

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

VOL. 8 NO. 18

20 SEPTEMBER 2006

Searchable Archives with over 1,000 articles at <http://www.cacianalyst.org>

ANALYTICAL ARTICLES:

THE ARMISTICE IN WANA: WILL IT LAST?

Rizwan Zeb

CAN THE KARABAKH PEACE
PROCESS BE SAVED?

Blanka Hancilova

TURKMEN-CHINESE ENERGY RELATIONS
LIKELY TO CAUSE GROWING TENSION
IN REGIONAL POLITICS

Hooman Peimani

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN UZBEKISTAN:
A CHANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT?

Douglas Tookey

FIELD REPORTS:

SECURITY SERVICE SCANDAL CAUSES POLI-
TICAL CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN

Nurshat Ababakirov

ISLAM KARIMOV ASKS FOR KAZAKH IN-
VESTMENT TO BOLSTER UZBEK ECONOMY

Marat Yermukanov

THE UPCOMING GEORGIAN LOCAL ELEC-
TIONS: TURNOUT IS THE ISSUE

Kakha Jibladze

LEADER OF ISLAMIC PARTY OF TURKESTAN
ELIMINATED BY KYRGYZ SECURITY SERVICE

Joldosh Osmonov

NEWS DIGEST



*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING
VOL. 8 NO. 18
20 SEPTEMBER 2006

Contents

Analytical Articles

THE ARMISTICE IN WANA: WILL IT LAST? 3
Rizwan Zeb

CAN THE KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS BE SAVED? 6
Blanka Hancilova

TURKMEN-CHINESE ENERGY RELATIONS LIKELY TO CAUSE GROWING
TENSION IN REGIONAL POLITICS 9
Hooman Peimani

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN UZBEKISTAN: A CHANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT? 11
Douglas Tookey

Field Reports

SECURITY SERVICE SCANDAL CAUSES POLITICAL CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN 14
Nurshat Ababakirov

ISLAM KARIMOV ASKS FOR KAZAKH INVESTMENT TO BOLSTER UZBEK ECONOMY 15
Marat Yermukanov

THE UPCOMING GEORGIAN LOCAL ELECTIONS: TURNOUT IS THE ISSUE 17
Kakha Jibladze

LEADER OF ISLAMIC PARTY OF TURKESTAN ELIMINATED BY
KYRGYZ SECURITY SERVICE 18
Joldosh Osmonov

News Digest 20d

THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

Editor

Svante E. Cornell

Assistant Editor, News Digest

Alima Bissenova

Chairman, Editorial Board

S. Frederick Starr

The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst is an English language global Web journal devoted to analysis of the current issues facing the Central Asia-Caucasus region. It serves to link the business, governmental, journalistic and scholarly communities and is the global voice of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center. The Editor of the Analyst solicits most articles and field reports, however authors may suggest topics for future issues or submit articles and field reports for consideration. Such articles and field reports cannot have been previously published in any form, must be written in English, and must correspond precisely to the format and style of articles and field reports published in *The Analyst* (www.cacianalyst.org) and described below.

The Analyst aims to provide our industrious and engaged audience with a singular and reliable assessment of events and trends in the region written in an analytical tone rather than a polemical one. *Analyst* articles reflect the fact that we have a diverse international audience. While this should not affect what author's write about or their conclusions, this does affect the tone of articles. Analyst articles focus on a newsworthy topic, engage central issues of the latest breaking news from the region and are backed by solid evidence. Articles should normally be based on local language news sources. Each 1000-1200 word analytical article must offer a concise and authoritative statement of the event or issue in question. An article must provide relevant, precise and authoritative background information. It also must offer a sober and analytical judgment of the issue as well as a clinical evaluation of the importance of the event. Authors must cite facts of controversial nature to the Editor who may contact other experts to confirm claims. Since *Analyst* articles are based on solid evidence, rather than rumors or conjecture, they prove to be reliable sources of information on the region. By offering balanced and objective analysis while keeping clear of inflammatory rhetoric, *The Analyst* does more to inform our international readership on all sides of the issues.

The Editor reserves the right to edit the article to conform to the editorial policy and specifications of *The Analyst* and to reject the article should it not be acceptable to our editorial committee for publication. On acceptance and publication of the edited version of the article, *The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies* will issue an honorarium to the author. The copyright for the article or field report will reside with the *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*. However, the author may use all or part of the contracted article in any book or article in any media subsequently written by the author, provided that a copyright notice appears giving reference to the contracted article's first publication by the "Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies."

Submission Guidelines:

Analytical Articles: 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 1,000 and 1,300 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 100-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: Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has 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.

Svante E. Cornell

Research Director; Editor, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University

1619 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, USA.

Tel. +1-202-663-5922; 1-202-663-7723; Fax. +1-202-663-7785

THE ARMISTICE IN WANA: WILL IT LAST?

Rizwan Zeb

The recent truce between the Utmanzai tribal elders and the Pakistani administration on September 6, 2006 is a most significant development in the War on Terror. However, critics have termed it a wrong move by Islamabad, which could lead the militants to take action more independently – whereas Islamabad claims that it has done so in consultation with its key regional and global allies. Whether this truce will last and deliver is too early to predict, however it is clear that Islamabad did this not because of fatigue but due to a logical and correct assessment of its options and choices.

BACKGROUND: Since September 11, 2001 and the American attacks on Afghanistan, many have claimed that Pakistan's Tribal areas, and especially Waziristan, right across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, is a readily available hideout for Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. Since the beginning of the on-going war against terror, Pakistan is a frontline state and a major U.S. ally. Pakistan has to date arrested more than 700 members of Al-Qaeda and killed a further 850 of them. Pakistan's security forces, meanwhile, have suffered a life-loss of 350-400 personnel, with injuries to another 760 in this war. This is a clear indication of its resolve to continue its fight against terrorism.

The recent truce between the Utmanzai tribal elders and the administration on September 6, 2006 is perhaps the most significant development. According to the details the main features of the agreement are: No attacks will be launched against law-enforcement agencies, armed forces and government installations. No parallel administration will be set up in North Waziristan. The writ of the Pakistani government will be accepted, which may sound obvious but which is a novelty in the semi-independent tribal areas. Further, nobody will enter Afghanistan's territory to fight Afghan and NATO troops, whereas travel to Afghanistan as per laws and traditions will be allowed. Moreover, all foreigners will leave, those who can not will be allowed to stay provided they live peacefully

and strictly abide by the law and the terms of this agreement. The administration on its part agreed to dismantle several newly built checkpoints. It also agreed that local troops, such as Khassadars and Levies, would man the old check posts. Privileges and benefits allowed to the tribes in the past would be restored, and those people who suffered from this operation as collateral damage would be compensated.

Both sides also decided to establish a ten member body encompassing the administration and tribal representatives, which will oversee and make sure that the agreement is implemented. Further, it was also decided that action will be taken against any violator of this agreement.

Regardless of what the cynics say, Islamabad before going ahead with the deal consulted with its allies in the war against terror: the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Afghanistan and all are on board, as pointed out by the governor of the Northwest Frontier Province, General Ali Jan Orakzai. He also added that if the truce works, it can be extended to Afghanistan. In fact President Bush himself in an interview with the ABC News said that (this deal) does not give "safe haven" to terrorists who may be hiding on tribal lands near the Pakistani-Afghan border, ... "I don't read it that way," adding "What he is doing is entering agreements with governors in the regions of the country, in the hopes that there would be

an economic vitality, there will be alternatives to violence and terror.” British State Minister Kim Howells, while addressing a press conference in Peshawar, termed the deal as a future “model” for insurgency-ridden Afghanistan.

People in the area have also expressed their relief by welcoming the deal. However, the deal has its strong critics who see this as Islamabad backing off from the war effort, and having finally given up to the Taliban. This might be music to certain ears but it is far from truth.

IMPLICATIONS: The views on the pros and cons of this accord are highly divided both in Pakistan and abroad. The critics of the deal are of the view that this provides no guarantee that the Taliban will refrain from attacking. Apparently this might sound reasonable, however if attacks will not stop, the accord will be broken and the government forces will take action. What this view is missing is that this accord nullifies the argument of those fighting the Pakistani forces that they are doing so because of their religious obligation. This turned out to be just another conflict over colliding interests, which can be solved through addressing the grievances and using non-military ways. Maulana Fazlur Rahman’s Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, who is a part of the religious political alliance MMA, played a significant role, which is an additional indication that the MMA is primarily a political alliance.

A number of observers have pointed out that Islamabad had made this deal because its military action in the region has failed as it suffered heavy casualties during the operation. If this is the case, what has compelled the fighters to agree to the terms and conditions of this accord? If media reports coming from the area are to be believed, there are signs that these so-called mujahideen are facing some problems of their own. According to these reports, the support and sympathy of the locals enjoyed by these foreigners is weakening. It has been reported that Maulana Sadiq Noor (Abu Talha) and Commander Gul Bahadur have asked the foreigners to leave the area. Recently a clash took place between a few local youngsters and a group of foreigners resulting in the death of two Uzbeks.

Therefore it would not be correct to say that it is only Islamabad who was facing problems in the region.

Governments in the past neglected the Tribal Areas, one the excuse of allowing locals to preserve traditions. The areas suffer from many problems of governance and most parts lack even basic necessities of life, such as clean water, hospitals, and schools. This situation, coupled with the rise of jihadist elements in the region, has added to the problems. However, Islamabad has to consider a number of factors while dealing with them. It has tried the military option along with development projects but has reassessed its position. It now believes it can do better through halting the military operations and focus more on the development aspect. The sole use of military force does not solve the problem of local hostility to the government, as the examples of Iraq and Afghanistan suggest. It has been very rightly pointed out that peace does not flow from killing fields. Killing fields accentuate existing fault lines. Convictions and causes survive the destruction of people and structures. Causes are strengthened by those who die for them. Therefore it is imperative that the factors which add to hostility must be eliminated. Winning the hearts and minds of the people through providing them with basic necessities of life is a crucial aspect of solving the longer-term problem. This accord will provide the circumstances in which Islamabad can focus more on the development of the area, and eliminating the reasons which lead to such tendencies.

By signing this accord, Islamabad has not abandoned its struggle against terrorism; in fact it has taken the next step. Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam stressed that this accord underlines Pakistan’s long-term commitment to ensuring that peace prevail in the area, adding that “a comprehensive strategy was urgently needed to counter terrorism since military action alone had proved ineffective. “We need a long-term strategy to address political disputes, [the] sense of alienation, [the] removal of grievances, and deprivation of socio-economic issues.”

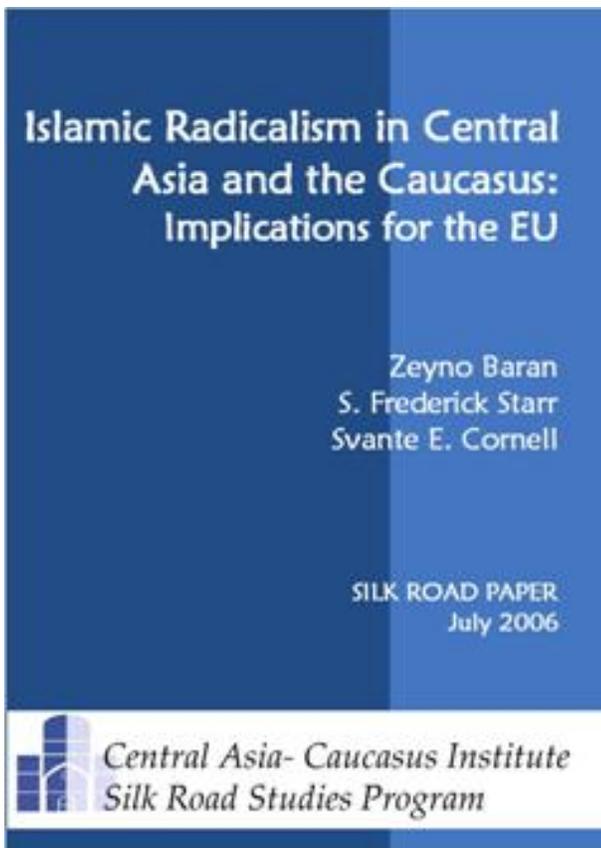
President Pervez Musharraf was very clear in his commitment with the alliance against terror when he ruled out any possibility of a “patch-up” with “fighting Taliban” and that “there has been no agreement with

the Taliban nor will there be any with them in the future.”

CONCLUSIONS: Islamabad’s will and resolve to eliminate terrorists from its soil appears to remain strong. The Tribal Areas, however, are a problematic region. They have been semi-independent since the British times – indeed, neither British India nor the Pakistani state ever extended their full jurisdiction over these territories. Governments in the past neglected the areas, claiming that they are preserving traditions. The area suffers from many problems of governance and most parts of it lack even basic necessities of life, such

as clean water, hospitals, education etc. This accord will provide Islamabad with the opportunity to do exactly this. It remains to be seen whether the government takes advantage of this opportunity.

AUTHOR’S BIO: Rizwan Zeb is Senior Research Analyst at the Islamabad based Institute of Regional Studies. The views expressed in this article are his own.



New Silk Road Paper!

Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU

by Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante E. Cornell

This 55-page report analyzes Islamic radical movements in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the reasons for radicalization, and implications for Western and European interests in the region covering Central Asian republics, the North and South Caucasus.

This 55-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either www.cacianalyst.org or www.silkroadstudies.org.

CAN THE KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS BE SAVED?

Blanka Hancilova

After the failure of the March 2006 Paris and the June 2006 Bucharest meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Co-Chairmen of the peace process seem to be exerting pressure on the sides to take full political ownership of the process. As Azerbaijan takes the issue to the UN, The Council of Europe and the EU seem to be developing a more active and coherent approach to the conflict. Although a slight modification of the Armenian position is discernible, it is unclear whether the Karabakh leadership or, for that matter the Armenian and Azerbaijani public, are ready for a painful compromise.

BACKGROUND: As no elections are scheduled either in Armenia or Azerbaijan in 2006, the OSCE and its Chairman-in-Office, Belgium, considered that it would be politically feasible to reach a breakthrough in a resolution to the long-standing Karabakh conflict.

The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan discussed a one-page document listing basic principles for a settlement of the conflict at the February summit in Rambouillet, France, but failed to reach an agreement on two of nine principles. The Presidents met once more in June in Bucharest on the margins of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation and again no progress was registered.

These failures were followed by an interview of the US Co-Chair Matthew Bryza to Radio Liberty, where he essentially confirmed information about the framework agreement leaked by officials in Baku and Yerevan over the past year, but refused to reveal the stumbling blocs. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have criticized Bryza's disclosure.

Reacting to speculations about the basic principles for a settlement of the conflict, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs on 3 July issued a statement revealing more details about the "fair, balanced and workable core principles that could pave the way for the two

sides to draft a far-reaching settlement agenda." The principles are based on the redeployment of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories around Mountainous Karabakh, with special modalities for Kelbajar and Lachin districts (including a corridor between Armenia and Mountainous Karabakh), demilitarization of these territories, and a referendum or population vote – at a date and in a manner to be decided through further negotiations – to determine the final legal status of Mountainous Karabakh. The parties would renounce the use or threat of use of force, and international and bilateral security guarantees and assurances would be put in place. The deployment of an international peacekeeping force and a joint commission for implementation of the agreement would be established and international assistance would be made available for de-mining, reconstruction, and resettlement of internally displaced persons in the formerly occupied territories and the war-affected regions of Mountainous Karabakh.

IMPLICATIONS: The failure of the presidential summits in Rambouillet and Bucharest was yet another blow to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and to Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict, to mediate the conflict.

Though the basic principles are a step forward, the disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan continue, with Azerbaijan insisting on the principle of territorial integrity, while Armenians stress the right to self-determination. The devil is in the detail: for as long as it will not be clear who should participate in the referendum on self-determination and when it should be held (according to available information “at least a decade” after the liberation of most occupied territories around Karabakh), there is a large space for speculation.

To further complicate matters, both parties continue to cater uncompromising statements for their domestic constituencies, hampering acceptance of a painful compromise. Already after the failure of the February summit, Azerbaijan threatened to “reconsider the negotiation course and view other options” and Armenia threatened to consider recognizing Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan is increasingly critical of Ambassador Kasprzyk and the OSCE Minsk group, signaling its growing unhappiness over the lack of progress in negotiations. Kasprzyk’s report on fires affecting the areas close to the line of contact issued on 10 July has triggered a wave of criticism. Baku expressed discontent at the fact that the OSCE team failed to identify those responsible for starting the fires and limited itself to statements that fires are a usual phenomenon in the region at this time of year, though the situation is likely to have been exacerbated this year by extreme heat and strong winds.

Azerbaijan used the issue of fires for bringing Karabakh back to the UN agenda and on 8 September, the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on the UN to urgently assist in preventing environmental damage from fires in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and organize a mission to the region to assess the short-term and long-term impact of the fires. Armenia disassociated itself from the resolution – though it supported its content, it has serious problems with its title and continues to oppose bringing any Karabakh issue to the UN. As a result, there will be an OSCE-led multi-national expert mission with

experts from the OSCE, the UN Environmental Program and other agencies, dispatched to the region later this year.

In addition to the UN, Karabakh’s profile is rising at the Council of Europe, and may be featured at the autumn session of its Parliamentary Assembly. Also, the EU is finally coming up with a coherent policy for the Caucasus and there are cautious talks about the possibility of EU peacekeeping operation for Karabakh, should an agreement be signed.

By revealing key principles and shedding some light on the negotiations, the Co-Chairs attempt to stir discussion about the peace prospects in the region and to step back from the process and give full responsibility for progress or lack thereof to the parties. As the US Co-Chair Bryza put it, “[the Co-Chairs] have exerted all of the creativity and all the negotiation energy they could... [The Presidents] have to decide whether [they] want it or not... So we are saying OK, it’s yours now.”

The latest information about the negotiations also suggests that Armenia is departing from its earlier position “first status, than land back” and increasingly considering a step-by-step approach, with local Armenian forces first retreating from the occupied territories and the final status of Mountainous Karabakh being decided through a referendum at a later point.

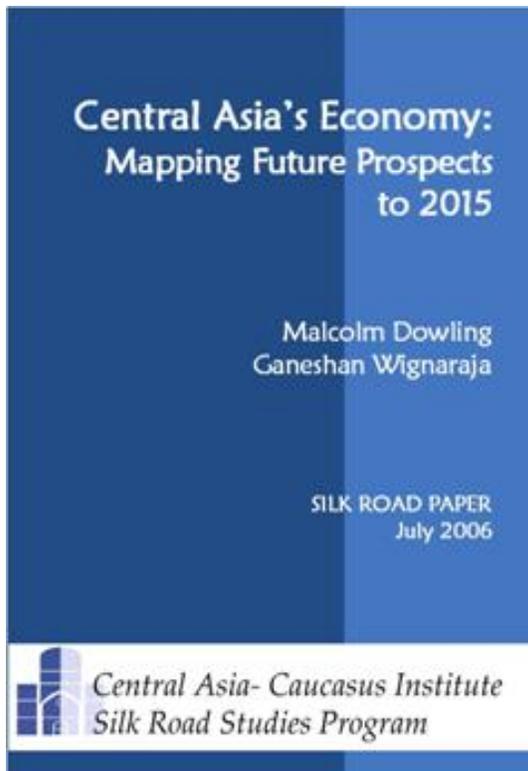
CONCLUSIONS: The secret negotiations have so far not recorded any meaningful progress, yet the May 1994 cease-fire continues to be in place and that alone is a testimony to the work of the OSCE. The key obstacle to peace is deep mutual distrust. Over the past decade, both sides repeatedly cited the lack of domestic support for a painful compromise as a reason to keep the negotiations secret. Meanwhile, however, none of the parties engaged in a meaningful domestic discussion about the positive implications of a possible peace agreement and as a result, the domestic constituencies continue to be unprepared for a compromise.

There seem to be a subtle change in the Armenian position, which is likely to be a reflection of the changing power balance in the region. Despite

Armenia's economic growth and strong rhetoric, Armenia is well aware that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the late 2006 launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Eruzrum gas pipeline together with the planned construction of the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railroad will contribute to the booming economic growth of Azerbaijan. Military spending in Azerbaijan is increasing rapidly and with it Baku's leverage at the negotiation table. Yet Armenia rightly points out that Azerbaijani military action would have far reaching international negative implications for Azerbaijan, and that Azerbaijan underestimates the defensibility of Nagorno Karabakh.

The negotiations will continue under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan are scheduled to meet on 25 and 26 September in the United Nations in New York to prepare for a meeting of the two presidents, which is likely to take place on 15 and 16 October at the margins of the CIS summit in Minsk, Belarus. But it remains to be seen whether the Presidents will be able to bridge their positions.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Dr. Blanka Hancilova is Democratization Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan. This article reflects the view of the author alone and does not necessarily reflect the position of the OSCE.



New Silk Road Paper!

Central Asia's Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015

by Malcolm Dowling
and
Ganeshan Wignaraja

This is a comprehensive though concise analysis of the economic development scenarios of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Written by two ADB experts, it provides guidance to understanding the evolution of Central Asian economies in coming years.

This 105-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either www.cacianalyst.org or www.silkroadstudies.org.

TURKMEN-CHINESE ENERGY RELATIONS LIKELY TO CAUSE GROWING TENSION IN REGIONAL POLITICS

Hooman Peimani

Turkmenistan and China concluded a series of economic and technical cooperation agreements on August 21. Describing in his remarks the event as a “turning point” in Turkmen-Chinese “large-scale political, economic and cultural cooperation,” Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov referred to work on a major gas pipeline project. Against a background of constantly growing Chinese interest in Central Asia’s energy industry, the pipeline, if realized, will further increase Beijing’s engagement. Given that both America and Russia are eager to expand their shares in the industry, the continuation of this trend will likely create tensions in Chinese bilateral relations with both Russia and the United States, while damaging Moscow’s relations with rival Central Asian energy exporters such as Turkmenistan.

BACKGROUND: Having the world’s fourth largest economy, China’s steady economic growth has gradually turned it into the world’s second largest fossil energy importer. Its seemingly unstoppable economic growth will further increase its energy requirements in the foreseeable future. As a consequence, the Chinese have been seeking multiple energy suppliers since the late 1990s. Being an energy-rich neighbor on good terms with China, Central Asia has increasingly become of interest to the Chinese as an energy supplier. For that matter, Beijing has particularly increased its activities in the Kazakh and Turkmen oil and gas industries, which has taken various forms such as purchasing the operating energy companies, pipeline construction, and oil and gas import contracts. As recent noteworthy examples in this regard, the Chinese in October 2005 acquired a major Canadian-owned oil company operating in Kazakhstan, PetroKazakhstan, with the commitment to expand its operations. This was a US\$4.2 billion acquisition. Also, in May of this year, Kazakhstan started oil exports to China through the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline completed in November 2005. Being 962 kilometers long, the \$700 million pipeline will provide China with 20 million tons of oil once it

reaches its maximum capacity. Within this context, the significance of the mentioned Turkmen-Chinese gas pipeline should be analyzed.

IMPLICATIONS: The pipeline project was first discussed in April this year during President Niyazov’s official visit to China. Once constructed, Ashgabat will annually supply China with 30 billion cubic meters of gas through the pipeline for 30 years. The project is still at the planning stage, and thus requires addressing difficult issues such as agreeing on its route. This also requires the consent of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan or only Kazakhstan, depending on the selected route. So far, Kazakhstan has shown interest in working with Turkmenistan on this matter as expressed by Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasymzhomart Toqaev during his August visit to Turkmenistan. If actual construction begins this year, the pipeline will be operational in 2009.

The Turkmen-Chinese pipeline, if it becomes a reality, will be a major challenge to Russia, which has a strong interest in the growing Chinese energy market, including plans for large-scale gas exports to China by 2011. That market has the potential to increase substantially Russia’s oil and gas exports to a neighbouring country through its own pipelines,

by which Moscow can also decrease its current heavy reliance on the European market for its fuel exports. Consequently, the Turkmen-Chinese pipeline will be a rival to Russia's proposed pipeline to China. This factor has the potential to damage Turkmen-Russian relations for two reasons. First, Turkmenistan's intention to take a large share of the Chinese gas market goes against Russia's interests. Secondly, it provides the Turkmen with an export route and means other than the Russian ones through which they have exported the bulk of their gas exports since 1991. This reality has granted an almost complete monopoly to Russia over Turkmen gas exports, which Moscow seeks to keep at any cost.

Being a sign of a growing Chinese interest in the Central Asian energy industry, the pipeline could also cause damage to Beijing's relations with Moscow and Washington. As Russia has been working hard through its oil and gas companies, including Gazprom, to expand its presence in the Central Asian fossil energy industry, China's evident effort to play a more prominent and expanding role in the industry to ensure uninterrupted supplies for its economy will inevitably make it a major rival to Russia. By the same token, the Chinese growing presence in that industry will also turn it into a major competitor to the United States whose energy companies have sought since 1991 to secure a lion share of the Central Asian oil and gas industry. The Americans and the Chinese both require an increasing amount of imported oil and gas to rank them as the world's first and second largest fuel importers, respectively. Thanks to its rapidly growing economy, which will be the world's third largest after America and Japan by 2009, China is competing neck to neck with the U.S. to secure the largest imports of energy in the

near future. As Washington considers Central Asia as a supplier for energy security, Beijing's pursuit of the same goal will create a clash of interest between the two countries at some point in the future.

CONCLUSIONS: While it is yet to become a reality, the Turkmen-Chinese gas pipeline is important for its impact on the Turkmen gas exports and for helping China secure gas suppliers. Yet, the pipeline is more important for its symbolic value. It therefore serves as an indicator of how China's bid to increase its share of the Central Asian oil and gas industry and, in particular, regional fuel exports, will inevitably put China on a collision track with Russia and the United States, pursuing the same objectives.

If the current trend continues, and there is no indication to suggest otherwise, conflicting energy interests will damage the Chinese relations with Russia and America alike. Needless to say, various factors, including the state of bilateral relations between the Chinese and the latter and the significance on the global scale of those relations for the Chinese, will determine how their rivalry with the Americans and the Russians will develop, while determining the form and the extent of damage of the rivalry on those bilateral relations. As for the effect of the Chinese energy moves on Central Asia, there is no uncertainty on its long-term damaging impact on Moscow's relations with two major regional fuel exporters, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, for their rivaling Russia as an energy supplier to China.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Dr. Hooman Peimani is an Associate Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS), Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK.

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN UZBEKISTAN: A CHANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT?

Douglas L. Tookey

Much has been written about the recent pressures on civil society groups in Uzbekistan. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on political or human rights issues have, either voluntarily or involuntarily, ceased their work. So far, environmentally focused NGOs have been able to continue their activities. Often working in partnership with governmental bodies and international organizations, these NGOs advance causes in the areas of environmental education, environmental justice and ecotourism.

BACKGROUND: Uzbekistan faces a number of threats to the environment. The government, either because of a lack of resources or a lack of political will, often responds less than effectively to these challenges. In the past, mahallas (local community associations) and, more recently, civil society organizations have helped to fill the gap. Despite the increased requirements for their operation set forth by the government in recent years, many civil society groups working on environmental issues have continued to operate and achieve positive results. Their current work is perhaps an acknowledgement by the government that grassroots efforts are an integral component of the national response to these challenges.

In the past, Uzbek customs and traditions ensured a great respect for land, water and nature in general. It was only when Uzbekistan became part of the Soviet Union in the first part of the twentieth century that this changed. The Soviets brought large-scale apartment blocks, infrastructure projects and agricultural development that greatly contributed to the massive environmental problems the country faces today. As set forth in the recent UNDP Central Asia Human Development Report and in Uzbekistan's Country Profile for the 2002

World Summit on Sustainable Development, these environmental challenges are varied and include deforestation, threatened flora and fauna, waste management, water resource issues and the Aral Sea disaster.

These problems are also apparent at the regional level. Transboundary environmental obstacles, related to air pollution, radioactive waste and water management, abound. Alone, national governments are ill-equipped, both in terms of human and financial resources, to deal with these issues.

In the years since Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, the formation of a number of environmental NGOs has been a positive trend. These NGOs address a range of matters: advocacy, education, conservation and pollution. While a few work at the national level, most of these NGOs restrict their work to a certain city or district. Since 2000, some environmental NGOs have made varied, unsuccessful attempts to form an association. At this writing, the most recent registration documents for association formation are under consideration at the Ministry of Justice headquarters in Tashkent.

As chronicled in a series of recent briefings by the Open Society Institute, toward the end of 2003 the

Government of Uzbekistan instituted a series of measures—including those related to registration, banking and freedom of association—meant to restrict the activities of civil society groups. In addition, NGOs have also been strongly encouraged to join a national NGO association whose formation was initiated by the government. The association is based in Tashkent and held its first meeting in October 2005. Although estimates given by the Open Society Institute and other observers vary, it is clear that in the past few years the number of active, independent civil society groups in Uzbekistan have declined. Despite this difficult work atmosphere, there are some NGOs, including those focusing on environmental topics, that continue their work and make a positive contribution in their communities.

IMPLICATIONS: Why and how have these environmental groups been able to continue their work? The answer seems twofold. First, the government appears to implicitly acknowledge that alone, it cannot adequately respond to the country's environmental challenges, and that the work of the NGOs complements and adds to its efforts. Second, the work of the NGOs has not been considered to be of a political nature, addressing topics such as human rights and free elections, which the government seems to view as threats to the status quo.

All the same, the work of such groups is far-reaching and touches on themes such as freedom of information and equality in economic opportunities. Although these NGOs are few and based mostly in the capital, Tashkent, and other large cities throughout the country, their work is vital to environmental protection efforts in Uzbekistan. For example, one NGO devotes its energy to advocacy on environmental issues. It provides free legal consultations to local citizens at its office in Tashkent, and has carried out a countrywide series of trainings about Uzbekistan's environmental laws for governmental staff and community leaders. This NGO has also gathered quantitative data about environmental problems that pose security threats, such as nuclear and chemical wastes, and it is

currently organizing this information into a database. A second NGO works on community-based ecotourism in Tashkent province and southern Uzbekistan. This group has identified an ancient site in Akwganski district about one hour outside Tashkent, and is combining forces with local communities and officials to create a base for tourism. In addition, the group plans to offer day trips to Chatkal National Park one hour southeast of Tashkent. A third NGO based in Tashkent concentrates on educational activities for schoolchildren, such as environmentally focused books and camps. This NGO is also working with a local artist to develop a program in which students use natural products to create small souvenirs. This activity will teach them about business and allow them to earn income while they also learn about environmental topics. Still another NGO works on conservation efforts in the Tien Shen Mountains shared by Uzbekistan with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, contributing to regional efforts to create a transboundary nature reserve. Other environmental NGOs work in fields such as journalism and Uzbekistan's implementation of international conventions.

Operating with small staff and limited budgets, these NGOs face a number of challenges including long-term sustainability issues such as financing, marketing, membership recruitment and strategic planning. Another challenge is navigating through and adhering to the range of regulations, including those related to accounting and employment, which cover NGOs. Other issues include maintaining strong working relationships with local communities and government authorities, and working to enhance collaboration among the various NGOs.

These environmental NGOs may encourage the work of other civil society groups by showing not only the government, but most importantly citizens, the need for active civil society groups. They supplement the work of governmental bodies, focusing on activities where local knowledge and expertise is crucial. By addressing specific local conditions, they initiate practical projects that have

the potential to succeed and last. Such endeavors by NGOs are an impetus for social investment, encouraging fellow citizens to become involved in environmental protection matters.

CONCLUSIONS: Many civil society groups in Uzbekistan are finding it increasingly difficult to continue their work. Cumbersome registration and reporting requirements have left some unable to operate. Others have had to limit their activities. To date those most adversely affected have been groups concentrating on political and human rights issues. A bright spot is that groups working on issues related to environmental education, environmental legal advocacy and ecotourism

continue their mission. Their efforts may perhaps set the stage for the future development of civil society groups in Uzbekistan.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Douglas L. Tookey worked for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as Economic & Environmental Officer at the Centre in Tashkent from 2001-04, and he continues to follow environmental issues in the region. Funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) supported the work leading to this article. The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone.

THE CHINA AND EURASIA FORUM QUARTERLY

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

Vol. 4 no. 2

May 2006

Terrorism

 Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program



New issue of the

China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly

The May 2006 issue of the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, edited by Dr. Niklas Swanström, is online, with a theme focus on terrorism.

The issue contains articles by Michael Scheuer, Rensselaer Lee, Yitzhak Shichor, Stephen Blank, Michael Mihalka, and many others.

The issue is freely available online through

www.silkroadstudies.org or
www.cacianalyst.org

FIELD REPORTS

SECURITY SERVICE SCANDAL CAUSES POLITICAL CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN

Nurshat Ababakirov

Omurbek Tekebaev, the parliamentarian and ardent critic of the government, was arrested in the airport of Warsaw with narcotics in his suitcase. As widely expected, the political confrontation between the government and opposition started, being fueled by rather intricate scandal. It is broadly believed that National Security Service (NSS) is involved in an attempt to discredit the Omurbek Tekebaev and the opposition.

On 5 September, Omurbek Tekebaev flew to Poland, through Turkey, to participate in an economic conference. On the airport, he was awaited by the Polish custom services, who were informed beforehand by Interpol in Astana that Omurbek Tekebaev and other accompanying parliamentarians were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and were carrying contraband. While searching Tekebaev's suitcase, they found a 'matryoshka' (nesting doll) with about 600 gram of narcotics hidden in it. It turned out to be heroin with low quality, which, as the Polish law-enforcement agency said, did not have any commercial value.

In a week's time, Tekebaev was acquitted by the Polish court on the ground that "Tekebaev is a victim of political intrigue." "If he was carrying the contraband, then it must have been detected in Kyrgyzstan. He did not have access to his suitcase until he landed in Poland", goes one of the arguments. Another reason was that the public in Kyrgyzstan reacted to it as a "provocation," given that he is a high-ranking politician, and one of the

leaders of Movement for Reforms, which constantly pushes the government to fulfill their demands.

After his arrival from Poland, he was welcomed with applause in the Parliament. The parliamentary commission, which was assembled to investigate how the setup against Tekebaev was hatched, revealed an explanatory document of the deputy chief of Security at Manas international airport, Nadyrbek Mamyrov, a former NSS employee. It stated that the Deputy Chairman of the NSS, Janysh Bakiev, a brother of president Kurmanbek Bakiev, gave an order to Mamyrov to execute a "special operation", to bring Tekebaev's luggage to a certain place. According to a videotape from airport cameras, the starkest evidence in the case, it became clear that Tekebaev's suitcase disappeared for 15 minutes into Mamyrov's office.

On 12 September, Janysh Bakiev, who was recommended by Prime Minister Felix Kulov in March 2006, resigned from his position with the President's approval, on the official pretext of moving "to another position". The Chairman of the NSS, Tabaldiev, also resigned, saying that he, although having no direct involvement in the case, bears "moral" responsibility before Parliamentarian Omurbek Tekebaev.

The government also created a commission to investigate the case, led by Adahan Madumarov, the State Secretary. But parliamentarians like Bolot Sherniyazov and Kanybek Imanaliev, who were included in the commission, left it referring to it as a "commission of matryoshkas". "The government

is shameless. With one hand it sets Tekebaev up, and with another justifies him,” reasoned Kanybek Imanaliev.

After the “scandal” with Omurbek Tekebaev, the parliament embarked on drafting a resolution. It consisted of 12 points: to recognize the “tandem” between the President and Prime Minister as “unconstitutional”, to create a “coalition government” led by the president, to reform the constitution, to shift the NSS from the president’s control to government’s, to institute proceedings against Former Deputy Chairman of NSS, Janysh Bakiev, as well as other measures.

“If it is necessary, I will leave,” said Prime Minister Felix Kulov as a response to the parliament’s criticism of the “tandem”, which was initially created as a means to stabilize the political and social environment after the March 2005 events. The prime minister was one of those who suggested that the NSS should be under the government’s control. The president in his turn is categorical about keeping the NSS at his disposal.

Apparently, the president doesn’t share the views of the parliament in terms of the resolution. “Please, don’t rush; every branch should work within its legal framework. You still need to specify each point. As for the dissolution of the government, you will have time to evaluate its work.” He also said that if his relatives are found guilty, they will bear responsibilities for their crimes. He stressed the importance of the investigation results.

Both Janysh Bakiev and Nadyrbek Mamyrov, who allegedly conducted this “special operation”,

initially did not appear in public. After some silence, they rejected all the accusations of their involvement in the “scandal”, and questioned the authenticity of the incriminating documents. Janysh Bakiev provided an official interview opportunity in the state information agency Kabar, instead of in Akipress, where most journalists were officially called. Most journalists were unable to ask their questions.

In the end, Omurbek Tekebaev believes, nobody will be found guilty for the ‘provocation’. “They are abandoning their initial statements. It is understandable. If they are found guilty, firstly, they will face 15 years of prison, and, secondly, it will mean a political disaster for the incumbent government.”

Bolot Sherniyazov, a parliamentarian and member of the Movement for Reforms, believes that the outcome would have been much worse if Omurbek Tekebaev was detained in Turkey. “This was the primary plan. Istanbul is harsher in terms of drugs.”

Currently there are three inquiries – the government-led commission, the parliamentary commission, and the Prosecutor General’s Office – investigating the case. Nevertheless, it is said that so far the most effective one is the parliamentary commission.

ISLAM KARIMOV ASKS FOR KAZAKH INVESTMENT TO BOLSTER UZBEK ECONOMY

Marat Yermukanov

Kazakhstan is increasingly finding it difficult to reconcile its ambition to spearhead the would-be Central Asian union proposed by Nursultan

Nazarbayev a year ago with the selfish interests of its Central Asian neighbors. But the worsening economic situation in Uzbekistan and the shaky

position of Islam Karimov offers Astana a new opportunity to exert pressure on Tashkent.

On September 4, Uzbek President Islam Karimov arrived in Astana on his first visit to Kazakhstan. He arrived at the invitation, as it was officially announced by the Uzbek Foreign Ministry, of Nursultan Nazarbayev. The Uzbek leader, who incessantly thanked his Kazakh counterpart for the cordial welcome stressing the "historic" friendship between the two nations, lavishly praised the fast growth rate of the Kazakh economy and did not conceal his enchantment with the rapidly expanding capital of Astana. Nursultan Nazarbayev in his turn said that his country was ready to cooperate with its neighbor in all spheres. But he was visibly perplexed when Islam Karimov, overwhelmed by emotions, quite unexpectedly said: "I can give you whatever you ask for!" "We don't ask too much," smiled Nazarbayev.

Observers in Tashkent and Astana can easily guess why the usually assertive Islam Karimov suddenly became so pliant and ostentatiously friendly towards his rival for the leadership in the region. After the withdrawal of the American air force from the Khanabad air base, and the unanimous condemnation of the Andijan bloodbath by the West, the Uzbek economy is in bad shape. The situation throws Tashkent into the arms of Astana, a vitally important economic and political partner. No wonder in the face of dwindling American investments, Islam Karimov stepped up dealings with Kazakhstan in all spheres, trying to remove political obstacles such as interminable disputes over water sharing, and reciprocal accusations of border violations. In the first half of the current year the trade volume between the two countries reached \$293.4 million, showing a 27.3 percent growth rate over the same period last year.

Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed his satisfaction with the growing trade, saying that the year 2006 saw a breakthrough in the development of Kazakh-Uzbek relations. The Development Bank of Kazakhstan opened a branch office in Tashkent. For the next year, both sides plan to link Astana with Tashkent with a railway line. The Kazakh railway

authorities introduced low transit tariffs for exports of Uzbek cotton and fruits to other countries. However small, these steps show the signs of intensification of relations between the two countries. Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov signed nine documents relating to various areas of economic cooperation and made a joint declaration of intentions to develop friendly ties.

The interests of Astana in maintaining good-neighborly ties with Tashkent are motivated also by security reasons. Some political analysts in Kazakhstan assume that by brutally suppressing the Andijan riots, Islam Karimov not only reinforced his despotic rule, but, more importantly, prevented the tide of extremism from spilling over to neighboring countries, including Kazakhstan. In that sense, the argument goes, the iron hand of Islam Karimov deserves credit for the relatively strong political stability in Central Asia. Astana and Moscow would like to see Uzbekistan economically and militarily strong, to face potential challenges from outside destabilizing forces and religious extremism at home. The Uzbek economy, still ailing, showed some encouraging signs of recovery last year with 7 per cent GDP growth and 7.3 percent increase in industrial production. However, with wide-spread unemployment and extreme poverty in densely populated regions, it is a long way from economic prosperity.

In recent months Islam Karimov, unlike the Turkmen leader Saparmurad Niyazov, never opposed the integration between Kazakhstan and Russia, made unequivocal statements in favor of the Eurasian Economic Community, seeing this structure as a basis for uniting all Central Asian states around Russia. Recently, Tashkent made another significant gesture, joining the Collective Security Treaty Organization haughtily snubbed by Karimov for years. Nursultan Nazarbayev welcomed his Uzbek counterpart's proposal to hold joint Uzbek-Kazakh military exercises. It is yet to be seen, who will benefit more from military cooperation. The Uzbek army faces severe material and financial problems.

After the United States and Western Europe turned their backs to Tashkent, Kazakhstan is the best choice as a helping hand for Uzbekistan which badly needs Kazakh investments into its crippled economy. Uzbekistan also wants to reach agreement with Kazakhstan to use jointly the KazSat satellite launched this year.

Despite the seemingly successful development of relations between the two countries, unresolved

problems still remain. Will Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have enough willingness to solve them in a brotherly manner? At any rate, the future shape of the ties between the two countries will be significantly influenced by American and Russian policy in the region.

THE UPCOMING GEORGIAN LOCAL ELECTIONS: TURNOUT IS THE ISSUE

Kakha Jibladze

The Georgian government surprised opposition parties last month when it announced the highly anticipated local elections would be held on October 5th, instead of the November-December date many had believed. While the National Movement has been successfully campaigning throughout the summer, the opposition parties have been forced to catch up to prepare. Although the government has taken some steps to ensure the elections will be free and fair, opposition candidates and activists are accusing the ruling party of stacking the odds in its favor. While the government is almost certain to come out victorious in the ballots, a low turnout could turn into a significant political setback for the administration.

The local elections have been a source of political tension for over a year, when the ruling party passed the current laws concerning local government last summer. According to the current law, the Sakrebulo or city council elects the Tbilisi mayor. However, the 37-seat council is largely staffed in a 'winner takes all' method that favors the ruling party: 25 seats are given to the party with the most votes while the remaining 12 are divided among parties that received over 4% of the vote.

While the opposition, in particular the Republican party, has been fighting the law for the past year, to date there is no indication that the government is

willing to allow the mayor of Tbilisi to be elected via open elections. According to Nino Burjanadze, the speaker of the parliament, while 'eventually' there should be open elections for mayors, to date the Georgian population is 'not ready' for the responsibility.

While no one believes the opposition has much of a chance to win the majority in the Sakrebulo, several prominent opposition leaders have announced their intentions to run for Tbilisi mayor, including influential former foreign minister Salome Zourabishvili and industrialist Gogi Topadze.

The outlook for the opposition for the elections as a whole – which include positions in local governments outside of Tbilisi – is grim according to political analysts. While opposition leaders tried to form a bloc to increase their chances, the early election date has thrown their plans into havoc. According to Georgian media reports, there is slim chance that they will succeed in forming any blocs; four parties are boycotting the elections and Zourabishvili's party, Georgia's Way, has made it clear it will not cooperate with any other party during the election.

While Zourabishvili is widely considered one of the strongest political candidates in the country, Georgian media sources began running stories last

week indicating that her party, Georgia's Way, might implode before the elections even take place. In addition, the New Rights, another semi-successful opposition party, dropped out of the elections after they failed to convince media tycoon Badri Patarkatsishvili to run for the Tbilisi mayor post on their ticket. According to Patarkatsishvili, his victory could 'have triggered a confrontation and even a split in the governmental structure and Georgia's enemies could have taken advantage of this situation.'

Opposition candidates are also pointing the finger at a new addition to the election code: according to a decision made by the Central Election Commission last week, a party's candidate for the position of Tbilisi mayor does not have to earn his or her seat in the party's block at the city council by winning a district election, which is good news for the heavily favored National Movement candidate (and current Tbilisi mayor) Gigi Ugulava.

Another obstacle created by the early deadline is the fact that current MPs who are planning on running in the election must temporarily relinquish their status in order to participate. The deadline to do so was September 11 although the parliament restarted its fall session on the 12th. According to members of

the ruling party, those who were interested in participating in the elections should have called an emergency session of the parliament. However members of the opposition believed this would have been against the constitution.

The government's decision to schedule elections so early does not quiet the fears that the election will be held in an open and fair manner. While the opposition parties do not have much chance to win the 25-seat majority in the Tbilisi city council, it is in the ruling party's interest to ensure fair elections for all participators. According to some political analysts, while the election results are really a foregone conclusion due to the general weakness of the opposition parties, the National Movement has more at stake than winning posts in the local councils and mayoral positions: a low turnout on election day could be a strong message of voter dissatisfaction as the Rose Revolution gears up for its third anniversary. Any steps the government can take to ensure the elections are as fair and open as possible – and as assessable as possible to all potential voters – will go a long way in relieving some of the anti-government rhetoric that has been gaining momentum over the past eight months.

LEADER OF ISLAMIC PARTY OF TURKESTAN ELIMINATED BY KYRGYZ SECURITY SERVICE

Joldosh Osmonov

Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service (NSS) conducted a special operation during which a leader of the Islamic Party of Turkestan, Rasul Akhunov, was killed. According to the security services, he was one of the top leaders of this terrorist organization. The NSS assures that this operation reduced the threat of terrorist acts on the territory of Kyrgyzstan.

The Special Forces of the National Security Service (NSS) conducted an anti-terrorist operation with the purpose of eliminating one of the leaders of international terrorist organization "Islamic Party of Turkestan" (IPT), former the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Rasul Akhunov. The operation took place in one of the densely populated districts of Osh, which is the biggest city in the south of Kyrgyzstan, on September 2. The NSS received information that the IPT leader was

staying in a private house in Osh city. The security forces surrounded the house and offered Akhunov to give up voluntarily, but Akhunov refused and responded with gunfire. The group had to storm the house and killed the resisting terrorist.

According to the NSS, the operation was conducted successfully, although one of the members of the special forces was wounded during the storming. After the operation was completed, guns and grenades were found during a search of the house.

The Kyrgyz intelligence service claims that Rasul Akhunov was an organizer of the attacks on the "Lyakkan" border post in Tajikistan, where his group wielded 11 submachine guns, 1 grenade launcher, grenades, and the same day attacked the "Ak-Turpak" border post in the Batken oblast of Kyrgyzstan, where two Kyrgyz border guards were killed. Apart from this, according to the NSS, he planned and organized the explosion in the Osh oblast administration building in December 2005.

It is notable that the trial of six IPT members, who attacked the Tajik and Kyrgyz border posts in May in cooperation with Akhunov, began in the Osh city court on August 28, 2006. As public prosecutor Ryskul Baktybaev stated at the court, these defendants are suspected of attacking the border posts, organizing a gang, and kindling interethnic and religious conflict. According to Baktybaev, the court proceedings will last at least for a month.

Rasul Akhunov (known as "Bahtier," "Lieutenant," and "Murod") was born in 1968 in the Namangan oblast of Uzbekistan. He was wanted for committing serious crimes and organizing terrorist acts on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Akhunov, along with Juma Namamgani and Tahir Yuldashev, was one of the top five leaders of Islamic Party of Turkestan. Together with Tahir Yuldashev, he was trained in foreign terrorist camps.

Meanwhile, it became known that Akhunov was the fourth passenger traveling in a car that belonged to Imam Muhammadrafik Kamalov on August 6, 2006. That day, Imam Kamalov and two IPT members, Ayubhodji Shahobidinov and Fathullo Rahimov,

were killed during a security service anti-terrorist operation in Jalalabad. When the security services demanded the car to stop, it ignored the order. The passengers of the car opened fire. The security responded, and three people in the car were killed. As it turned out, these two terrorists opened fire in order to cover Akhunov. According to the NSS, the role of Imam Kamalov – whether he was a hostage or an accomplice of the terrorists – is still not ascertained.

The head of the NSS, Busurmankul Tabaldiev, stated at the press conference in Bishkek on September 4, 2006, that the IPT top controlling group is fully eliminated now. He also said that such a success was the result of planned operations: "The latest operations of the NSS were directed to liquidate the top people within the organization." The NSS head assured that his department will keep fighting against terrorists. At the same time, he noted that the NSS will also work on convincing ordinary members of such organizations and groups to return to a peaceful and normal life. For these purposes, the NSS has extended the deadline for militants to lay down their arms to October 1, 2006.

In early August 2006, the Osh Oblast Department of the NSS addressed members of illegal armed groups through local television, urging them to voluntarily surrender by September 1, 2006. As the NSS reports, two men have taken up the call so far.

In view of the latest special operations, the NSS claims that the threat of terrorist acts is not relevant in Kyrgyzstan any longer. "There is no threat of terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan anymore and autumn will pass quietly," stated the NSS head with confidence at a press conference on September 4, 2006.

Parliament also discussed the situation surrounding the NSS anti-terrorist operations while screening the new "Anti-terrorist law," initiated by the NSS leadership and Parliament member Rashid Tagaev, at the parliamentary session on September 5, 2006. This new law foresees the creation of an Anti-Terrorist Center under the NSS. Many parliamentarians stated that this law will

significantly strengthen the powers of the National Security Service. Nevertheless, most lawmakers (48 votes) voted for the draft bill at a parliamentary session on September 7, 2006.

KAZAKH MIGRANT-LEGALIZATION PROGRAM CONTINUES

7 September

Under the terms of a program to legalize migrant workers in Kazakhstan, a total of 45,440 such workers have been registered by the Interior Ministry. They include 33,500 Uzbek citizens (74.4 percent of the total), 6,000 Kyrgyz citizens (13.4 percent), 1,850 Russian citizens (4.1 percent), and 1,450 Tajik citizens (3.2 percent). Most of the migrants (12,935 individuals) were registered in Almaty and Almaty province. Most are employed in the construction industry (24,682), with smaller numbers employed in the service sector (3,946) and agriculture (3,033). The program, which is expected to register 100,000 migrant workers by the end of the year, allows illegal migrants who entered Kazakhstan less than 60 days before the law was passed earlier this summer to legalize their status. The Interior Ministry estimates that Kazakhstan is currently home to 200,000-300,000 illegal migrant workers from CIS countries. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

GEORGIA CLASHES WITH REBEL FORCES

9 September

Four people are reported to have been killed in clashes in Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia. Georgian police said they were fired upon as they tracked smugglers. One of their number died and two were hurt. However South Ossetian police said they came under fire from Georgian forces using heavy small arms and mortars, and that three of their number died. South Ossetia is under a tense stand-off between Georgian forces and separatists, who are backed by Russia. Last weekend a helicopter carrying Georgia's defence minister over the region was shot at. After the latest clash Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili said on

NEWS DIGEST

television: "Our task today is not to yield to any large-scale provocations. Time is on Georgia's side." Mr Saakashvili vowed on his election in 2004 to reunite the country, after its violent rupture in the early 1990s. Spasms of violence have interrupted a tense ceasefire. The latest clashes broke out at around 1100 (0800 GMT) on Friday. Later, a South Ossetian government spokeswoman Irina Gagloyeva said Georgian forces had opened fire with grenade-launchers and machine guns on the region's capital, Tskhinvali, at around midnight and that South Ossetian forces had returned fire. She said there were no reported injuries. Georgian officials could not be reached for comment, the Associated Press said. Georgia's foreign ministry said the Russian peacekeeping deployment in the region had done little to step in and prevent the violence. "Friday's armed incident in the Tskhinvali region yet again exposed the unwillingness of Russian peacekeepers to safeguard the peace process in the conflict zone," it said. (BBC)

ONE MILITANT ELIMINATED, THREE SURRENDER IN CHECHNYA

10 September

An active member of a criminal armed group was eliminated in a sweep operation in Argun early on Sunday, Chechen Interior Ministry spokesman Magomed Deniyev told Interfax. "The militant had been on the federal wanted list on suspicion of committing serious crimes. He was eliminated in an exchange of fire after he offered resistance. He had a grenade which he failed to set off," Deniyev said. Firearms and ammunition were seized at the scene. None of the law enforcement officers, involved in the operation, was injured. Deniyev also said that unidentified men fired three shots with a shoulder-held grenade launcher at the premises of a police

department in the Shelkovskoi district. None of the police officers was hurt. An operation was launched to track down the assailants. In other developments, three former militants have surrendered to law enforcement services. One of them, a resident of the village of Assinovskaya, told the police that he had been a member of the Khachukayev criminal armed group and that he had surrendered his Kalashnikov assault rifle after he quit the illegal armed group. Another militant, who had previously collaborated with the Dadayev criminal armed group, surrendered in the Ashatoi district. The evidence provided by the ex-militants is being checked. (Interfax)

SOUTH OSSETIAN INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM SLATED FOR NOV 12

11 September

The self-proclaimed republic of South Ossetia will hold a referendum on its independence on November 12, 2006, head of its information and press committee Irina Gagloyeva has announced. She said the decree of South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity setting the date for the referendum was announced at a Monday conference of top government officials of the breakaway territory. (Interfax)

GEORGIA OPPOSITION MEMBER SENTENCED TO 2 MONTHS IN PRISON

11 September

The city court of Tbilisi sentenced to two months of preliminary imprisonment on Monday Alexander Chumburidze, a Georgian citizen, who, according to the law enforcement agencies, planned to blow up the office of the ruling United National Movement Party. The court passed judgement on the basis of the application of the Tbilisi prosecutor's office, rejecting at the same time the application of his lawyer on releasing Chumburidze on bail amounting to 10,000 lari (5,700 dollars). Alexander Chumburidze was arrested on September 8 on charges of "the intention to stage an explosion in the office of the United National Movement Party." Georgian Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili said on September 9 that "400 grams of TNT and a home-made explosive liquid in a bottle were confiscated from him during his arrest." "We had information about the intentions of Chumburidze. This is why our anti-terrorist centre kept him under observation over the past few days. We have audio materials, which feature him talking about his intentions, as well a video materials, showing him

purchase the explosives," he added. According to Merabishvili, "Chumburidze served in the Georgian security service, in the Alpha special task group, in 1993-1995, i.e. at the time when it was headed by Igor Georgadze." He said that during the past few years Chumburidze had been a member of the Justice Party (of which Igor Georgadze is the leader) and had closely cooperated with the United Communist Party of Georgia, headed by Panteleimon Georgadze, who is the father of Igor Georgadze. (Itar-Tass)

AZERI PRESIDENT OBJECTS TO IDENTIFICATION OF ISLAM WITH TERRORISM

11 September

It is impermissible to identify Islam with terrorism, Azeri President Islam Aliev stated here on Monday, addressing the opening meeting of the Fifth Conference of Tourism Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference nations (OIC). The president noted that a terrible act of terrorism was committed in the United States exactly five years ago, which claimed the lives of many innocent people. The Islamic world had condemned it, he stressed. "Today, some forces are endeavouring to identify Islam with terrorism. This is impermissible. Those who are trying to identify Islam and terrorism are committing an aggression against one of the world religions," Aliev stated. "Islam is a religion of patience and tolerance," the president stressed. "We want to live in peace with all the world," he added. It is necessary to pool the efforts of all the nations in order to make the fight against terrorism effective, the Azerbaijan leader stressed. "It is impossible to overcome this evil single-handed," he added. The Azerbaijan leader believes the Islamic world is a big family, which should be "used to strengthen universal stability and security". Aliev also stressed the importance of the solidarity of Moslem nations. The stronger OIC is, the stronger will be our positions and our influence on the global processes," the president of Azerbaijan stated. Tourism ministers of forty of the fifty-seven OIC countries are attending the Baku conference, as well as representatives of ten international organisations, including the World Tourism Organisation. (Itar-Tass)

KYRGYZSTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE ADMINISTRATION HAND IN RESIGNATION

12 September

Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service senior officials have submitted their resignation. Forced to resign was deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service, brother of president Kurmanbek Bakiyev Janysh Bakiyev, REGNUM correspondent reports. Head of republic sanctioned his dismissal from office. Head of the national security Busurmankul Tabaldiyev also announced his resignation at the parliamentary session. The reason for the resignation is the incident of detainment in Warsaw Kyrgyzstan deputy Omurbek Tekebayev. A parliamentary commission asserts that a copy of a letter by Manas airport vice president Nadyrbek Mamurov to Kyrgyzstan president is available, in which Mamurov informs of the deputy Tekebayev detainment operation, allegedly organized by Janysh Bakiyev. (Regnum)

NATO 'MUST BOOST AFGHAN NUMBERS'

12 September

Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has asked the 26 members of the alliance to heed calls for more international troops for Afghanistan. He told the BBC some Nato members were carrying more of the burden than others in the fight against the Taleban. Nato leaders have asked members to pledge some 2,500 extra troops. Nato leads the International Security and Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan, which currently includes at least 18,500 personnel. Some 37 nations have committed troops to the Isaf deployment. Conflict between international troops and Taleban fighters has grown in intensity this year, especially in the southern regions of Kandahar and Helmand. The militants, who were ousted from government in 2001 by Nato-backed forces, have proved to be a far more determined enemy than anticipated, says the BBC's Alastair Leithead in the capital, Kabul. Speaking to the BBC a day after meeting alliance ambassadors, Mr de Hoop Scheffer said he was working continuously in an effort to boost Nato numbers in Afghanistan. "The question here is that nations should live up to what they promised," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. "A 26-nation alliance should show this solidarity." Nato officials are to hold a "force generation conference" on the troop appeal in Belgium on Wednesday. The secretary general's call was backed by the international commander in Afghanistan, Lt Gen David Richards. Gen Richards told the Financial Times that Nato members knew 18 months ago that commanders in Afghanistan wanted a reserve force of 1,000 troops, plus 1,500 air support troops which

the alliance's supreme commander called for last week. "That requirement has never been met by nations. The bit it lacked was a hard-hitting reserve of about 1,000 people that I can use wherever I need to use it throughout Afghanistan, although obviously its focus would be the south." Despite taking regular casualties, Gen Richards insisted international forces were establishing "psychological ascendancy" over the Taleban. Nevertheless, some commanders apparently remain concerned about the dangers of committing troops to southern Afghanistan. In some cases, our correspondent says, they are unwilling even to change rules of engagement to allow the movement of soldiers from quieter and safer parts of the country to fight in the south. There is a serious concern on the ground that the extra troops just will not be found and Isaf will have to make do with what it has got, under-resourced or not, he adds. (BBC)

KAZAKH STAGE FOR RELIGIOUS EVENT

13 September

More than 40 spiritual leaders from around the world are in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, for the Congress of World and Traditional Religions. The event was organised by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, to promote security and stability through religious tolerance and understanding. Critics say it was also designed to promote Kazakhstan. Delegates are meeting beneath the glass roof of a 62m (190 foot) pyramid built by British architect Norman Foster. For two days, seated in the building's spaceship-like giant hall, Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Buddhist spiritual leaders have discussed religious freedom and tolerance. Much of the conversation has focused on the Middle East and the recent war in Lebanon. The idea for this dialogue belongs to President Nazarbayev, and its goal, he says, is to enhance peace and security worldwide. He calls his own country an example of such tolerance. But beyond the walls of the spectacular pyramid, there are concerns that the Kazakh government, although more tolerant than others in Central Asia, has recently itself moved to restrict religious freedoms. Muslim groups that are outside state control and non-traditional groups like Hare Khrisna have complained about official harassment. This is one of the reasons why critics have questioned whether the Congress was as much aimed at serving President Nazarbayev's goal of promoting his country, as it was designed to promote world peace. Oil and uranium-rich Kazakhstan is an emerging economic

giant and President Nazarbayev has ambitions to turn it into a serious political player too. But Kazakhstan's rare post Soviet economic success is increasingly overshadowed by question marks over democracy and freedom. Not a single election here, observers say, has lived up to international standards and the media are tightly controlled by the state. While during the Congress President Nazarbayev has called on his guests to help foster democratic values worldwide, his opponents say more effort needs to be put into promoting them inside the country too. (BBC)

TURKEY: ILHAM ALIYEV TO SPEAK AT TENTH CONGRESS OF TURK COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES' FRIENDSHIP, BROTHERHOOD, AND COOPERATION

13 September

Following Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's invitation, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev will take part in an opening ceremony of the tenth congress of Turk countries and communities' friendship, brotherhood, and cooperation at Kemer resort area of Antalya; Azerbaijani Public television informed, referring to Azerbaijani Ambassador to Turkey Zakir Gashimov. Governmental officials, scientists, businessmen, civil society activists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Northern Cyprus, as well as from Tajikistan and Mongolia will attend the event, which will be next important step, aimed at developing closer ties between Turk countries. (Regnum)

GROUP SAYS REPORTER DIED IN TURKMENISTAN

14 September

A human rights activist and journalist has died in prison in Turkmenistan, according to a rights group whose director blamed the government Thursday for what he said appeared to have been her violent death. The body of Ogulsapar Muradova had a major head injury and there was evidence of strangulation, said Aaron Rhodes, executive director of the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, citing contacts in the tightly controlled Central Asian nation. "It's an extremely serious crime that has taken place," Rhodes said. "First of all, because she was unfairly tried and imprisoned, and now she appears to have been the victim of an extrajudicial killing." Muradova was associated with the Bulgaria-based Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation rights group,

and was also a reporter with U.S.-funded Radio Liberty. She and two other rights defenders were arrested in June and later handed down sentences ranging from six to seven years, according to the International Helsinki Foundation. The charges were unclear. The press freedom advocacy group Reporters Without Borders also demanded a full investigation into Muradova's death, and expressed concern about the other two prisoners, one of whom it said was an assistant for French television production company Galaxie-Press. It said Muradova's adult children had been shown her body at a morgue in the capital, Ashgabat. Radio Liberty said Turkmen authorities had declined the family's request that a medical examination be done at the morgue but allowed Muradova's two adult daughters to take their mother's body home after they appealed for help to the U.S. Embassy. The family called a medical examiner but Turkmen security agents surrounded the apartment building and allowed no visitors to the Muradova family, it said. (AP)

AZERBAIJANI, ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS TO DISCUSS KARABAKH SETTLEMENT

14 September

The Azeri and Armenian foreign ministers will hold a meeting on the Karabakh settlement on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York City on September 25-26, Azeri Foreign Ministry spokesman Tair Tagizade told Interfax. Azeri Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov and the OSCE Minsk Group cochairman reached the agreement during negotiations in London on Wednesday, he said. "The whole agenda of the negotiations was discussed from 12:45 p.m. through 5:00 p.m. GMT. The meeting was not easy, but it was positive," Tagizade said. The London meeting was targeted for "another step" in the promotion of the peace process. "As a result, the ministers will meet in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session on September 25 or 26," he said. (Interfax)

GEORGIA, TAJIKISTAN TO BE PREVENTED FROM VOTING AT UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

14 September

Ten states, including Georgia and Tajikistan, will not be able to participate in voting in the United Nations' General Assembly, due to their failure to pay their fees to the UN, the UN News Center said

on Thursday. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan sent a letter to the chairman of the General Assembly saying that the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe. (Interfax)

BAKIYEV DENIES MEETING BEREZOVSKY 14 September

Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has denied meeting with businessman Boris Berezovsky. "I have never seen or met him," Bakiyev said at the parliament on Thursday. The parliament was informed on Tuesday that Berezovsky allegedly visited Kyrgyzstan and met with Bakiyev in late July. The report claimed that Bakiyev's son Maxim and deputy head of the Kyrgyz Border Service Zarif Khudaiberdiyev met Berezovsky at the airport. Berezovsky, who currently resides in London, was put on the international wanted list by Russia on suspicion of attempting to unlawfully seize power. (Interfax)

KYRGYZ PRESIDENT DISMISSES CALLS FOR HIS RESIGNATION 15 September

Speaking during a session of parliament, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev dismissed on September 14 opposition demands calling for his resignation over the escalating political crisis involving an alleged conspiracy to discredit opposition leader Omurbek Tekebaev. Bakiev argued that "there are no reasons or circumstances for my resignation" and challenged the opposition to seek his impeachment "in accordance with the law." Opposition deputies are leading a mounting demand for an official clarification of the circumstances around the recent arrest of Tekebaev in Poland after members of the Kyrgyz National Security Service (SNB) allegedly planted drugs in his luggage (RFE/RL).

KAZAKH PRESIDENT OPENS HIGH-TECH PARK

15 September
Nursultan Nazarbaev inaugurated Kazakhstan's largest information-technology (IT) park outside the former capital Almaty on September 15. The new IT park, located within the special economic zone established in 2003 in the village of Alatau, seeks to attract global IT companies and aims to emerge as an "intellectual center" for the region. Nazarbaev said that nearly a dozen of the world's leading IT and communication companies have

already committed to offices and training centers in the Alatau IT City information-technology park. (KazInform)

CHINA PM ARRIVES IN DUSHANBE FOR THREE-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT

15 September

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao plans to discuss with the Tajik leadership in Dushanbe the whole range of issues of trade, economic, military and technical cooperation, says a written statement of Wen Jiabao upon his arrival in the Dushanbe airport on Thursday night. "Over 14 years of diplomatic relations, bilateral ties between the two countries in the political, trade, economic, transport and educational spheres have expanded," the document stresses. According to the Chinese prime minister, "close interaction is also carried out in settlement of international regional problems." "The border issue has been finally and completely settled, and today the border line has turned into a line of everlasting friendship and peaceful co-existence of two peoples." As Wen Jiabao noted, developing relations of good-neighbourliness, friendship and mutually advantageous cooperation between China and Tajikistan in many respects promote ensuring of peace and stability both in the region and the whole world. During a three-day official visit, the Chinese prime minister will take part in the fifth meeting of the Council of Prime Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation which is opening in Dushanbe on Friday. In the afternoon, Wen Jiabao will hold talks with Tajik Prime Minister Akil Akilov, and on September 16, with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov. (Itar-Tass)

ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW TALKS WITH AZERBAIJAN

15 September

Vardan Oskanian said on September 14 that another round of talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart is planned for later in the month, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Speaking to journalists in Yerevan, the foreign minister added that Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to meet during the New York meeting of the UN General Assembly in an attempt to restart the peace talks aimed at resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The format of the talks, set for September 25-26, will be limited to the foreign ministers but are intended to achieve progress in anticipation of a subsequent meeting

between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents sometime before the end of the year. But the talks will depend on Azerbaijan's attempt to call for a possible UN debate on the Karabakh conflict, as Oskanian said that "there will be a question mark over the meeting of the ministers until it becomes clear what happens at the UN." (RFE/RL)

GEORGIA EXPRESSES INDIGNATION OVER UPCOMING S. OSSETIAN REFERENDUM

15 September

The Georgian Foreign Ministry in a Friday statement expressed deep indignation over ongoing processes in breakaway South Ossetia and the proposed referendum there slated for November 12. It says that the independence referendum "lacks any legitimate basis and goes against the peaceful settlement of the conflict." The ministry regrets "the open support for the referendum by high-ranking Russian politicians." (Interfax)

NOMINATION OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES STARTS IN TAJIKISTAN

16 September

On September 16, congresses of the Agrarian Party and the Socialist Party (Gaffarov's Faction) have started, a REGNUM correspondent reports. Leader of the Agrarian Party Amir Karakulov is nominated as the party's presidential contender. The Socialists have nominated their leader too: Abdukhalim Gaffarof is named the party's presidential contender. However, as the law on election of the president of Tajikistan says, official nomination of the candidates is allowed only in 50 days before the election, a decision is made to continue the congresses tomorrow, on September 17, so the candidacies will be proposed officially. Presidential election is to be held on November 6. (Regnum)

ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WARNS THAT UN ACTION DIVERTS FROM KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS

16 September

Speaking to reporters in Yerevan following an annual meeting of the Armenian diplomatic corps, Vardan Oskanian warned on September 16 that a recent Azerbaijani diplomatic initiative in the United Nations "diverts attention" from the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and may even "slow it down." The foreign minister was referring to an initiative of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM group seeking to add the issue of the region's "frozen" conflicts to

the agenda of the UN General Assembly. Oskanian characterized this as a "new challenge" for Armenia, but said that it stems from the fact that "pressure on Azerbaijan is growing." He earlier warned of "a question mark" over future peace talks if Azerbaijan proceeded with the UN initiative. (Arminfo)

THREE MILITANTS VOLUNTARILY SURRENDER IN CHECHNYA

17 September

Three members of criminal armed groups have applied for amnesty in Chechnya in the past 24 hours, Chechen Interior Ministry spokesman Magomed Deniyev told Interfax on Sunday. "Two of them supplied food and clothes to the illegal armed group, led by field commander Mitaliyev. The other, a resident of Grozny, fought against federal troops in 1995-96," Deniyev said. A local resident has voluntarily surrendered 393 shells, two mines and 31.5 kilograms of explosives in the Shatoi district. "The man said he had found the ammunition and explosives in a forest, on the outskirts of a village," Deniyev said. (Interfax)

UZBEK COURT SENTENCES IMAM TO LENGTHY PRISON TERM

18 September

An Uzbek regional court in Tashkent issued a ruling on September 15 sentencing prominent imam Ruhiddin Fakhriiddinov to a 17-year prison term, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reported. Rakhriiddinov was convicted on charges of religious extremism and terrorism in a closed trial held in the town of Chirchiq, north of Tashkent. Fakhriiddinov, who was captured in southern Kazakhstan in November 2005 after evading arrest since 1998, is accused by the Uzbek authorities of being a leader of the banned radical Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). (RFE/RL)

ABKHAZIA WILL RECOGNIZE RESULTS OF TRANSDNIESTRIA REFERENDUM - LEADER

18 September

Sergei Bagapsh, president of the breakaway republic of Abkhazia, has said his republic fully supports the aspirations of the self-proclaimed republic of Transdniestria toward independence and integration with Russia. "We fully recognize the results of the referendum held in Transdniestria on Sunday. Abkhazia supports the aspirations of Transdniestria toward independence and its choice of unification with Russia," he told Interfax on Monday. "In the

morning I talked on the phone with President of Transdnestria Igor Smirnov and congratulated him on the success of the referendum," Bagapsh said. Speaking of the possibility of an independence referendum in Abkhazia he said: "Our republic had an independence referendum in 1999. Abkhazia is an independent state and we are not planning any repeat referendum." (Interfax)

OVER \$53 MLN TO BE SPENT IN KAZAKHSTAN ON AIDS FIGHTING PROGRAM

18 September

Kazakhstan has developed a programme for fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic for 2006-2010. About 6.7 billion tenge (over 53 million US dollars) are to be allotted for its implementation, Kazakhs Health Minister Yerbolat Dosayev told journalists on Monday. According to the minister, "The programme's aim is to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country at the level of 0.5 percent among the population aged from 15 to 49 at the end of 2010." Over 5,000 HIV-infected has been officially registered in Kazakhstan and, according to a report on the global AIDS epidemic made public in May by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the epidemic in this Central Asian country is spreading at a quick pace. The programme envisages measures aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS in five key spheres – the improvement of the policy of legal relations, efficient implementation of prevention programmes, as well as medical treatment, care and support of HIV-infected and people having AIDS, as well as implementation of special social programmes for those affected by HIV infection. (Itar-Tass)

SCO SUMMIT CONCLUDES IN TAJIKISTAN

18 September

A prime-ministerial summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) concluded in the Tajik capital Dushanbe on September 15, RFE/RL's Tajik Service and Asia-Plus reported. Delegates of the SCO summit issued a statement pledging to improve the transport network connecting their countries and vowing to develop new energy export routes that would serve SCO member states. The statement also called for the formation of a new "SCO Energy Club," in order to coordinate regional energy policy and promote cooperation in the energy sector among SCO members. The summit was attended by the

prime ministers of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and the Uzbek deputy prime minister, as well as representatives from SCO observer states Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan. Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov also met with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao on the sidelines of the summit and reviewed plans for expanding bilateral trade and investment, as well as discussing details of the upcoming joint military exercises, Tajik state television reported. China held its first-ever joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan in 2002 and with Kazakhstan earlier this year. (RFE/RL)

RUSSIAN CONVOY PREVENTED FROM CROSSING GEORGIAN BORDER

19 September

Six vehicles carrying fuel and lubricants to Russian military bases in Georgia via Azerbaijan are not being allowed to cross the Georgian border, Deputy Commander of the Russian forces in the South Caucasus Col. Vladimir Kuparadze told Interfax-AVN on Tuesday. "Six vehicles have been in Baku since September 7. Every day the Russian military are promised they will be given Georgian visas, but so far this has not happened and no explanations have been given," he said. The refusal to issue visas crudely violates the agreement on the operation of Russian bases in Georgia, he said. "Such obstacles should not be created," he said. Meanwhile, Georgian Deputy Defense Minister Mamuka Kudava told the press the reasons for the delay is that "this amount of fuel and food would have been sufficient for half of the population of Tbilisi, the cargo requires customs clearance." (Interfax)

TALIBAN SAY KILLED KIDNAPPED TURK IN AFGHANISTAN

19 September

Taliban guerrillas said on Tuesday they had killed a Turk kidnapped last month after the Turkish construction company he worked for ignored an ultimatum to leave Afghanistan. The Taliban, fighting an intensified insurgency across the Afghan south and east, regard companies involved in reconstruction as supporting the U.S.-led military involvement in the country. A Taliban spokesman, Qari Mohammad Yousuf, said the Taliban had shot dead the Turk in the southern province of Helmand. His body had been dumped, he said. "We killed him because the company failed to listen to our demand to pull out of Afghanistan," Yousuf said by telephone from an undisclosed location. The Turk,

who worked for a security firm, was abducted on August 28 in an ambush in Helmand. A Turkish engineer with the Ankara-based Kolin Insaat construction company was killed in the ambush, Turkish officials said. The Interior Ministry and the Turkish embassy in Kabul said they were trying to check the Taliban claim. Turkish media identified the man as Mustafa Asimi. Yousuf said on Saturday the Taliban were giving a 24-hour deadline for the company to pull out of Afghanistan or they would kill the man. He later said more time was being given for negotiations. Dozens of road and telecommunications workers as well as aid workers, have been kidnapped, or killed or wounded in ambushes, in recent years. Some of those kidnapped have been freed. The highest level of violence since the Taliban were ousted in 2001 has largely crippled aid and reconstruction work in much of the south and east. About 40,000 NATO and U.S.-led troops are in Afghanistan trying to push back the Taliban and ensure enough security for development. But the violence shows no sign of easing. Nineteen people were killed in three separate blasts on Monday. Among them were four Canadian soldiers, killed by a suicide bomber while they were bringing aid to villagers in a volatile southern district. (Reuters)

CHECHEN RESISTANCE LEADER'S BROTHER VANISHES

19 September

Akhmad Umarov, who reportedly turned himself in to pro-Moscow Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov on August 18 in response to FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev's July appeal to militants in the North Caucasus to surrender, disappeared several days after footage of his surrender was screened on Russian television, the resistance website kavkazcenter.com reported on September 15. None of Umarov's relatives or friends have any idea of his whereabouts. Umarov's brother Doku succeeded Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev in July as resistance commander and president of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria. (RFE/RL)

CHECHEN, INGUSH PARLIAMENT SPEAKERS APPEAL FOR CALM

19 September

Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov and Makhmud Sakalov, chairmen of the lower chambers of the Chechen and Ingush parliaments respectively, issued a joint appeal on September 15 in the wake of the shoot-out two days earlier on the border between those two

federation subjects between Chechen Interior Ministry special forces (OMON) and Ingush traffic police in which eight men died, ingushetiya.ru reported. The two men cautioned against construing the incident as an interethnic clash, and they stressed the need for law-enforcement agencies in the two republics to coordinate their activities more closely when conducting cross-border operations. Issa Kostoev, who worked for three decades in the Interior Ministry prior to his election as Ingushetia's representative to the Federation Council, similarly argued in a September 15 interview with regnum.ru that the law-enforcement agencies of the various North Caucasus republics should draft clear ground rules for conducting and coordinating such cross-border operations. He described the September 13 shoot-out as the direct consequence of "an appallingly laid-back approach" on the part of the leaders of the ministries involved. (RFE/RL)

ARMENIAN PART LEADER: ARMENIAN - USA RELATIONS ARE IN DANGER

19 September

Leader of the opposition Democratic Fatherland Party Petros Makeyan believes both Armenia-USA relations and Armenia's authority in the world "are in danger." According to him, the USA has good relations only with the countries that are devoted to democracy and respect human rights, which for Armenia is an abstract concept. "Disrespect for Armenia" by the USA, says Petros Makeyan, is confirmed by the fact that the USA, opinion of which is very respectable in the UN, allowed introducing the issue of "frozen conflicts" into the agenda of the 61st session of the UN General Assembly under the GUAM initiative. "Armenia's prestige at international institutions decreases, and for Russia we are an outpost," he says. Besides, Petros Makeyan states that if the main for Armenia political vectors (recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict) are settled, Armenia will disappear from the geopolitical arena and stop being interesting for world powers. Moreover, appointment of the new US ambassador to Armenia will not bring about radical changes in the Armenian-US relations, Makeyan believes. (regnum.ru)

INTERNET AND LONG-DISTANCE NETWORK PHONE CONNECTION IN

SOUTH OSSETIA OUT OF ORDER FOR THREE DAYS ALREADY

19 September

Internet and long-distance network phone connection in South Ossetia has been out of order for three days already. The fault was caused by damage to a communication line in Gori (Georgia). A Regnum correspondent informed on it at South Ossetia's national communication company. As they say at the company, the fault was supposed to be repaired as early as until midday of September 18, however, the communication line is still out of order. As a result, South Ossetian residents have no opportunity to call up Russia, Georgia and other countries, neither they can use Internet, which is provided by Georgia Online Company (Georgia). At present moment, Internet connection is functioning only in places provided with satellite communication. Long-distance network services in South Ossetia are provided by Telecom Georgia Company. At the same time, a project of fiber-optics communication with Russia is being implemented in Russia, which will allow to provide South Ossetian residents with a more qualitative long-distance network services. (regnum.ru)

AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT CALLS ON AZERBAIJANI, TURKISH DIASPORAS TO CONSOLIDATE

19 September

In a speech at a two-day conference on Turkic friendship and solidarity held in Antalya, Turkey, Ilham Aliyev called on September 18 for Azeri and Turkish groups living outside of their countries to mobilize and consolidate, Turan and ANS-TV reported. Referring to the seizure of several districts of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces at the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Aliyev vowed that "Azerbaijan will not allow its territory to be turned into a second Armenian state" and warned that "we will mobilize all of our forces: political, diplomatic, economic, and military, and we will liberate our land." Aliyev further called on the Azeri and Turkish diaspora organizations to consolidate to oppose "Armenian propaganda" regarding Azerbaijan and Turkey and welcomed plans to convene a joint forum of Azeri and Turkish diaspora organizations in Azerbaijan next year. (RFE/RL)

