

# Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute*  
*Silk Road Studies Program*



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# THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## KADYROV-ZAKAYEV TALKS SPARK CONCERNS IN MOSCOW

*Dmitry Shlapentokh*

*Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov recently offered Akhmed Zakayev, usually considered a quite moderate representative of the North Caucasian insurgency, a safe return to Chechnya and a potential post in the Chechen administration. While Moscow does not consider Zakayev himself to be a dangerous figure, the offer strengthened Moscow's concerns over Kadyrov's increasing self-consciousness. Moreover, the issue has added to what Moscow perceives as a potentially harmful inspiration of Kadyrov's example for the segments of Russian Muslims advocating increasing autonomy from the centre.*

**BACKGROUND:** Chechnya's president Ramzan Kadyrov recently invited Akhmed Zakayev, a moderate representative of the militant opposition, to return to Chechnya. Kadyrov had promised him a comfortable, professional life and even a possible position in his government. Zakayev seemed ready to accept Kadyrov's offer and engaged in several phone conversations with him. Still, he was a too important member of the Chechen diaspora to return with Kadyrov's promise as the sole guarantee for his security. He remembered well that in 2004, after the Beslan massacre, the Kremlin regarded him as one of the key masterminds of terror in the North Caucasus and demanded his extradition from Great Britain. One of the major reasons why Zakayev decided not to leave London is possibly that Kadyrov's promises were not accompanied by any official proclamation from Moscow.

But why is Moscow reluctant to provide amnesty to Zakayev? It is true that Zakayev was accused of terrorism, but this is also the case with thousands of Chechens who were given amnesty and now serve in Kadyrov's paramilitary forces. Moreover, when the split between Zakayev and Movladi Udugov, one of the Chechen Wahhabist ideologists, became clear (Udugov later advocated the integration of

North Caucasian insurgents into the global jihad and a refusal to compromise with the Kremlin), Russian authorities signaled that they actually viewed Zakayev as a moderate with whom they could negotiate. The semi-official *Izvestia*, for example, published a rather positive article about Zakayev. The author of the piece made it clear that he understood the emotional reasons for Zakayev to become a rebel. Zakayev was also presented as a highly cultured and intelligent man who abhorred the morally rotten émigré community, including Boris Berezovsky, the controversial Russian tycoon with whom Zakayev was associated. The implication of the article was that Zakayev is quite different from jihadists such as Udugov, and that his return to Russia was almost expected. But why did Moscow not provide Zakayev with a full pardon? In fact, the problem may be less associated with Zakayev than with the role of Kadyrov, and even more so, with the increasing assertiveness of the Russian Muslim community.

It is clear that global jihadism continues to be one of Moscow's major concerns. Recently, certain Russian pundits expressed concern over what they describe as the "Talibanization" of the Northern Caucasus and the increasing influence of radical Islam among Russian



Ramzan Kadyrov

Muslims. This prompted Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to state that Russian Muslims should be protected from harmful ideological influences from abroad. Yet, besides the jihadist front, there is also a concern about other groups of Russian Muslims who neither consider joining the universal jihad, nor call for the dissolution of the Russian Federation. There is no doubt that redistribution of power is favored by such groups, which in certain ethnic enclaves request maximum autonomy from Moscow. The renewed assertiveness of these Muslims groups was reflected in the recent public statement of Ravil Gainutdin, one of the leading Russian muftis. Gainutdin's speech dealt with what seems to be an abstract historical subject — the role of Mongols/Tatars in the building of the Russian state.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The assumption that Mongols/Tatars had played a considerable role

in the creation of the Russian state is hardly a novelty in the intellectual and political discourse of post-Soviet Russia. A happy Russian-Tatar/Mongol “symbiosis” has been emphasized by popular Eurasianists, ranging from the late Lev Gumilev to Alexander Dugin. Still, there are substantial differences between Gainutdin's and Dugin's “Eurasianisms”. For Dugin, the Mongols/Tatars played a critical role in the creation of the Russian state but then transferred the mission of building the mighty Eurasian empire to Orthodox Russians. Muslims of non-Slavic origin were relegated to the role of “younger brothers” in the ethnic/geopolitical arrangements. While Orthodox Russians remained the key element in Dugin's Eurasianism, their role was even more strongly pronounced by the Russian nationalists, whose ideology has been much more influential than that of Dugin-style Eurasianists.



Akhmed Zakayev (AFP)

The nationalists rejected any idea of a “symbiosis” between Orthodox Russians and Muslims of various origins, and the implicit existence of a trans-ethnic or trans-cultural “Eurasian” nation. For them, Russia is the foremost state of Orthodox Russians and fully assimilated minorities. The origin of Russian statehood is not located in the capital of the Mongol Empire, Karakorum, as Eurasianists have insisted; but in Constantinople, the capital of Orthodox Byzantium. Gainutdin’s vision, however, opposed both the Russo-centric Byzantinism and Dugin’s Eurasianism. In his public speeches, Gainutdin proclaimed that the Mongols and Tatars had not only been the creators of the Russian state; they also passed the torch on to the Russians at a relatively late stage and actually guided the Russians for most of the sixteenth century. According to Gainutdin, their role in Russian civilization was much greater than anyone, including the Eurasianists, acknowledged. This vision of Russian history was fully supported by Abd al-Wahed Niazov, a Russian convert to Islam. He created his own Eurasian party at approximately the same time as Dugin, but contrary to Dugin emphasized the leading role of Muslims in the ethnic arrangement.

Gainutdin had quite a close relationship with Kadyrov and implicitly saw him as the Muslim leader whose example rearranged ethnopolitical relations in the country. In this respect, Gainutdin’s views were not off the mark. While placed in office by the Kremlin in 2004 as a way to “Chechenize” the conflict, Kadyrov consistently increased his power and showed less and less fear of Moscow. During the ethnic riots in Kondopoga in 2006, when local Chechens were evicted from the city, Kadyrov

threatened to send his men to the city to protect the Chechens. At the same time, he continued to weed out all Chechen military and paramilitary detachments not directly under his command. Most important was the elimination of the “Vostok” (East) battalion, directly incorporated into the Russian army. It is this rise of Kadyrov’s power and his direct affiliation with those parts of the Muslim community craving a redistribution of power that explains Moscow’s reluctance to grant amnesty to the comparatively harmless Zakayev.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Zakayev’s return and acceptance of Kadyrov’s hegemony would increase Kadyrov’s prestige and further legitimize him in the eyes of not just the broad Chechen community but also the West. It would enhance his position as role model for increasingly assertive Muslim groups in Russia, which could in the future create similar problems for Moscow as the jihadists. This is the primary reason why Moscow prevented Zakayev’s return.

Kadyrov’s recent new overture toward Zakayev, a moderate nationalist member of the Chechen opposition, sparked serious concerns in Moscow. Moscow was apparently not happy with the prospect of Zakayev’s return, not because of any fear of Zakayev but because the Kremlin did not want to amplify the prestige and power of Kadyrov by increasing the numbers of those members of the Russian Muslim community who demand a redistribution of power.

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# DESPITE GROWING SECURITY COOPERATION, RUSSIA IS LOSING GROUND IN TAJIKISTAN

Alexander Sodiqov

*Tajikistani President Emomali Rakhmon's state visit to Moscow in October resolved none of the major divisive issues marring the relations between Moscow and Dushanbe. The Tajik leader failed to convince President Medvedev to pay Tajikistan a rent for Russia's military base in Tajikistan, and to participate in the Rogun power station project. Despite this, security considerations have pushed Dushanbe and Moscow to agree to step up military cooperation. This, however, is more a matter of necessity than choice for the both sides, and is unlikely to produce a lasting normalization of relations between the two countries.*

**BACKGROUND:** Over the last two years, Tajikistan's relationship with Russia has deteriorated to its worst level since independence. The major reason for Tajik frustration with Russia has been what many in Tajikistan view as a failure on Moscow's part to honor its commitment to build the Rogun power station. Under the 2004 deal, Russian aluminum giant Rusal pledged to invest roughly US\$2 billion in building the Soviet-planned power giant. In return, Dushanbe agreed to the reorganization of Russia's 201<sup>st</sup> Motor Rifle Division stationed in Tajikistan into a permanent military base to be deployed in the country free of charge. Under the same deal, Moscow wrote off US\$242 million of Tajik debt, and Dushanbe handed over a major space-surveillance facility to the Russian space forces.

Despite the signing of the deal, brokered personally by the then-president Vladimir Putin, Russia has not yet invested in the Rogun project. Facing strong pressure from Uzbekistan, Rusal attempted to persuade Dushanbe to change the height and type of the dam. Unwilling to agree to a lower dam project, Dushanbe cancelled the deal with Rusal in 2007

and pressed Moscow for an alternative arrangement to build the power station. These efforts have so far yielded no result.

Rising power demand, failing infrastructure and inability to negotiate transit of electricity from neighboring states through Uzbek territory during the last several winters led Dushanbe to introduce strict power supply rationing and leave entire regions without electricity and heating. The Rogun power station is currently seen as the only feasible project that could not only resolve Tajikistan's electricity deficits but also make the country a net power exporter. Therefore, the construction of the Rogun power plant has become a matter of necessity rather than choice for Tajikistan. Dushanbe began building the power station on its own, investing US\$120 million in the project in 2009, and planning to spend roughly US\$150 million from the state budget in 2010.

Disappointed with Moscow's reluctance to deliver the promised investment in the Rogun project, Tajik media, intellectuals and part of the political elite began demanding that the government revisit the 2004 deal and begin charging Russia for hosting its military base.





Presidents Medvedev and Rakhmon (AP)

Both Tajik and Russian media cited unnamed sources in Tajikistan's defense ministry as suggesting that Dushanbe had demanded US\$300 million in annual rent fees from Moscow. Moreover, as discussed in previous issues of the *CACI Analyst*, many in Tajikistan have felt offended by Moscow's stance on water management issues in the region, an inability to stem the wave of ethnically motivated attacks on Tajik migrants in Russia, and media coverage they perceived as insulting.

It was widely expected that President Emomali Rakhmon's state visit to Moscow on October 21-23 would bring about an agreement on either an alternative arrangement for Russia's participation in the Rogun energy project or on rent payments for Moscow's military outpost in Tajikistan. Instead, however, the Russian and

Tajik leaders preferred to leave everything as it is and focus on strengthening cooperation in defense and security.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The decision to put aside disagreements and strengthen military and security cooperation between the two countries can be attributed to their mutual fear of further deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. There is increasing evidence of deteriorating security conditions and an upsurge of violence in northern Afghanistan which has recently experienced the arrival of numerous Islamist militant groups. Afghan officials, including President Hamid Karzai, claim that since the beginning of the year, hundreds of Taliban-linked insurgents have fled the major Pakistani ground offensive in South Waziristan and attacks by U.S. UAVs. These fighters appear to

have relocated to the northern Afghan provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan and Balkh, which border Tajikistan.

The regrouping of Islamist insurgents in northern Afghanistan has major security implications both for Dushanbe and Moscow. The fear in Dushanbe is that these militants might further radicalize Tajikistan's own Islamist groups or mount military incursions across the largely porous Tajik-Afghan border. Tajik authorities also fear that by allowing their territory to be used to bring in military cargo to Afghanistan via the northern route, they have made Tajikistan increasingly vulnerable as a likely target for Taliban militants seeking to disrupt NATO's supply routes.

These fears have been reinforced by a recent upsurge of violence in Central Asia. Over the spring and summer, the Tajik government conducted a large-scale police and military operation in the Rasht Valley, hunting a civil-war era warlord who had returned to Tajikistan with a large group of Islamic militants after reportedly spending the last nine years with Taliban allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The instability in the Rasht Valley has been followed by a series of armed attacks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Aware of its own vulnerability in case of spillover of the Afghan conflict into Central Asia, Dushanbe increasingly looks towards Russia with its sizable military force in the region as a guarantor of security.

Moscow also fears that the inability of the U.S.-led coalition forces to prevent the resurgence of

Islamist militancy in northern Afghanistan might lead the conflict to spill over into its "near abroad." Such a spillover would not only threaten Russia's energy interests in Central Asia but also have major security implications for the North Caucasus as well as for Russia proper. Therefore, it is in Russia's interests to step up military aid to and cooperation with increasingly vulnerable Tajikistan, positioned on the frontline of Central Asia's border with Afghanistan.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Security concerns are pushing Dushanbe and Moscow to put aside major disagreements and focus on military cooperation to counter threats stemming from the resurgence of Islamist insurgency in northern Afghanistan and the spillover of the Afghan conflict into Central Asia. It is highly unlikely, however, that this refocusing will bring about a sustainable normalization of the relationship between the two countries. Russia is steadily losing its status as Tajikistan's favored or "strategic" international partner. Reluctant to assist Tajikistan in resolving its energy problems, Moscow is pushing Dushanbe to look for other partners. As China's economic power and influence in Tajikistan grows, Dushanbe will increasingly look towards Beijing for security cooperation and guarantees.

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# CHINA'S WATER POLICIES IN CENTRAL ASIA AND LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

Stephen Blank

*Although they do not get a lot of attention abroad, water issues are truly vital in Central Asia. Since those states who have water do not have oil and gas and vice versa, a fundamental economic-political asymmetry exists between them. This has led to many continuing instances of disputes, rivalries, and clashes among them. However, as the quality of China's water becomes an issue and given the geography of rivers in Central Asia (including Russia and China), China's waste policies, which have hitherto been for the most part unilateral ones committed to development and heedless of other parties' interests, have become an increasingly important issue in interstate relations. China's policies also tell us a good deal of what its posture might be like on those and other issues as it ascends the power rankings and becomes an ever more important player there.*

**BACKGROUND:** China's Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection, Wu Xiaoqing, said that the area water and soil loss in China amounted to 37% of its land area or 3.56 million square kilometers. Thus it is already reaping the harvest of its environmental policies. The implication of those policies, and their results, greatly affect Central Asia. Indeed, environmental issues affect the relationships not just of Central Asian states but of these states and Russia with China.

For instance, China's efforts to leverage its greater power for unilateral benefit also appear in environmental policies with major economic impacts. China plans to extract water from the Ili and Irtysh Rivers for Urumchi and oil field development in the Xinjiang autonomous Uyghur Region – a source of escalating inter-ethnic conflict between Han and Uyghur communities. While both rivers rise in China, the Ili passes through Kazakhstan before terminating in Lake Balkhash, and the Irtysh River travels through Kazakhstan before joining up with the Russian Ob River and Siberia. This proposal aims to stimulate Xinjiang's economy, while eroding support for

Uyghur unrest. But it will probably fail to meet its goals, even as it links environmental degradation and political activism, erosion of regime legitimacy, and instability.

This project will also probably generate outcomes resembling those we see in Central Asia. Xinjiang is already the most environmentally stressed area in China. This project will also negatively affect Kazakhstan, which is already involved in a host of water disputes with other neighbors in Central Asia, and other environmental concerns relating to oil and gas and Soviet biological and chemical warfare experiments. From Beijing's standpoint, this is unfortunate. As of 2005 China had contravened both international law and bilateral agreements by not notifying Kazakhstan of its intentions and not providing environmental impact assessments. Thus, as Stuart Horseman concluded, "it is evident that China is unwilling to engage in meaningful cooperation or compromise [in] the pursuit of its water demands."

Simultaneously, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev has voiced several claims against China due to Kazakhstan's grave

concerns about some water projects being implemented by China. These concerns are readily understandable, since Kazakhstan is at the bottom of post-Soviet countries' list of sufficiency in fresh water. China's project of a canal that will siphon water from the Irtysh River to the Karamay oil province plants and farmlands in Xinjiang is close to completion. Beijing is also building up an intake of water in the upper reaches of the transborder Ili River that ensures 30% of the influx of water to Lake Balkhash. The expansion of the intake of the Ili's waters in China from 3,500 to 5,000 cubic meters will increase the shallowing and salinization of Lake Balkhash. The Irtysh is also the largest tributary of Russia's Ob River and yields water to Lake Zaysan in Kazakhstan.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Thus the consequences of this project are quite clear. It will slash freshwater inflow to eastern and Central Kazakhstan, putting the cities of Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semipalatinsk, and Pavlodar on the brink of full water deficiency, dry up the Irtysh-Karaganda canal, and lower the water level in the Irtysh around Russia's city of Omsk by 0.6 meters. But China is doing this because it is short of water as 70% of its water supply is so polluted that it cannot be used even for technical purposes. Since Beijing conceals the extent of its pollution and of the resulting industrial accidents, its neighbors have no clear assessments and means of undertaking adequate countermeasures. So until there is a catastrophe that involves the neighbors, little can be done except consequence management which is clearly an inadequate response.

Many fear that such a catastrophe could sooner or later take place due to China's continuing policies. Leading Kazakh environmentalist and two-time presidential candidate Mels Eleusizov in 2007 charged that China's efforts to increase

diversion of the Ili river will generate an "ecological catastrophe" around Lake Balkhash, especially if combined with the impact of climate change, i.e. melting glaciers. Although it is known that Beijing expects to develop the river and its tributaries for agriculture and electricity generation, the extent of Chinese plans for harnessing the Ili remain unclear. He also compares this outcome to the visible deterioration of the area of the Aral Sea. Specifically, Lake Balkhash could divide into several smaller lakes and the spread of desertification throughout the surrounding area. Then airborne salt, potentially produced by an evaporating Lake Balkhash, could be carried as far as glaciers in the Tien Shan Mountains that provide water for southern Kazakhstan, including Almaty, as well as portions of Xinjiang. He claims that if this outcome materializes, China's glaciers will die and migrants into Xinjiang as part of the Go West campaign, he said, "will also be left without water." Igor Malkovsky, Deputy Director of Kazakhstan's Institute of Geography, agreed then with Eleusizov, contending that China's rising exploitation of the Ili's water represented the most immediate and dire threat to Balkhash. However, he gave his opinion that the evidence that salt from Central Asia's disappearing lakes would speed glacial melt was inconclusive. Rather global warming bore the primary responsibility for glaciers melting at an average annual rate of one percent each year.

As the foregoing suggests, China has hitherto been unwilling or unable to show any consideration for the interests of its Central Asian neighbors. Since they are all looking to China to render them even more support during a time of global economic crisis, China's economic power and attraction to them is growing despite its posture. Central Asian

economies will naturally confront greater pressure to integrate with China, and become more dependent upon it. But their inability to persuade China to rethink its policies and defend their interests could have profoundly negative consequences for their ecology, environment, and economics. Moreover, China's unilateralism suggests as well that China aims to move these states and their economies into a



position of dependence upon China. According to the Chinese scholar S. Zhaungzhi, "SCO members share a common border. It is unimaginable for Central Asian countries to develop their economies and maintain domestic stability without support from their neighbors." More recently, even as unrest in Xinjiang was beginning, Chinese newspapers were writing that Central Asians are envious of China's developmental policies and their success in Xinjinag, notably the production of stability and ongoing economic growth, something they had failed to achieve in their own countries.

**CONCLUSIONS:** It need not be added that these are traditonally neo-colonialist and patronizing views of so called backward states and their relationship to the metropole. Central Asia has in many ways served as a laboratory

for China's broader Asian policies. This may also be the cse with regard to its water polices insofar as they affect its other neighbors to the South, and Russia. Indeed, on September 11 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev called for a joint Russo-Kazakh project to save the Irtysh, Tobol and Ural rivers that would, if necessary, involve China. Such involmment is clearly necessary, but China's response may be a significant sign of its future policies in Central Asia.

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# AZERBAIJAN'S DIVERSIFIED ENERGY SECURITY STRATEGY

Gulmira Rzayeva

*Due to its own energy resources and its indispensable geographic position between the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea, Iran and Central Asia, Azerbaijan is successfully pursuing a diversified energy security strategy. It seeks to develop alternatives for delivering its gas to Russia and Iran along with an alternative route transporting gas to Europe through the Black Sea ports. By diversifying its own energy routes and markets, Azerbaijan is increasingly contributing to global energy security.*

**BACKGROUND:** Turkey and Armenia recently signed the long awaited protocols on normalizing relations with strong support from the United States, the European Union and Russia. The international community sees the normalization of relations as being of short-, medium- and long-term benefit for the region. However, from Azerbaijan's perspective, the developments rather risk increasing instability in the region. Turkey's intention of rapprochement with Armenia has been viewed with apprehension in Azerbaijan. Baku is seeking to convince the international community, and especially the EU, that an opening of the border and a restoration of diplomatic relations will encourage Armenia will toughen its stance in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations once it is rid of its regional isolation. At the current stage of the Turkish parliamentary discussions on the protocols, Ankara has more leverage than ever before to pressure Yerevan on these issues.

Moreover, the Turkey-Armenia rapprochement has brought another point of contention between Turkey and Azerbaijan onto the agenda: the transit and price of natural gas. Ankara's stance has provided Azerbaijan with an incentive to work intensively on its diversification policy and consider additional transit routes to the one through Turkey.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline is a major channel for delivering natural gas from Azerbaijan to Georgia, Turkey and on to Europe, which also holds great potential for supplying Caspian gas to the Nabucco pipeline. Since the launch of the BTE, Azerbaijan has negotiated transit prices with Turkey, which are up to 70 percent more expensive than the world market price. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has been selling Turkey gas at a "political price", which has generally been far below the price Turkey pays for Russian gas - Azerbaijan receives US\$120 per thousand cubic meters compared to a world market price of around US\$400 currently. Negotiations on the transit fees have been ongoing since 2007 but no agreement has been reached so far.

As a result, Azerbaijan is envisaging new transit routes to European states through Georgia to the Black Sea ports. However, at the same time it works on developing options for delivering its hydrocarbons to Russia and Iran, as there are no transit states between these countries.

It should be noted that over-dependence on any country for key oil and gas supplies implies risks of disturbances to national energy security. Overt energy dependence is thus problematic, but many European states depend heavily on gas imports from Russia. Diversified





weakens not only Turkey's position as a major transit state for delivering Azerbaijani and Central Asian gas to Europe but also undermines EU and U.S. interests in reducing Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Russia is actively pursuing a policy of diversification through purchasing additional volumes of gas from Azerbaijan as well as from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in order to keep its position as the prime gas supplier to the European market. In addition, Turkey – primarily a transit state – also pursues a policy of diversification by participating in the South Stream sub-sea pipeline, a joint project between Gazprom and ENI.

gas supply sources are usually viewed as key to achieving energy security. The same goes for supplier states in need of reliable, solid, and stable markets and transit states to deliver their gas safely. Russia, for example, puts huge effort into the diversification of its energy exports routes (with priority to China), thus weakening the Russian-European energy interdependence. Azerbaijan has been pursuing its own diversified energy policy to secure its gas and oil exports in case of unexpected problems with the existing pipelines.

**IMPLICATIONS:** By starting to sell low volumes (0.5 bcm a year) of gas to Russia at a lucrative price from 2010 onwards (with a possible increase in the future) Azerbaijan is questioning the Nabucco project, planned to alleviate to a very limited degree Europe's dependence on Russian gas. In doing so, it

In July 2009, Turkey officially agreed with Russia for South Stream to be constructed through its territorial waters entirely bypassing Ukraine, thus reducing Kiev's ability to interrupt Russian gas transit. Furthermore, Turkey's consent was of crucial importance for Russia since Turkey is also a key partner in the rival Nabucco pipeline, which is being developed and pursued with support from the EU. These two projects are generally believed to be not only competing with one another, but also mutually exclusive.

In this regard, Azerbaijan is a perfect source for the Nabucco pipeline. Its geopolitical position allows direct access to a supply route bypassing Russia, and it is situated to constitute both a transit and a supplier state. Eventually, the realization of the Nabucco project would be

very difficult without Azerbaijani (and later Turkmen) gas. Therefore, Azerbaijan would be undermining the project if it sold its entire gas production to Russia. Apparently, Russia envisages a clause concerning the Shah-Deniz 2 reserves, while Turkmen gas exports currently remain largely under Russian control. In addition, Azerbaijani reserves could be easily delivered to Europe through the newly constructed South Stream pipeline, rather than through Nabucco. On the other hand, access to the production of the Shah-Deniz-2 block is of crucial importance for the rationale of the Nabucco project. This might be considered Azerbaijan's main trump card.

However, Turkey's position on the transit conditions for delivering Azerbaijani gas to the European market causes serious obstacles to Azerbaijan and the Shah-Deniz consortium, which signed a contract in 2006 to develop the Shah-Deniz-2 gas block.

The other possible option for Azerbaijan to diversify its energy markets is Iran. Summing up Azerbaijan's options for diversifying its energy routes, President Ilham Aliyev recently stated that, as Iran is a big energy consumer, which buys its gas from Turkmenistan, why should it not buy its gas from Azerbaijan? There are no transit states between the two countries and there is an available pipeline from Astara to Iran.

In the case of Iran two questions arise: first, whether Iran is able to offer Azerbaijan a competitive price for its gas, and second, whether Iran would buy Azerbaijani gas only for its domestic consumption, as there is the possibility that Iran could re-export the gas to

other countries. If Iran would choose the option of transporting Azerbaijani gas through its territory for re-export, this would open up new, large and lucrative markets for Azerbaijan. Among other big markets in the region such as Pakistan and Afghanistan (though these are the least stable countries of the region), the most attractive one seems to be the large and growing Indian market. There has been talk of building a gas pipeline from Iran to India through Pakistan, a project that would connect the Middle East and Southern Asia. Azerbaijan could potentially join this project. This scenario is feasible but relatively remote.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Azerbaijan is located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, enjoying an indispensable geographic position between the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea, Iran and Central Asia. It is perhaps unsurprising that Azerbaijan finds itself at the center of gas diplomatic maneuvering these days. Its hydrocarbon reserves make it not only a strategic transit state but also a reliable supplier. A successfully implemented diversification of its energy security strategy will increase Azerbaijan's role as a stabilizer in the region. It already contributes considerably to the energy security of neighbor states, especially Georgia and Turkey. However, by diversifying its own export routes and markets, Azerbaijan increases its role in both regional and global energy security.

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## FIELD REPORTS

### **CALLS FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE AND END TO CORRUPTION MARK THE AGENDA OF CLINTON'S VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN**

*Roman Muzalevsky*

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Afghanistan on November 21 to attend the inauguration of Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The visit marks an attempt of the U.S. and its allies to strengthen the legitimacy of the Afghan government following the fraudulent presidential elections last summer. In essence, this implies pressing Karzai to implement better governance and more effective means to fight corruption in order to win the Afghan people's support and alienate the Taliban. Most importantly, the visit highlights the need for a properly balanced political, military and economic approach to the overall campaign on the ground as the U.S. administration is still deciding whether to deploy additional troops in Afghanistan.

Hillary Clinton arrived in Kabul on the eve of President Hamid Karzai's inauguration scheduled for November 22. About 800 guests and more than 40 dignitaries from around the world were invited to attend the ceremony, including the President of Pakistan Asif Zardari, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, British Foreign Minister David Miliband, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, and NATO's Secretary-General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

"There is now a clear window of opportunity for President Karzai and his government to make a new compact with the people of Afghanistan to demonstrate that now there will be accountability and tangible results to improve the lives of people throughout this country", Clinton told U.S. Embassy staff upon her arrival. Clinton then met

with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry and the commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal. She subsequently had dinner with Karzai.

McChrystal had earlier requested up to 40,000 additional troops, while Eikenberry, in turn, questioned the utility of sending more forces amidst unstable political circumstances. There are now 65,000 U.S. and 39,000 allied troops on the ground, but the Taliban is on the offensive, Pakistan has turned into an unstable ally and domestic U.S. support for the war has been on the decline. Karzai's rigged August 20 elections and rampant corruption have also undermined the legitimacy of allied efforts. On top of this is added an annual drug-generated income estimated at US\$70-100 million, feeding drug and war lords, terrorists and officials.

Clearly, guns and bullets are not a panacea for success, let alone a victory, in Afghanistan. A military component of the strategy needs to be complemented by substantial political, civilian and economic efforts. Clinton indeed stated that "nobody knows better than our military commanders that troops alone cannot meet our goals of defeating al-Qaida, of helping the Afghans get the capacity to defend themselves and provide governance that will result in positive changes for the people of this country".

Clinton further raised serious concerns about corruption and its effects on governance – something the international community has been pressuring Karzai to deal with persistently. "We

believe that President Karzai and his government can do better”, Clinton stated. Karzai himself underlined that the development of the Afghan state requires serious measures against corruption and the drug industry. But while recognizing these problems, Karzai is quick to point out that the international contracting process in Afghanistan is corrupt and that foreign aid gets wasted before reaching the Afghans.

According to a senior U.S. official, the U.S. administration is already discussing concrete “benchmarks” with the Afghan government, which the latter will need to achieve in order to receive payments and aid from the U.S. He was also quoted to add that the U.S. “wants an Afghan-led process to fight corruption”. Transparency International recently ranked Afghanistan as the second most corrupt country in the world after Somalia.

Clinton also emphasized that the U.S. wants to see a “credible anti-corruption governmental entity” in Afghanistan. “They’ve done some work on that, but in our view, not nearly enough to demonstrate a seriousness of purpose to tackle corruption.” The Afghan government already announced its plans to form special bodies to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption.

The formation of the new cabinet will demonstrate Karzai’s commitment to reforms. The Afghan president in his inauguration speech already invited his major opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, to join the government. Clinton raised questions, however, about Karzai naming Northern Alliance leader Muhammad Fahim as one of his two vice-presidents and forming a political alliance with General Abdul Rashid Dostum. U.S. officials believe the former has been involved in drug trade, while the latter is a warlord suspected of wide-scale corruption.

Hillary Clinton’s visit to Afghanistan is an effort to both bolster support among the Afghan people for the Karzai Government, which has a tenuous legitimacy amidst widespread corruption, a booming drug industry, Taliban resurgence and warlordism, and to pressure Karzai to enact effective reforms, improve governance and tackle corruption. How to complement the military and political parts of the overall strategy in Afghanistan with a reinforced economic component should now occupy the minds of the U.S. administration as it ponders over the need for additional troop deployments in Afghanistan.

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## GEORGIAN YOUTHS REMAIN IN TSKHINVALI AFTER NEGOTIATION FAILURE IN GENEVA

*Maka Gurgenidze*

The mediated talks between Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Geneva on November 11 failed both to produce an agreement to release the four Georgian teenagers detained by South Ossetian authorities and to address the insecurity of the breakaway regions at a more fundamental level.

The South Ossetian authorities detained four Georgian teenagers on November 4 on charges of illegal border crossing. The Georgian, Russian and

South Ossetian sides have been negotiating over the issue with the active participation of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), however without results.

The eighth round of the Geneva talks was the Georgian side’s main hope to achieve the release of the school boys from Tirdznisi, a village in the conflict zone located two kilometers away from the de facto border.

Lacking other effective levers, Tbilisi applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and called on the international community to pressure Russia to free the teenagers. The Council of Europe, the U.S. Congress and the Foreign Ministry of France expressed their concerns over the incident and requested the instant release of the young Georgians, who still remain under arrest.

The arrest of the teenagers was preceded by similar incidents, as the post-war elusive administrative demarcation has proven problematic for people residing close to the conflict zone. In order to survive, residents of bordering villages frequently collect firewood in neighboring forests and pasture their livestock in the fields surrounding their villages, thus running the risk of infringement and arrest. Twenty-one Georgian citizens were detained by the South Ossetian authorities when collecting the firewood for their families on October 26, and accused of illegally crossing the administrative border with the breakaway region. However, in this case the Georgian side and the international negotiators proved more successful, as Tskhinvali released the prisoners after several days in jail.

During the latest Geneva meeting, the Georgian, Russian and U.S. negotiators, as well as the representatives of Abkhazian and South Ossetian authorities, focused on the elements of the non-use of force treaty, an issue on which discussions had commenced in September at the seventh round of the Geneva talks. Russia insists on the principal importance of signing such an agreement between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, as well as between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali. Georgia, however, argues that an agreement on non-use of force should be signed between Moscow and Tbilisi and should visualize a "de-occupation" of the breakaway regions of the country.

Through urging Georgia to sign the agreement with the Abkhazian and South Ossetian sides, Russia seeks to regain the status of mediator, masking its direct participation in the conflicts on the one hand and creating legal obligations for Tbilisi towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia to concede their independent status on the other.

The Georgian government has two basic problems with the treaty. First, Georgia is urgently interested in engaging international forces to provide stability in the territories of the conflict zones. The version of the document proposed by the co-chairs of the Geneva talks included this type of security mechanisms. However, Russia rejected the current version claiming it needs a two-month period to study and make amendments to it. Second, a non-use of force treaty satisfying Russia would imply a ground for independence of the breakaway regions rather than their "de-occupation", which directly contradicts vital Georgian interests.

The suspension of the UN and OSCE monitoring missions in the territory of Georgia earlier this year, and the fact that the EUMM cannot monitor the breakaway regions, increases the urgency of international engagement in the conflict areas – not least in light of the recent cases of detained Georgian citizens in the vicinity of Abkhazia's and Ossetia's administrative borders.

Within the framework of the Incident Prevention and Reaction Mechanism, EUMM considers a gentlemen's agreement as way to eschew similar cases in the future through achieving an accord between the conflicting parties on returning trespassers appearing on any side of border without detention. In an effort to ease the tensions over the post-war border arrangements, the U.S. has discussed the possibility of "a status-neutral approach" with Russia, via creating a buffer zone that could be monitored by the UN and the OSCE.

EU officials presented another mechanism in Tbilisi on November 13 (after the EU's ambassadors had visited the conflict zones in Georgia) for preventing large-scale clashes through satellite monitoring of the separatist regions. Though technical and financial details have not yet been negotiated, talks on the rationality of establishing satellite surveillance have already been started within the EU. This initiative aims to observe any military movement in the breakaway regions, providing early warning of conflict escalation.

While these initiatives might serve short-term stability, a durable security arrangement can only be built upon mutually beneficial and acceptable elements.

The main impediment in this respect, however, is the absence of any single point of reference between the conflicting parties. Georgia appeals to the universality of the principle of territorial integrity while Russia continues its attempts to legalize the independent status of the breakaway regions, referring to the Kosovo example. Thus, while Georgia keeps moving out of the Russian orbit, it

will not accept security arrangements questioning its territorial integrity.

The sole progress achieved on the eighth round of the Geneva talks was an agreement to hold the next meeting on January 28, 2010. However, the insufficient international pressure on Russia to fulfill the six-point agreement mediated by France, and unwillingness on part of both Georgia and Russia to make painful concessions, suggest that the parties will hardly be able to make any breakthrough at the ninth round of Geneva Talks either.

## CONFUSION AND PANIC IN TURKMENISTAN OVER FLU

*Chemen Durdiyeva*

While concern over the expansion of the H1N1 pandemic is increasing worldwide, the leadership in Turkmenistan claims the country is safe from swine-flu transmission and that proper preventive measures have been taken in the country. However, recent panic and confusion in different cities of Turkmenistan paints a quite different picture.

When the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the alert level from 4 to 5 in May, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov called for taking all necessary steps to prevent the swine-flu from entering Turkmenistan. He also assured that the sanitary and epidemiological service of Turkmenistan is "adequately equipped and trained" in situations of swine-flu transmission.

Despite the authorities' strict control over the flow of information, panic over the apparent reach of the swine-flu to Turkmenistan spread faster than any news over the last six months. This unexpected confusion over the pandemic caused different reactions among the population and from the government. Fearing infection, ordinary people in some regions did not wait for the government's help or advice and simply started wearing protective masks in public places like hospitals, airports, train stations and schools.

When asked if any cases of the swine flu have been registered in the country, a therapist in one of the central city hospitals in Turkmenabat stated that there might be some official cases of infection but said such information is under a strict government control. At the same time, several hospitals in Turkmenabat announced a period of quarantine where all medical personnel as well as the patients were instructed to wear masks. In unofficial conversations, randomly interviewed residents of Mary, another central city in Turkmenistan, said they were shocked by the news and did not know how to protect themselves from the pandemic. Some children of younger age also reluctantly started wearing masks in classrooms until the news and confusion about the pandemic cooled down in mid-November.

The shock started in the capital city Ashgabat, which is the center for the influx of foreign visitors, tourists and many businesses. The number of people buying vitamins and drugs at pharmacies increased significantly in early November. The unexpectedly high demand for anti-flu medicine has caused shortages in more remote regions of the country. While many rushed to pharmacies to store medicine, cases were reported where certain

individuals bought all available medicine in the pharmacies and attempted to make money by reselling them at higher prices in black market. Some even say that the available antibiotics and other anti-flu medicine are not sufficient to reduce the high fever caused by this year's seasonal pandemic.

While the fear of the pandemic has increased, there is still no consensus among medical personnel on the nature of the flu that has caused widespread uncertainty among the population. While some hospitals say it is just a seasonal flu, nurses in other places started distributing brochures about the bird flu. In order to prevent further escalation of the panic, the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry unofficially ordered employees not to wear masks in both private and government agencies. Among the preventive measures, the government of Turkmenistan also prohibited the annual pilgrimage of faithful Muslims to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia this year. Government officials and religious leaders of the Council of Religious Affairs

said the annual trip to Mecca has been cancelled due to growing concerns over the spread of the swine-flu and recommended visiting the 38 sacred sites of Turkmenistan instead.

As tensions over the flu have developed in many areas of the country, the authorities took further measures to calm down the public. In Particular, a massive public awareness campaign has been launched in major public places. To reduce the level of panic, nurses have temporarily been designated at the airports to provide instructions on the major symptoms and basic protection against the swine-flu. Officially, the government denounced any cases of confirmed swine-flu or any cases of deaths related to the flu. However, referring to its local sources in Turkmenistan, the Vienna-based émigré group Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights reported two swine flu casualties in the country.

Instead of facing the urgency of the matter, the authorities seem to have been denying its seriousness. The panic has temporarily cooled down but the confusion over the nature of the flu remains.

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## UZBEKISTAN EXITS CENTRAL ASIA'S COMMON ENERGY SYSTEM

*Erkin Akhmadov*

In early November, representatives of Uzbekistan's state stock company "Uzbekenergo" announced the decision to withdraw from the Common Energy System (CES) of Central Asia. While the same intention had been declared several times during the year, the intention previously did not seem serious. This time, however, Uzbek officials stated that they see no further incentives for staying in the CES, especially since the system is not capable of securing national energy systems from external factors. These developments could have positive as well as negative implications for Uzbekistan, as well as for its immediate neighbors.

The current functioning of the CES is in Uzbekistan considered to be a "remnant of the unitary state". The system was organized and operated as one mechanism that would provide reliable and continuous energy supply for the whole Central Asian region. After the collapse of the USSR, however, the system's operation was largely based on interstate trust – there were practically no authorities or legal regimes that would provide guarantees for its member states. At times, energy was consumed without control in certain parts of the region, and consequently there were no proper sanctions. In some extreme cases, especially during winter time, this contributed to serious conflict situations in the energy system.

The CES manages energy transfers from the networks of one state into the networks of others and coordinates the operation of reservoirs from the basins of the Naryn-Syrdarya and Amudarya Rivers. According to Valentina Kasymova, an independent energy expert, if any of the states would withdraw from the CES, the operation of the whole system will be compromised. Thus, she concludes, it will be very uneasy for states to overcome possible breakdowns independently.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's neighbors have already experienced certain consequences of Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CES. Tajikistan, being one of the most energy-intensive states during the winter season, is facing a problematic energy situation already – since October 29 the delivery of electricity in some parts of the country has been limited. Moreover, Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CES makes the flow of Turkmen energy to Tajikistan through Uzbekistan technically impossible. According to Kasymova, Kyrgyzstan may also suffer from Uzbekistan's withdrawal as it could disrupt the parallel energy systems of all the states, which have until now provided an uninterrupted frequency in high-voltage lines. Thus, she states that Uzbekistan's withdrawal may lead to drops of frequency that may be difficult to control and that, in turn, may cause systemic breakdowns in Kyrgyzstan's energy system. Kazakhstan does not seem to worry about Uzbekistan's decision as it considers withdrawing from the CES itself. Turkmenistan, for its part, did so back in 2003. Therefore, Uzbekistan's decision would largely affect Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, especially during the winter.

Interestingly enough, a shift from the centralized to autonomous mode seems to have few, if any,

negative consequences for Uzbekistan. The state stock company Uzbekenergo stated that on December 1, 2009, new energy transmission facilities with a capacity of 500 kilowatt will be established on the route from Guzar to Surkhan. This power line will allow for the delivery of electricity to the Surkhandarya region, passing Tajik territory. Moreover, another new power line, "Uzbekistanskaya," which connected the Tashkent region with three regions in the Ferghana valley, has freed Uzbekistan from its previous dependence on energy from Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, local experts forecast that these new power lines will allow Uzbekistan to withdraw completely from the CES by the end of 2009. In addition, the new power line would allow Uzbekistan to increase its electricity exports to Afghanistan.

The Common Energy System of Central Asia is a remnant of the Soviet past that does not seem to survive current realities. A lack of interstate legal regulations and mechanisms to coordinate the functioning of the system inevitably led to the disintegration of a mechanism that was designed to serve the whole region. Building national infrastructure, including energy facilities is perhaps required of independent states. However, in a situation when the states of the region have differing economic and technical capacities, it is hard to predict what form these transformations will take. While it is largely expected that future coordination of national energy system issues will be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements, in the context of Central Asian region where states tend to disengage rather than cooperate, even such agreements may well turn out to be redundant.

## NEWS DIGEST

### **SLAIN KAZAKH OPPOSITION FIGURE'S SON GETS GOVERNMENT JOB**

**13 November**

The son of a late Kazakh opposition figure has been appointed to an Almaty City administration post on the eve of the anniversary of his father's mysterious death, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Kayrat Nurkadilov was named the chief of the Almaty City Housing Department on November 11. His father, Zamanbek Nurkadilov, was a close associate of President Nursultan Nazarbaev for many years but in 2004 became an active opponent of the president. He was found shot dead in his house in Almaty on November 12, 2005. Although he had two bullet wounds in his chest and one bullet wound in his head, his death was officially announced as a suicide. Unlike previous years, Kazakh opposition leaders and activists did not mark Nurkadilov's death, which they consider to have been murder. (RFE/RL)

### **CHECHEN LEADER SAYS SPECIAL FORCES KILL 20 REBELS**

**13 November**

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov says security forces have killed up to 20 Islamic rebels. In a statement posted on the Chechen government website, Kadyrov said he believed one of those killed in Friday's battle may have been Doku Umarov, who has declared himself the head of a North Caucasus "emirate." Kadyrov said helicopter gunships opened fire on the rebels before special forces launched a ground operation in Shalazh, 30 kilometers southwest of Grozny. There has been no independent confirmation of the government's account of the battle. Attacks in Russia's southern republics have risen in recent months. Local leaders blame clan feuds, poverty, Islamism and heavy-handed tactics by law enforcement authorities for the upsurge. In his state of the nation address on Thursday, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said violence in the North Caucasus region, which

includes Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, was Russia's biggest domestic problem. (RFE/RL)

### **OPEC LAUDS AZERI POTENTIAL**

**13 November**

Oil production from Azerbaijan for 2010 is expected to increase more than any other former Soviet country, OPEC predicts. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in its November report said oil production from Azerbaijan will increase 0.13 million barrels per day in 2010. Kazakhstan, for its part, is expected to increase its oil production by 0.08 million barrels per day. For the fourth quarter of 2009, the OPEC cartel expects Azerbaijan to produce 1.07 million barrels per day, the Trend news agency reports. Proven crude oil reserves in Azerbaijan are estimated at 7 billion barrels. Most of its reserves lie in the offshore Azeri Chirag Guneshli field. The ACG oil field is the third largest in the world as surveyed by the American IHS Cambridge Energy Research Associates. Azerbaijan exports its Azeri light crude blend primarily to Turkish ports on the Mediterranean Sea through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the second longest in the world. (UPI)

### **BAKU OFFICIALS SLAMS "BIAS" OVER BLOGGER VERDICTS**

**17 November**

An official in Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's administration says the international community's reaction to the case of two bloggers given jail sentences last week is biased, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Ali Hasanov, head of the Azerbaijani president's Social and Political Affairs Department, said Azerbaijani law "applies equally to everyone and there is no special treatment for intellectuals and those who are closer to the West, like the bloggers."

A Baku court on November 11 sentenced Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli to two and 2 1/2 years in prison, respectively, on hooliganism charges for an altercation at a Baku restaurant on July 8. International organizations such as the Council of

Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have strongly condemned the case and said the charges against the bloggers are politically motivated. Hasanov said the Azerbaijani courts are independent and the government cannot influence judicial verdicts. He added that "if the bloggers disagree with the court's verdict, they can take their case to the European Court of Human Rights."

Hasanov said many Azerbaijanis are charged with hooliganism every year but international organizations do not protest against those convictions. He countered that "the state of freedom of speech in Azerbaijan is not worse than that in France, Germany, and Italy."(RFE/RL)

### **KYRGYZ DEPORT RUSSIAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST**

**19 November**

A Russian human rights activist, Bahrom Hamroev, has been deported from Kyrgyzstan while gathering information connected with his work, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Hamroev is said to have been in the southern part of the country in an effort to collect information on alleged abuses against Muslims, who make up a majority of Kyrgyzstan's population. He is a member of the Moscow-based Memorial Human Rights Center, a leading rights-advocacy group that has been critical of government abuses throughout the former Soviet Union. A Memorial representative said a local rights activist, Izzatilla Rahmatillaev, was detained along with Hamroev. Vitaly Ponomarev, the director of Memorial's Central Asian program, told RFE/RL that Hamroev's mobile phone and camera were confiscated by police in Osh and he was put on a flight back to Moscow. Rahmatillaev was later released. Islamic extremists are frequently blamed for antistate activities in all five of Central Asia's post-Soviet republics, none of which receive high marks from the U.S. government or international NGOs for their rights records. (RFE/RL)

### **KAZAKHSTAN ADOPTS TOUGH PRIVACY PROTECTION LAW**

**19 November**

Kazakhstan has approved a bill introducing tougher punishment for invasion of privacy in a move condemned by the opposition as an attack on press freedom. Democracy, media freedom, and human rights are under intense scrutiny in Kazakhstan as the Central Asian state prepares to take the helm of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) in 2010. Kazakhstan's upper house of parliament approved the bill unanimously. President Nursultan Nazarbaev now needs to sign it into law -- largely a formality. Nazarbaev's opponents have said that the new law, which introduces jail terms for crimes against privacy, would further limit freedom of speech in a country where mainstream media never criticize the president. "This is yet another attempt to shut everyone up," opposition leader Zharmakhan Tuyakbai said last week commenting on the draft law. International rights groups say Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic that has never held elections judged free and fair by the OSCE itself, has not fulfilled its promises to bring more democracy and continued to crack down on political dissent. The government has rejected accusations of intolerance to dissent and biased trials against its critics. Adil Soz, a media rights group, urged parliament last month to reject the latest draft, saying it was too tough and would give the authorities an excuse to silence independent or investigative reporting. The government says the law would help protect people's rights and curb crimes against privacy such as publishing data on people's savings or private correspondence without their consent. The bill follows a series of leaks of what appears to be private conversations between former and current senior officials posted on various websites, including YouTube. Earlier this year, Kazakhstan adopted a law allowing the government to block websites posting "illegal" information. (Reuters)

### **AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT CRITICIZES ARMENIA ON KARABAKH TALKS**

**19 November**

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has accused Armenia of delaying efforts to resolve the conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Speaking at the opening of an apartment building in Baku for 369 internally displaced families on November 17, Aliyev said that although the OSCE Minsk Group was established in 1992 to resolve the Karabakh dispute, he said there have been no results from their activities. Aliyev said the main issue in the OSCE-led talks with the Armenians is the "withdrawal of Armenian troops from all seven occupied territories," referring to the Azerbaijani areas around Nagorno-Karabakh that are occupied by Armenian forces. Aliyev said Azerbaijanis who have been displaced from those territories and Karabakh are "also part of the discussion" and act as



"a stimulus for us to participate in negotiations." He said Armenian negotiators "keep dragging their feet over issues and prolonging the negotiations." But Aliyev said such a tactic "will not give them anything," and that Armenia's goal is to "populate our lands with Armenians, but they don't have enough people." Aliyev said that Armenia's population has fallen to 1.7 million (contradicting an official estimate of 3.26 million in 2008.) "It will be difficult for them to defend their front line," he said. In contrast, he continued, "Azerbaijan's opportunities, economy, and demography are growing. Our population is already 9 million. In five or six years we are going to be 10 million." Aliyev predicted that in a few years, the Azerbaijani economy will be 13-15 times larger than Armenia's. Aliyev and Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian will meet under the auspices of the OSCE at the French Consulate in Munich on November 22 for further talks on Karabakh. (RFE/RL)

## **ROCKET HITS LUXURY HOTEL IN KABUL, FOUR WOUNDED**

**21 November**

A rocket hit the outside wall of the luxury Serena Hotel in Kabul today, wounding four people, including two boys, a Health Ministry official said. Ministry spokesman Ahmad Raaid said an Afghan soldier was also hurt in the attack. "None of the wounds are serious," he told Reuters. An employee of the Serena Hotel said there was no damage to the hotel itself. Witnesses said police had sealed off roads leading to the building. Several rockets were fired at the hotel three weeks ago, forcing more than 100 people to rush into an underground bunker. On the same day, gunmen killed five foreign UN staff in a separate attack on a Kabul guesthouse. In January 2008, several Taliban gunmen stormed the hotel, which is near the presidential palace, killing six people including a Norwegian journalist. The Norwegian foreign minister, who was staying there at the time, was unhurt. Since then, security has been stepped up at the hotel. Violence in Afghanistan is at its worst levels since the Taliban was overthrown in 2001. The Islamist militants have spread their insurgency from the south and east of the country into previously peaceful areas. (Reuters)

## **NATO TAKES COMMAND OF AFGHAN ARMY, POLICE TRAINING**

**21 November**

NATO took command of the training of the Afghan army and police today to consolidate efforts on building an effective security force, a vital precondition for the withdrawal of foreign troops. The existing U.S. training mission, CSTC-A, until now responsible for most of the training, is to merge with the new NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), under a single NATO command, commanders said today at a ceremony in Kabul.

Deputy commander of the new NATO mission Major General Michael Ward said he believed the move would encourage more NATO training personnel to be sent to Afghanistan, helping to speed the expansion of local forces.

"I'm very optimistic. We've identified what our needs are and we're bringing those back to NATO to get nations to contribute and we've already seen in this run-up, a significant number of people coming in with exactly the right skills," Ward told Reuters. There are some 110,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan, including 68,000 Americans, fighting the Taliban that has spread its insurgency from the south and east of the country into previously peaceful areas. At present there are about 95,000 Afghan soldiers and about 93,000 police. In his assessment of the war, the commander in Afghanistan, U.S. Army General Stanley McChrystal, has recommended local security forces be eventually raised to a total of 400,000 soldiers and police. Ward said the immediate aim was to increase the army to 134,000 and the police force to 96,800 by October 2010. U.S. President Barack Obama is expected to decide in the coming weeks whether to send up a further 40,000 soldiers to Afghanistan, which McChrystal says he needs. Military commanders believe the foreign troops can ultimately only buy time before the Afghan Army and police force are expanded. Only when they are able to provide security for themselves will foreign troops be able to leave. (Reuters)

## **UZBEKISTAN CLOSES BORDER WITH KAZAKHSTAN**

**23 November**

Uzbekistan has closed its border with Central Asian neighbor Kazakhstan to all but citizens of each nation returning home, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry said today, as swine flu spreads in both countries. Kazakh media and residents of the Uzbek

capital, Tashkent, have connected the move to fears about an outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus, but this has not been confirmed by the authorities there. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported on November 20 that Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and parts of Afghanistan were reporting higher numbers of flu cases. "The initiative did not come from the Kazakh side," Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Yerzhan Ashykbayev told a briefing. "There is no official information on the reasons behind this decisions." Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry could not be reached for comment. Tashkent regularly closes its borders with its other neighbors Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan for security reasons before national holidays such as the Constitution Day, marked on December 8. Parliamentary elections are also due in Uzbekistan next month. (Reuters)

### **INGUSHETIA BOSS ADMITS CORRUPTION FUELS REBELLION**

**23 November**

The leader of Russia's Muslim republic of Ingushetia, who narrowly survived an assassination attempt in June, conceded on November 22 that widespread state corruption was helping an Islamist insurgency in the region. He declined to say what proportion of officials were corrupt, but acknowledged the problem was bad enough to fuel a cycle of violence and crime that has put his impoverished region at the heart of mounting violence across the North Caucasus. "Bandits give money to officials, knowing they can be easily paid off," Yunus-Bek Yevkurov told Reuters in an interview during a trip to the Russian capital. "This in turn means officials are [aiding] the terrorists and militants." He added that law-enforcement agencies were also behind eight kidnappings this year. The leader, who spent two months in hospital including a fortnight in a coma after a suicide bomber blew up his car in June, said he was banking on a stabilization program including harsher punishment for corrupt officials. When Yevkurov was appointed just over a year ago, he immediately sacked his entire cabinet, pledging to reduce corruption. He admitted his efforts had yet to show progress. "We underestimated the situation before and this was a mistake.... But I believe in myself, that I will control it by punishment," he said, adding that more officials still needed to be stripped of the power they had amassed in the previous government. The decorated paratrooper, who led Russian troops in a showdown with NATO forces

at Pristina airport during the Kosovo war in 1999, was chosen by the Kremlin to replace Murat Zyazikov, whom rights groups accuse of murder and corruption. Yevkurov is largely credited with securing an aid package from the Kremlin worth 32 billion roubles (\$980 million) over the next six years. Over half of Ingushetia's economically active population are unemployed, and 90 percent of the region's revenues are subsidies from Moscow. He aims to use the aid package to develop the economy and create jobs, in the hope that this will reduce crime. Armed attacks on authorities and law-enforcement agencies are a near daily occurrence in the region of 470,000 people bordering Chechnya, where Moscow has gone to war with rebels twice in the past two decades. He said his biggest challenge was to prevent "disenchanted, disappointed" young men being drawn into the insurgency by creating more jobs and establishing social programs. Having grown up with a surge in violence that started after the Soviet Union fell in 1991, Ingushetia's youth "know nothing but violence, terrorism, and banditry", he said. (Reuters)

### **BISHKEK SCHOOLS CLOSED WITH FLU QUARANTINE**

**24 November**

Officials in the Kyrgyz capital have introduced a quarantine in all Bishkek schools until November 30 due to a flu epidemic, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The Bishkek City Council's press service said that some 30 percent of schoolchildren and about 20 percent of teachers are reportedly sick with the flu.

Additionally, there have been about 50 cases of swine flu registered. (RFE/RL)

### **JAILED AZERBAIJANI BLOGGERS ALLOWED TO MEET PARENTS**

**24 November**

A Baku district court has ruled that two jailed Azerbaijani bloggers may meet with their parents, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada were sentenced to 2 1/2 and two years in jail, respectively, on November 11 after being found guilty of "hooliganism and battery." Judge Araz Huseinov has allowed the parents of Hajizada to visit with his parents on November 25, while Milli and his parents will be allowed to meet the following day. The bloggers -- both of whom wrote critically about the government -- were detained after being confronted and scuffling with two men in a Baku restaurant on July 8. Milli and

Hajizada were not allowed to meet with their relatives while they were being held in detention. International human rights organizations consider the case against them to be politically motivated and connected to their criticism of the government in their blogs. (RFE/RL)

### **PRICE DEAL CLOSE FOR SOCAR AND BOTAS**

**24 November**

Turkish pipeline company BOTAS and the State Oil Co. of Azerbaijan Republic finished a round of price talks for Azeri gas with settlement seen by year's end. Baku has lobbied for a revision to a gas pricing formula for Ankara. The current price is far below current market conditions. Baku also aims to make conditions more attractive for possible gas transits through the Nabucco pipeline for Europe. Nabucco would bring gas from Central Asia and the Middle East to European markets along a route passing through Turkey. SOCAR and BOTAS said they made progress on their negotiations but warned the matter was complex, the Azerbaijan Business Center reports. Rovnag Abdullayev, the president of SOCAR, said pricing terms for Azeri exports from its second phase of the offshore Shah Deniz gas field could develop by the end of the year. "The sides reached certain arrangements," he said. "I believe that soon we will get answers to our questions and achieve full understanding." (UPI)

### **EU NEEDS SOLIDARITY ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

**24 November**

The European Union should respect territorial integrity and sovereignty in a common principle for the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, analysts said. Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Turkish relations with Armenia, meanwhile, are strained by claims of genocide during the Ottoman Empire. Ankara and Yerevan, however, signed protocols aimed at repairing diplomatic relations at an October summit in Zurich, Switzerland. Baku is upset over the deal as Ankara sided with its Azeri partners by closing its border with Armenia during the conflict in the 1990s. Leaders from Azerbaijan and Armenia are in talks with negotiators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, though few details from that meeting have emerged. Borut Grgic, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, tells the Azeri news agency News.Az that Europe

needs a united stance on the conflict. "The EU should start by having a common set of principles that outline its position on the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus -- respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty are two fundamentals," he said. Baku has threatened in recent days to resort to force should negotiations fail. Grgic said that while conflict was unlikely, the situation was straining regional affairs. (UPI)

### **TWO MILITANTS KILLED IN INGUSHETIA'S KARABULAK**

**24 November**

Two militants have been killed after being surrounded at a property in Rabochaya Street in the town of Karabulak during a special operation in Ingushetia on Wednesday. "Two militants were blocked at a private house. When ordered to surrender they opened fire against police officers. Both criminals were killed during the clash," a source at Ingushetia's Interior Ministry told Interfax. (Interfax)

### **EU TO REMOVE KAZAKH AIRLINE FROM BLACKLIST IN NOVEMBER – OFFICIAL**

**25 November**

The European Union will remove the Kazakh airline Berkut from its 'black list' in late November, Radilbek Adimolda, the chairman of the Kazakh Transportation and Communications Ministry's Civil Aviation Committee said in an interview published in Wednesday's issue of Vremya. Adimolda said he had recently provided the Eastern bureau of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Paris with a short-term plan of measures Kazakhstan is planning to take so that domestic airlines meet the ICAO requirements and then presented a report to the European Commission in Brussels. "We were told in response that the government airline Berkut would be excluded from the black list, and the European Commission should make this decision public by the end of November," he said. Talking about other Kazakh airlines included in the EU black list, Adimolda said, "we will work to have them removed from there step by step." It was reported earlier that the European Union on July 14 had put 70 Kazakh airlines, that is, nearly all of them except Air Astana, on the list of those banned from operating within the EU. During ICAO's audit of the Kazakh airlines, it found out that the Kazakh aviation laws do not comply with the

ICAO standards and that the Civil Aviation Committee does not properly control the national airlines. (Interfax)

### **RUSSIAN FREE-PRESS ADVOCATE MOVES TO GEORGIA**

**26 November**

The prominent Russian journalist and free-press advocate Oleg Panfilov has moved to Tbilisi. "The main reason for my moving to Georgia is the situation in Russia. It's impossible to live in a country where the authorities lie to you, where media lies to you, and people are afraid of them," Panfilov, who previously ran the Moscow-based Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, told reporters. Panfilov, a longtime critic of the Russian authorities, said he had been receiving death threats. He took Georgian citizenship last year. In Tbilisi, Panfilov will host a program on a new Russian-language television channel called "Kavkaz Kanal." He will also teach journalism at Tbilisi's Ilia Chavchavadze University. Panfilov also says he hopes to found a journalism school and write a book on the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war. (RFE/RL)

### **S. OSSETIA, ABKHAZIA COULD JOIN CIS IN THE FUTURE**

**26 November**

South Ossetia and Abkhazia could become members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on condition that all of the CIS member-states recognize the sovereignty of these republics and agree to admit them to the CIS, Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee Sergei Lebedev said. "Our charter allows the admission of new members on condition that all CIS countries without exception give their consent. It is apparently premature to discuss South Ossetia and Abkhazia's membership now, because they have not been recognized by other CIS countries, except Russia," Lebedev said. "When this recognition is formalized, the republic's accession to the CIS could be discussed, if they apply and if all members give their consent," he said. "It is difficult to guess exactly when this may happen," he added. "We have regional communities in which not only CIS members participate," Lebedev said. (Interfax)



New Book:

#### ***The Guns of August 2008***

**Edited By Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr**

M.E. Sharpe, New York, June 2009,  
290pp

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