. First Deputy Defense Minister Mukhtar Altynbayev became acting defense minister. In April, Kazakhstan's Defense Ministry was rocked by a scandal when the nation's security service accused it of buying defective military hardware from Israel. A Kazakh deputy defense minister was sacked after the security agency's investigators established the government had incurred losses of \$82 million as a result of the deal. (Reuters)

INGUSHETIAN PRESIDENT SEVERELY INJURED IN SUICIDE BOMBING

22 June

The president of the Russian republic of Ingushetia was severely injured on Monday, when the convoy he was travelling in came under suicide bomb-attack. At least one of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov's bodyguards was killed in the attack and several others were injured, the Interfax news agency reported. The bombing took place in the city of Nazran. A spokesman from Yevkurov's office said the president had been in surgery and was no longer in life-threatening danger. He is believed to have been transported to Moscow for further care. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev condemned the attack as a cowardly act by "bandits" unhappy that Yevkurov "is bringing order to the region." He ordered the Interior Ministry and state secret services to investigate the attack. The attack on the presidential convoy is believed to be the work of a suicide bomber who hid an "enormous bomb" in a

car, a police spokesman said. According to Russia's FSB security services, the bomb had contained some 20 kilos of TNT. No one has yet claimed official responsibility for the attack, although tensions have been rising in the area as Islamist rebels have become more bold in fighting local powers. Their attacks have claimed the lives of a former vice premier and the deputy chairwoman of the supreme court since the start of June. Medvedev has promised a campaign against such terrorist attacks. To that end, the government has planned military anti-terror manoeuvres with about 8,500 troops and 650 tanks in the region for the end of June. Monday's attack came on the fifth anniversary of a rebel attack in Nazran in which some 100 people were killed. (Earthtimes)

AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION PARTY RALLIES IN FRONT OF IRANIAN EMBASSY

22 June

Azerbaijan's Muasir Musavat opposition party held unauthorized protest action in front of the Iranian embassy on June 22. "Nearly 50 party activists protested against repression and violence against compatriots in peaceful demonstrations staged after presidential elections in Iran. Three of them were arrested by police. The police office said the arrested party members will be released as soon as they give evidence," Muasir Musavat Chairman Hafiz Hajiyev said. The Saturday clash with the police in Tehran claimed lives of 19 people, CNN reported with the reference to sources in hospitals. Thousands of people unhappy with results of the June 12 presidential elections in Iran launched protest actions which led to clash with the police. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the presidential elections by 63.6 percent of votes. According to unconfirmed reports, the street clashes killed 150 people. The police used tear gas, clubs and water cannons to disperse demonstrators. Hajiyev said Iranian embassy did not accept resolution of the

rally. "Protest actions in support of rights of Azerbaijanis in Iran will continue," he said. (Trend News)

KYRGYZSTAN, USA AGREED ON OPENING OF CENTRE OF TRANSIT TRANSPORTATIONS

23 June

Kyrgyzstan and the USA have agreed on opening at the international airport Manas of the centre of transit transportations, the agency reports citing a source in the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan. According to the source, today at 13.00, the Committee of Defense, Security, Law and Order and Judicial-Legal Reform of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan will consider the ratification of cooperation agreement between the governments of Kyrgyzstan and the USA signed yesterday in Bishkek. "The transit centre will exist on the basis of air base of the coalition forces at the Bishkek Manas airport," the source added. The air base was opened in Kyrgyzstan in December, 2001 under the mandate of the United Nations for realization of the USA antiterrorist operation and their allies in Afghanistan. In the spring, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan denounced the contract. Six months have been given to close the air base. According to the Parliament, last foreign military man should leave the territory of Kyrgyzstan until August 18th. (Kazakhstan Today)

GEORGIA'S RADICAL OPPOSITION ANNULS PICKETING IN FRONT OF PRESIDENT'S RESIDENT

24 June

The radical opposition annulled picketing in front of Avlabar Residence of the President of Georgia. Democratic Movement - Unified Georgia said that the decision was made jointly with United Georgia Party, who were responsible for the picketing in the territory. The decision was made due to possible provocations by the authorities, who tried to oppose the local Armenian population of Avlabari against participants. The actions of the radical opposition started on April 9. (Trend News)

KYRGYZSTAN SAYS SLAIN MILITANTS WERE UZBEK NATIONALS

25 June

A Kyrgyz parliament deputy has said that five armed individuals killed by Kyrgyz national security forces near Jalal-Abad on June 23 were citizens of neighboring Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Rashid Tagaev said the Uzbek citizens might have trained in terrorist camps in Pakistan. He said a large amount of explosives and ammunition was found in the house, indicating they were preparing a significant terrorist attack. Investigators are trying to determine how and when the Uzbek citizens managed to enter Kyrgyzstan. The five armed men refused to surrender to security forces on June 23 and opened fire from a house in the village of Tashbulak in Kyrgyzstan's southern Jalal-Abad region. All of them were killed. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKH LEADER A NO-SHOW AT NATO FORUM IN ASTANA

25 June

Kazakhstan -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev did not attend the third forum of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in Astana, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. His greetings speech were conveyed by Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin. The message was in English, and no translation into Kazakh or Russian was provided. It had been previously announced that Nazarbaev would take part in the forum. The EAPC comprises 50 NATO and partner countries, and its main goal is to facilitate consultation on political and security matters. The current event is NATO's first-ever gathering on that level held on the territory of the former Soviet Union. (RFE/RL)

AFGHANISTAN FOCUS OF NATO'S FIRST CENTRAL ASIA TALKS

25 June

NATO has held its first meeting in Central Asia to discuss issues ranging from Afghanistan to Caspian Sea cooperation. The talks in the Kazakh capital take place days after Kyrgyzstan, one of the region's former Soviet republics, reversed its decision to shut down a U.S. military air base used to support operations in Afghanistan. "Instability in Afghanistan affects Central Asia more than any other region -- from terrorism to drug-trafficking," NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said at a lecture at the Kazakh Academy of State. "By the same token, no region has more to gain from stability in Afghanistan than Central Asia," he said, ahead of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council meeting on June 26. Central Asia has

gained significance for Washington as it boosts its Afghan force to fight the resurgent Taliban. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are, together with Russia, parts of a corridor along which the United States plans to supply its Afghan troops following attacks on convoys in Pakistan. Earlier this week, Kyrgyzstan said its security service officers fought and killed five Islamist militants from a group long linked to Afghanistan's Taliban. (Reuters)

U.S. ENVOY: NO ROLE FOR IRAN IN NABUCCO

25 June

There are no plans to include Iran in the planned Nabucco natural gas pipeline to Europe, said the U.S. special envoy for Eurasian energy issues. Richard Morningstar, the U.S. envoy, said in an interview with the Trend news agency in Azerbaijan that there is no chance for Iran to join the \$10.7 billion project. "I can say we have no plans regarding Iran's involvement in this project at the moment and in the future," he said. Iran has boasted of developments in its energy infrastructure, announcing recent tenders for a pipeline to the Gulf of Oman and advancements in its Persian Pipeline. Iranian, Syrian and Turkish officials also signed a trilateral package of deals that included the development of upstream activities, drilling and exploration. Iran's moves come amid supply concerns for Nabucco. Europe sees the Nabucco pipeline, traveling north from Turkey to European markets, as an answer to its push for energy security and diversification. Morningstar lauded the potential impact of the project, saying it would not only contribute to energy diversification and security, but also encourage international cooperation. "Nabucco opens up many possibilities," he said. "We support all projects that involve the delivery of oil and gas to world markets." (UPI)

CHECHNYA VOWS TO ELIMINATE MILITANTS

25 June

The President of the Russian republic of Chechnya has vowed to work with neighbouring Ingushetia to wipe out militants in their volatile region. Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov has made a surprise visit to Ingushetia, whose President, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, was seriously injured by a car bomb on Monday. Mr Kadyrov has overseen a sometimes brutal campaign against militant groups in Chechnya. With violence spiralling in Ingushetia,

the Chechen leader has used his visit to declare that both republics will work closely together to eliminate all militants in their region in Russia's south. Mr Kadyrov was quoted earlier as saying Russian President Dmitry Medvedev approved of the joint operation and told him to combat the bandits, even harshly. Ingushetia's President is reported to be in a serious but stable condition after his motorcade was attacked by a suicide bomber in a car on Monday. (ABC)

KARZAI TELLS TALIBAN TO VOTE IN AFGHAN ELECTIONS

27 June

Afghan President Hamid Karzai called on the Taliban and their allies on June 27 to vote in August's elections rather than attempt to disrupt the nation's second presidential poll. The August 20 vote is seen as a crucial moment for Karzai's government and for Washington, which is sending thousands of extra troops this year as part of President Barack Obama's new regional strategy to defeat Al-Qaeda and stabilize Afghanistan. "I appeal to them [the Taliban] again and again to avoid any conflicts, not only during polling days but forever," Karzai told a news conference at his heavily guarded palace. "Through elections we can bring peace and security, and through elections we can bring development," he said. The Taliban, whose strict Islamist government was ousted after a U.S.-led invasion in 2001, have repeatedly rejected the election as a Western-inspired sham. The Taliban have also rejected Karzai's calls for them to join the peace process, saying no talks can take place until all foreign troops have left the country. Washington has already almost doubled the number of its troops from the 32,000 in the country in late 2008 in order to secure the elections and to combat a growing Taliban insurgency. Karzai has ruled since the Taliban's ouster and won the nation's first direct vote for president in 2004. A clear favourite to win again, he welcomed meetings held by foreign officials and diplomats with some of the 40 candidates opposing him, particularly his main rivals, former senior ministers Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. But he also called on the international community not to interfere and to play an impartial role. Most of the more than \$230 million the Afghan election will cost is being provided by Washington and its allies. An unflattering report by leading think tank the International Crisis Group this week said poor security and failure to capitalize on gains since the

2004 poll meant widespread fraud was possible in the voting. The Taliban-led insurgency has reached its most violent level since 2001, U.S. military commanders have said. It has grown out of traditional Taliban strongholds in the south and east into the once relatively peaceful north and to the fringes of Kabul. (Reuters)

KYRGYZSTAN KILLS SUSPECTED ISLAMIST MILITANTS

28 June

Security forces in Kyrgyzstan have killed three men they believe were militants from an Islamist group, a state security official said. Earlier this week the Central Asian state said five militants had been killed in a gun battle in the southern town of Jalal-Abad in which one state security officer had been killed. It said the militants belonged to the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which ex-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, home to a U.S military air base since 2001, has been battling off and on since 1999. A state security official who asked not to be named said its forces killed three more militants in a village in the Osh region, also in the south near the border with Uzbekistan, on the night of June 27. "According to preliminary data three militants have been killed. Most likely they were terrorists from the group destroyed in Jalal-Abad," the official told Reuters. Another senior government official confirmed the killed militants were believed to be members of the IMU. "They (the militants) were from the same structure ... They (the security service) used two armoured personnel carriers to avoid casualties on our side," said the official, who also requested anonymity. The IMU, founded in 1998 and believed to be allied with Afghanistan's Taliban, conducted several raids in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, holding entrenched positions for months. In 2006, Kyrgyz security forces reported killing several IMU members in a special operation. No attacks involving the IMU members have been reported in the last two years in Kyrgyzstan. But in May, Uzbekistan's security forces blamed the IMU for attacks in Khanabad, a small town close to the Kyrgyzstan border, in which one policeman died and another was injured. Western security analysts say the IMU was largely wiped out during U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan but some have pointed to a possible rise in its activity in recent months alongside a parallel resurgence in Taliban operations. (Reuters)

CHECHEN REBELS CLAIM ASSASSINATION BID ON INGUSH LEADER

28 June

A Chechen rebel group has claimed responsibility for the assassination bid against the Moscow-appointed president of Ingushetia, Yunus- Bek Yevkurov, who was seriously wounded in a bombing. "This operation was led by the rebel battalion 'Riyadus Salikhiin' under the order of the leadership of the Emirate of the Caucasus," said a statement posted on the Chechen pro-independence Web site Kavkazcenter.com. The group claimed it was led by Chechen guerrilla leader Doku Umarov, although Russian media say he was killed in a Russian military operation in May. The rebels deny their leader has died. Yevkurov - appointed by the Kremlin to bring stability to one of Russia's bloodiest regions - was badly wounded when his motorcade was hit by a car bomb last Monday. His spokesman, Kaloï Akhilgov, said Sunday that the Ingush leader's condition had slightly improved, although he was still under artificial respiration. "Even though his condition remains serious, the doctors have noted a positive dynamic and are talking about an improvement in the health of the president," he told Echo of Moscow radio. (AFP)

KANDAHAR POLICE CHIEF KILLED IN CLASH BETWEEN AFGHAN FORCES

29 June

The provincial police chief and at least four other police officers in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar Province have been killed in a clash with private Afghan security guards. Local officials told RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan that the clash broke out after the security guards entered the Kandahar city prosecutor's office and forcibly removed an unidentified prisoner. Kandahar Provincial Council head Ahmed Wali Karzai told RFE/RL that the "clash erupted when a group of Afghan security guards for foreign troops wanted to take out a prisoner, probably a driver." Karzai said provincial police chief General Matiullah Qahteh and eight other police officers were killed. It's not clear if there were casualties among the guards. Karzai -- the younger brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai -- said the security guards were unsuccessful in their attempt to remove the prisoner. He added that police are trying to arrest the security guards involved in the incident. A senior Kandahar security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told RFE/RL that Qahteh, along with the head of the city police department

and four other police officers, were killed in the gun battle. Interior Ministry spokesman Zmarai Bashari told local television the prisoner had been due to appear on criminal charges on June 29, but gave no other details. (RFE/RL)

EXERCISE "KAVKAZ-2009" BEGINS IN RUSSIA'S SOUTH

29 June

The operational-strategic exercise "Kavkaz-2009" has begun in Russia's south on Monday. As head of the Information and Public Relations Service of the North-Caucasian Military District (NCMD) Colonel Andrei Bobrun told ITAR-TASS, "the exercise in the NCMD is being held in the period from June 29 to July 6 in accordance with a plan of training of the Russian Armed Forces under the direction of chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General of the Army Nikolai Makarov." "Large units and military units of the NCMD, as well as interacting and dependent agencies - - the armies of the Air Force and Air Defense, the Caspian small fleet, the Novorossiisk naval base, the regional command of Interior Troops of the Russian Interior Ministry and the Airborne Troops are being involved in the exercise," Bobrun specified. "The exercise will be held in the Krasnodar and Stavropol Territories, the Astrakhan, Volgograd and Rostov Regions, the Republics of North Ossetia - Olania, Ingushetia and Dagestan, as well as the Karachayevo-Cherkess and Chechen Republics. (Itar-Tass)

OSCE SECRETARY GENERAL TO VISIT KAZAKHSTAN

29 June

The OSCE Secretary General, Mark Perren de Brishambo will visit Kazakhstan. The official representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Ashikbayev, said at a weekly briefing in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, the agency reports. "The OSCE Secretary General will hold a number of bilateral meetings and will make a speech at the seminar devoted to preparation for the forthcoming presidency of Kazakhstan in this organization in 2010," Y. Ashikbayev informed. According to Y. Ashikbayev, Perren de Brishambo will take part in the work of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana on July 1-2, 2009. (Kazakhstan Today)

ISRAELI PRESIDENT MAKES LANDMARK KAZAKHSTAN VISIT

30 June

President Shimon Peres was in Kazakhstan on Tuesday in the first visit by an Israeli head of state to the majority Muslim country, following a similar trip to overwhelmingly Shiite Azerbaijan. Peres held talks with the Central Asian state's strongman President Nursultan Nazarbayev on trade, cultural and humanitarian issues, the Kazakh presidency said in a statement. "Kazakhstan sees Israel as an important partner in the Middle East region with which there is a diverse cooperation," it quoted Nazarbayev as saying. The two sides also vowed to expand ties in trade, which according to the Kazakh presidency in 2008 increased two-and-a-half times to a total volume of more than 2.4 billion dollars. Peres had on Monday wrapped up a visit to Azerbaijan -- also the first by an Israeli president -- which aroused intense curiosity due to the country's border with Iran, which refuses to recognise the Jewish state. Israel maintains tight economic and military ties with Kazakhstan after Astana asked the Jewish state to help it modernise its military and produce weapons as it seeks to upgrade its armed forces. However Kazakh security forces in April arrested a deputy defence minister in connection with irregularities surrounding a 2006 deal for Israel to supply modern artillery designs to the Kazakh military. (AFP)

KAZAKH OFFICIAL REJECTS NABUCCO PROJECT

30 June

A senior official says Kazakhstan will not take part in the Nabucco project, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Kazakh Deputy Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Aset Magauov said at the third session of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in Astana that due to insufficient natural-gas supplies, Kazakhstan wouldn't be able to participate in the Nabucco project. Nabucco is a planned pipeline that will transport Central Asian gas via Turkey to Europe. The project's goal is to give Europe access to Central Asian gas while bypassing Russia. It is backed by the European Union and the United States.

According to Magauov, Kazakhstan's current gas priorities are the Caspian Sea pipeline and a project with Chinese partners. (RFE/RL)

RUSSIA SECURES AZERI GAS

30 June

Russian gas giant Gazprom and its counterpart in Azerbaijan reached an agreement for gas purchases that could possibly undermine Europe's Nabucco project. The State Oil Co. of Azerbaijan Republic and energy monopoly Gazprom signed a deal to secure 1.7 billion cubic feet per year from Azerbaijan in 2010. Gazprom chief Alexei Miller said the early volumes would come from the massive Shah Deniz gas field. Shah Deniz in the Caspian Sea is one of the largest finds in recent decades, with roughly 15 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves. Azerbaijan has emerged as the center of a regional race to secure gas reserves. Europe had looked to Shah Deniz to supply its \$10.7 billion Nabucco project, while the Gazprom move could fill the Moscow-backed South Stream pipeline to southern Europe. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev noted, however, that the deal was "absolutely" not based on political motivations, the Moscow Times reports. He acknowledged, however, that the SOCAR deal was an early sign of major plans for the Russian energy monopoly. "I think we can further continue this work, keeping in mind the big opportunities and big volumes, which will be growing," he said. (UPI)

IRAN REPORT: U.K. EMBASSY EMPLOYEE HAD ROLE IN UNREST**1 July**

A semi-official Iranian news agency has said one of three local British Embassy staff still in detention had had a "remarkable role" in last month's postelection unrest in the Islamic republic. Iran's Foreign Ministry said on June 30 that five of the detained Iranian staff at the British Embassy in Tehran had been freed while four were still being held for questioning. The Fars report suggested that one more person had been freed. "Among the three detained British Embassy staff there was one who...had a remarkable role during the recent unrest in managing it behind the scenes," Fars said, without giving a source. It said another embassy employee had been a "main element behind the riots" but that she had been freed because she enjoyed diplomatic immunity. The same news agency first revealed the detentions of the British

Embassy staff on June 28, saying they were accused of stirring unrest after Iran's disputed June 12 election, which moderate opponents of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad say was rigged in his favor. On June 30, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said London was pressing Iran's Foreign Ministry to help secure the release of the local employees of the British Embassy. (Reuters)

OBAMA AIDE SAYS NO MORE TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN**01 July**

President Barack Obama's top security adviser has told U.S. military commanders there are no plans to send more troops to Afghanistan for now and that the focus instead will be on economic development and reconstruction, "The Washington Post" has reported. National security adviser James Jones delivered that message last week in Afghanistan, where Marine Brigadier General Lawrence Nicholson hinted he could use more "thousands more" troops, the newspaper said. Jones' message seemed designed to cap expectations that more troops might be coming, although the Obama administration has not ruled out additional deployments in the future, the report said. "This will not be won by the military alone," Jones told the "Post" during his trip. "We tried that for six years." "The piece of the strategy that has to work in the next year is economic development. If that is not done right, there are not enough troops in the world to succeed." An extra 17,000 troops Obama deployed to fight a growing Taliban-led insurgency in southern and western Afghanistan were expected to be on the ground by mid-July. Another 4,000 troops being deployed to train Afghan security forces are due to arrive by August. The forces are part of a build-up that could expand the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan to 68,000 troops by the end of this year, more than double the 32,000 at the end of 2008. "The Washington Post" said Jones made it clear during his visit to Afghanistan that it was a new era and Obama will not automatically give military commanders whatever force levels they request, a departure from the practice of the Bush administration in the Iraq war. (Reuters)