

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING VOL. 12 NO. 19 13 October 2010

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

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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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PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN KYRGYZSTAN: LONG ROAD TO STABILITY?

Rafis Abazov

On October 10, for the first time since independence in 1991 the voters in Kyrgyzstan went to the voting stations with great fear for their safety, amid widely circulated rumors about potential bloody incidents. The electorate was also deeply polarized in their views of the elections. One large group of voters was profoundly frustrated and disillusioned with the democratic experiment in the country. The other group was highly optimistic about the outcomes, claiming that the introduction of the parliamentary republic would finally put to an end the abuses, excesses and corrupt practices of the so-called super-presidential system, where the president played a disproportionately large and often destructive role in the political development of the country.

BACKGROUND: These parliamentary elections were held in the shadow of two violent conflicts: a revolt in Bishkek, which led to the forceful removal of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev from power in April 2010, and inter-ethnic clashes in and around the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan in June. Both events led to the escalation of political instability and numerous casualties among the civil population. In fact the events were probably the bloodiest in the country since the civil war of the 1920s, surpassing even the traumatic clashes of 1990, when several hundred people were killed and wounded. Both events of 2010 spread fear among the general population about threat of civil war and of a break-up of the state into two feuding entities – Southern and Northern Kyrgyzstan. Because of these threats and challenges the ruling coalition perceived parliamentary elections to be the best political solution for the country; while their opponents thought that without proper guarantees for minorities and rival groups the elections would bring a further destabilization of the situation. One of the threats was the 'balkanization' of the country, if the people began voting according to their ethnic and regional loyalty lines, leading

to a deeply confrontational composition of the *Jogorku Kenesh* (parliament). The other threat was a possible permanent stalemate in the legislative body, as hypothetically up to 20 parties had a chance to be elected by passing the five percent threshold.

What made these elections different from many earlier ones was that President Roza Otunbayeva and her government promised not to interfere in the election process, and they largely kept their promise. In fact, according to the election laws, no individual in the transitional caretaking government could run in the elections while in office, and thus government members were required to resign from their position to become eligible for registration as candidates. The stakes were extremely high as this parliament would indubitably redefine the political map of the country; therefore about 3,300 registered candidates from 29 political parties organized their campaigns in order to capture just 120 seats in a new parliament. According to the country's new Constitution, the winning party or a coalition in the *Jogorku Kenesh* would form the government and would elect the prime

minister, the most powerful figure in the newly designed political system.

IMPLICATIONS: These elections became one of the most expensive parliamentary elections ever in the history of the country, although according to the OSCE they were quite fair, open and competitive. The case of the interception of US\$ 700,000 in cash (in a country where a university professor receives on average the equivalent of about US\$ 100 per month) by the National Security Service illustrates the amount of resources invested in these election campaigns. Different parties used their resources differently. Some tried to simply buy voters en masse, and the Kyrgyz media regularly reported incidents in which candidates offered voters cash or various goods in exchange for votes. Others tried organizing quite professional Western-style election campaigns, often using Western-educated local election campaign organizers.

Yet, most of the fears about the fragmentation of the electorate and armed confrontation at polling stations proved to be groundless. Already a month before the elections, the list of front runners had narrowed down to half a dozen leading political parties that had a real chance to win seats in the legislative body. The elections were conducted in a surprisingly calm and stable environment amid heavy security provided by both the state police and a large number of volunteers. The OSCE sent about 300 international observers to all regions of the country, including the areas that saw bloody conflicts during the summer of 2010. The five largest and best organized parties – *Ata-Jurt*, the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK), *Respublika*, *Ar-Namys* and *At-Meken* – indeed managed to win the most of the votes and get seats in the parliament. On election day and on the night of the ballot counting,

thousands if not tens of thousands of citizens were glued to TV screens to hear the results. Surprisingly, *Ata-Jurt*, which many observers associated with southern regional grouping (the stronghold of the former President Bakiyev) came first with 8.88 percent of the votes, followed by the SDPK with 8.04 percent, *Ar-Namys* with 7.74, *Respublika* with 7.24 and *At-Meken* with 5.6. Another surprise was that *Butun Kyrgyzstan* came just a whisker away from entering the *Jogorku Kenesh*, winning 4.84 percent of the votes, not quite enough to cross the magic five percent mark.

Despite the fears and some gloomy predictions, the parliamentary elections proceeded without violence or confrontation, and seemingly contributed to the strengthening of the new political regime. As the leader of *Ar Namys* Party, Felix Kulov, announced in an interview to the local Kyrgyz media, "[we] should move forward to achieve prosperity for our country [by] overcoming personal ambitions," though it remains to be seen if the newly introduced parliamentary system will be strong enough to deal with a long list of problems and challenges, including deep political division along ethnic, regional and social lines, endemic corruption and economic recession.

Yet the elections have several important implications. First, they helped the incumbent regime achieve its single most important objective: to gain the sense of legitimacy it had lacked ever since coming to power in April 2010, due to the fact that the old parliament was dissolved, the constitutional court was dismantled, the old Constitution was abandoned and the new Constitution was introduced in a very hasty manner. Second, the elections helped to overcome the southern region's mistrust in the post-conflict political process, as through the elections the

representatives of the southern elite gained some stake in the current political system and significant representation in the legislature. Third, the elections helped to achieve a degree of stabilization, as the current configuration of the political forces in the newly elected parliament provides hope that this legislative body would be able to offer a legal and open platform for conflict mitigation, bargains and compromises to all major political players in the country. There is also hope that previously marginalized political groups and ethnic minorities will be able to access a valuable channel of communication with the ruling majority.



(EPA)

After the successful elections, the government and most of the politicians in Kyrgyzstan have been jubilant about the outcome. However, they should avoid over-simplification of the situation in the country and should work carefully on furthering political stabilization and on building bridges and trust between various communities. The political, social and economic development in the country is still complicated by a maze of special interests, regional and local alliances, poor governance, red tape and competing ambitions. The newly elected parliament should consider several important steps to solidify the political changes.

The first step is to develop a program and strategy for achieving national reconciliation between South and North, and between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.

CONCLUSIONS: The wounds of the April and June events are still fresh and the atrocities were quite severe, therefore it is extremely important for the country and its leaders to work to overcome hatred and mistrust between the communities and find ways to move forward. The second step is to find opportunities for revitalizing the national economy, stimulating the creation of new jobs, especially for youth, and attracting international investments by containing corruption and red tape and developing more transparent and business-friendly legal environment. The third step is to improve governance and to increase reform efforts to move the civil service sector towards a lean, highly motivated, well-trained and well-prepared civil service. Due to the turmoil of the revolutions in 2005 and 2010, political retributions and random firing, hundreds of highly trained young civil service workers left their jobs, moving to foreign countries or to the private sector. The fourth step is to begin dealing with forthcoming humanitarian disaster as thousands of people in conflict-torn areas enter the winter without proper housing, adequate food and fuel reserves, with no incomes or access to medical and social services.

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KAZAKHSTAN-RUSSIA SUMMIT SEEKS DEEPER COOPERATION

Robert M. Cutler

Presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia held a two-day summit in early September, at the two countries' Seventh Forum on Interregional Cooperation in Oskemen (settled by order of Peter the Great in 1720, called Ust'-Kamenogorsk from the mid-nineteenth century until 1992), the capital of the East-Kazakhstan province. While some agreements to implement existing agreements for joint energy development of the Khvalynskoe and Imashevskoe deposits were reached, the summit was mainly notable for being less superficial than other such meetings in the recent past.

BACKGROUND: There are two main areas of historical Russian concentration within the borders of contemporary Kazakhstan. First there is an historically settled area, shadowing the present-day border in the north, of industrial concentrations connected with natural resource exploitation and heavy industry. Second, the agricultural "virgin lands" of the Khrushchev era stretch much further south, almost to the central part of the country. In addition, the province of Eastern Kazakhstan is historically and demographically linked with the northern part of the Virgin Lands area, although it was settled much earlier and is economically distinct from it. In summary, waves of Russian settlement came in the extreme east and extreme north during the mid-eighteenth century, in the northeast and the north-center during the early and mid-nineteenth century, and in the north and center during the mid-twentieth century.

Despite significant ethnic Russian out-migration from Kazakhstan since the country's independence, the two national economies remain inevitably and inextricably linked, not least in the energy sector. Lukoil and Gazprom have a strong presence in the country, and oil from the Tengiz deposit in northwestern

Kazakhstan reaches world markets only through the pipeline of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) which ends in Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. Still, there are some frictions, as for example Russian commitments to double the CPC's capacity have never been realized. At the Oskemen meeting, agreements were nevertheless reached to implement decisions concerning joint development of certain onshore and offshore fields in the Caspian Sea.

Russia and Kazakhstan were the first two Caspian littoral states to agree on how to delimit the seabed bilaterally for natural-resource rights between them. They accomplished this in 1998, although the agreement took a few years to implement. For that purpose they used the "modified median line" principle, a standard in international law sometimes also called the "equidistance" principle because a line is drawn equidistant (thus "median") from the closest mainland points of each of the two countries. Small adjustments are then made to the resulting line (therefore "modified") so as to take into account any existing de facto boundaries, and also if necessary to avoid splitting individual oil or gas fields between the two states. Since then,



in 2001, Russia and Azerbaijan agreed on a bilateral delimitation of their respective seabed sectors following the same principle (the resulting Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan line has been accepted too), and also Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have a partial bilateral agreement.

In the case of Russia and Kazakhstan, there was not only a bilateral agreement on the modified median line principle a dozen years ago, but the decision was also taken to jointly develop certain deposits straddling the border. Thus half of the Kurmangazy exploration and production company is owned by KazMunaiGaz (KMG) and a quarter by Rosneft, with the last quarter still to be assigned. This project has been slowed by the need for geophysical reassessments due to drilling results not conforming with modeled projections. In the case of the Khvalynskoe deposit, a 2002 protocol from the 1998 agreement on offshore delimitation provides specifically for joint development. (Khvalynskoe is estimated to

hold 322 billion cubic meters of natural gas, 17 million tons of gas condensate, and 266 million barrels of oil.)

IMPLICATIONS: In 2005, about the time Kurmangazy's joint venture was structured, KMG and Lukoil created a joint venture for Khvalynskoe. KMG was given the right to participate while having to compete in a tender offer and it was agreed that the laws of the Russian Federation would govern the development project. However, since bureaucratic obstacles had stymied the implementation of these decisions, the Khvalynskoe venture was the subject of specific discussions between Nazarbayev and Medvedev, who took a further decision to apply the necessary political will; and, so far, this appears to

be in process.

The Imashevskoe gas deposit on the border between the two countries, estimated to hold 128.7 billion cubic meters of gas and 20.7 million tons of gas condensate, was also the subject of discussions between Medvedev and Nazarbayev. It had been agreed in 2005 at a bilateral summit meeting that Imashevskoe would be jointly developed by Gazprom and KMG, and that they would share the exploration costs and together choose the project's operator. The Imashevskoe field lies almost but not entirely on the Kazakhstani side of the common border; in return for half ownership, the Russian side this month formally and officially renounced all claims to any of Kazakhstan's northern territories; also Kazakhstan ceded a fairly small salient of pastoral land to Russia's Astrakhan region.

In Oskemen, the only measure agreed between Kazakhstan and Russia for the promotion of the Customs Union within the Eurasian Economic

Community was to further the integration of the railroad networks of the two countries. Nazarbayev even re-raised the possibility of implementing a Soviet-era project to reverse the flow of Siberian rivers from the north to the south, in order to irrigate farmland in Kazakhstan. The Ob, Irtysh, and Yenisei rivers flow northward although their sources are not far from Kazakhstan or even in the country. Originally conceived under Stalin, planning for the project intensified under Brezhnev but was abandoned in the mid-1980s due to environmental objections and an absence of financial means. Various bilateral and multilateral summits including other Central Asian countries and China have seen this project raised again throughout the past decade. However, this year, regions in western Kazakhstan were affected by the drought and fires that accompanied the summer heat wave in Russia, adding urgency. Nazarbayev called for institutionalizing cooperation over natural catastrophes and also mentioned that the river-diversion project could help ease disputes among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan over hydroelectric power vs. irrigation and drinking water. Pre-summit reports in the Russian press had anticipated bilateral agreements for sharing the water resources of the Irtysh and Ural rivers, but it is not clear whether these were reached.

Kazakhstan's president Nursultan Nazarbayev was strongly indicated to become Gorbachev's second in command had the mid-1991 project for a Union of Sovereign States been implemented, and he was not happy to see the Soviet Union disappear. His insistence on Central Asian participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States prevented the grouping from devolving into a Slavic Union. With the proliferation of "oligarchic" and other private

economic interests following their own purposes, it has proved increasingly difficult for Kazakhstan to manage its relations with Russia. The Eurasian Economic Community is just another incarnation of the CIS Group of Four (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia) with slightly different membership, and for Kazakhstan it is just another instrument through which Nazarbayev hopes to achieve some multilateral leverage for managing Kazakhstan's relations with Russia.

CONCLUSIONS: Russia remains an important, indeed inescapable, direction in Kazakhstan's "multivectoral" foreign policy. However, Nazarbayev's frustration with the difficulty of overcoming bureaucratic Russian obstacles to state-to-state cooperation on the one hand, and with the imbalances enforced upon the national economy by energy resource development on the other hand (by Western firms as well as Russian firms, it should be noted), is all too evident. The Kazakhstani press opined that the most important result of the meeting was that the bilateral interregional forum, as an institution, was reinvigorated and that the depth and breadth of consultations between the two top leaders, which had "declined over the past decade" once again reached the intensity of the 1990s (i.e. the Yeltsin era). This is probably an accurate indicator of elite and leadership attitudes.

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THE ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN TAJIKISTAN

Umida Hashimova

While Islamic fundamentalism exist to a greater or lesser extent in every Central Asian country, these threats are greatest in Tajikistan. Regardless of whether radicalized Islam in Tajikistan is considered a consequence of the civil war including the marginalization of former allies of President Rakhmon and members of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRP), poverty exacerbated by corruption driving people to seek justice through religion, or a crumbling regime losing control at the “top” and “bottom” of its society, the new pattern of violence indicates serious challenges for Tajikistan. Unless the government finds ways to improve its intelligence and security forces, the unrest will likely continue and worsen.

BACKGROUND: The causes of Tajikistan’s civil war lay in the struggle among elites at the republican level, which spread to other regions as the clash of interests among different regional clans intensified. As a result, the IRP was created as a regional counterbalance against the Communist Party of Tajikistan, which was dominating in mainly Khujand and Kulyab in the 1990s. The IRP’s followers were mainly from Garm and Gorno-Badakhshan, which had a minority stake in the government and were not able to enjoy the economic benefits of these positions. Their purpose was to overthrow the Communist Party in order to establish an Islamic state. As the government moved to repress the IRP, the latter spawned the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) coalition forces with other opposing groups under the agenda of advocating nationalism, democracy, and Islamism to fight for political and economic inclusion. Antigovernment demonstrations that started in the spring of 1992 were shortly followed by the civil war.

The ruling secular party secured support from Russia and Uzbekistan and was able to repulse the UTO forces. As a result, the UTO sought safe havens in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Iran and those who did not leave the country hid in regions difficult to access for

the government troops. Reconciliation was reached when the two parties signed a peace deal in 1997, in which the UTO was offered a 30 percent quota in governmental positions. Nevertheless, most political power has been concentrated in the presidential office, which was dominated by President Rahmon’s Kulyabi clan, depriving the opposition of a significant role in the management of the country. The president did little to share political power and economic resources beyond his clan-based network.

Since the 1997 peace agreement, the president has gradually been sidelining those former opposition and allied commanders whom he viewed as posing a real or potential threat to his power. A suspicious car crash on October 2 involving the head of the IRP and his deputy is a recent example. This resulted in the growth of discontent and has caused frequent armed clashes between the government and former opposition forces since the middle of 2005.

IMPLICATIONS: The new wave of tensions and conflict over the last three months indicate the resurgence of militant Islamists in Tajikistan after a long period of relative quiet since the end of the civil war in 1997. In themselves, the September 3 suicide attack on a



police station in the northern city of Khujand, killing four police officers, and the September 6 bomb explosion in a disco in Dushanbe, wounding seven, could be characterized as the usual Central Asian hit-and-run-attacks aiming to threaten the government. However, the prison break by 25 prisoners in Dushanbe on August 23 and the latest ambush of a military convoy, sent to capture the breakaway prisoners, by militants in the Rasht Valley on September 19, claiming the lives of 20-40 soldiers, indicate that the situation is now far more serious. Despite the government's launch of a large-scale operation in the Rasht Valley, it continues experiencing failures. On October 4, wounded and dead soldiers were returned from that area to Dushanbe. The helicopter carrying soldiers crashed and officially killed four soldiers, while unofficial sources claim the actual death toll amounts to 28. Six more soldiers died in landmine explosion in the same area. The government claims the events were accidents due to technical failure.

The events in the Rasht Valley reiterate the dominant position of the militants in the mountainous regions. This is not surprising

given that the population in mountainous areas is mostly socially, economically, and politically deprived, and views the sitting government simply as domination by the other clans as opposed to theirs. In such an environment, Islamic militants may easily garner support. On the other hand, the audacious prison break indicates that the militants are gaining a foothold in the capital as well. There are strong indications that sidelined ex-government and

ex-opposition commanders are behind the recent violence and are trying to make a comeback.

The recent events are an indication of two new tendencies in Tajikistan. First, the country experienced its first ever suicide attack. Second, the attacks are professionally conducted. In the well-prepared and coordinated military convoy ambush, the government troops experienced heavy casualties, losing as many as a third to half of their soldiers and many others were seriously wounded. The convoy drew heavy fire from grenade launchers and machine guns. The extent of the violence indicates that the militants may have formed a well-organized local insurgency with extended networks and planning more serious fighting.

As the militants now have enough power to cause trouble for the current government and challenge its security, the stability and future of Tajikistan will depend on the extent to which the government will be able to resist the new wave of violence. Tajikistan's government may be able to prevent smaller groups from entering Tajikistan from Afghanistan, but will it be able



to prevail if their numbers increase? Now that the militants are strong both inside and outside of the capital, does the government have the institutional and logistical capacity and resources to act effectively against the Islamists to neutralize their violent opposition? Will Russia, Uzbekistan or any other country be ready materially to assist Tajikistan to oppose those forces this time?

At the same time, the government's failure to address the crumbling infrastructure and social systems and the absence of functioning governmental institutions are undermining public support for the government. The Tajik public, despite fresh memories of the bloody civil war, will probably feel fewer inhibitions about taking to the streets to protest. In light of the planned withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan, the recent outbreak of violence in Tajikistan puts the future of Central Asia's security and stability into question.

CONCLUSIONS: Although clashes between the government and militants are not a new occurrence in Tajikistan, their intensity,

frequency and sophistication is new and need to be given special attention. The latest events indicate that government security forces are ill-prepared to stand up to resurgent militant groups, likely supported by militarily sophisticated elements from Afghanistan, both in the mountainous areas bordering Afghanistan and in the capital. As the existing power structure starts to crumble, Islamic fundamentalism can turn into a major problem for the country and its immediate neighbors. Poverty, corruption and the absence of basic services for the population, as well as the marginalized former warlords and elites allow radical Islam to breed. Unless the government finds ways to avert the continuing violence through better intelligence and strategies that can neutralize the militants before they are able to extend their power bases further, perilous times for Tajikistan and the rest Central Asia could be just around the corner.

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THE NEW DÉTENTE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.- RUSSIAN COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Dmitry Shlapentokh

The relationship between the U.S. and Russia has been increasingly tense over the last ten years. Still, the fear of instability in Afghanistan and Central Asia has brought them together. Articles have appeared in the Russian press, which have emphasized the importance of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia. Some concrete actions also point to a recognized need for cooperation. For example, Russia provided 20 helicopters to Afghanistan and an open corridor for U.S. cargo. Still, both sides remain suspicious of each other's intentions and full-fledged cooperation is unlikely to develop.

BACKGROUND: The U.S.-Russian relationship continued to worsen through the late Yeltsin and Putin eras despite occasional meetings between the U.S. and Russian presidents and the apparent personal rapport between them. The crisis in the relationship was exacerbated by the U.S./NATO bombings of Serbia/Yugoslavia as a result of the Kosovo crisis in 1999; the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003; and, finally, the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia. The U.S., as the only superpower, expressed little desire to take Russia's concerns into consideration. Still, the Russia-Georgia war demonstrated that the U.S. had few resources to prop up Georgia, its staunch ally. The signs of what historian Paul Kennedy defined as "imperial overstretch" almost a generation ago became increasingly visible in Iraq and Afghanistan, from which the U.S. wishes to disentangle itself. Still, this should be done with minimal drawbacks for U.S. prestige and, even more important, without inviting chaos to the entire region.

The fear of chaos was also increased by the outbreak of violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and the risk of its spreading throughout Central Asia. The change in mood could be recorded

not only in Washington but also in Moscow. Still, suspicion runs high, and the practical implications of this rapprochement are quite limited.

The Russian press, including that representing official or semi-official views, continues to publish articles that emphasize the danger of a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and its implications for stability in Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan. It has been suggested that Russia and the regional states should work together with the U.S. and the West in general to deal with the situation.

More important than words are concrete actions. Russia provided a corridor for the transportation of NATO goods to Afghanistan and recently sold 20 helicopters to Afghanistan. Moscow has also engaged in broad cooperation with the Kabul government. While these actions are undoubtedly important, one should not overestimate them. To start with, one should remember that by opening a corridor for NATO supplies to Afghanistan, Russia earned a considerable amount of money; while weapons were not donated. The NATO base in Manas is still seen as a base of the Western allies, a stronghold of Russia's geopolitical rival,



and the decision of the new Kyrgyz government not to close it immediately clearly displeased Moscow.

The deep distrust of the U.S. that still dominates the minds of the Russian elite is exemplified by the comments of General Vladimir Shamanov, one of Russia's hardliners. He discussed the implications of the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan with a correspondent of one Russian newspaper. The correspondent noted that this could well aggravate the situation in Tajikistan, implying that the Taliban could move from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and create problems for Russia. Shamanov rejected this notion and stated that the major threat for Russia could well come from Georgia. The implications here are clear – the U.S. would take advantage of Russia's problems in Central Asia and would once again use Georgia to create problems for Russia in the most sensitive areas of the Northern Caucasus.

IMPLICATIONS: The continuous deep suspicion of U.S. intentions in Central Asia can also be seen as a response to the U.S. support

for the forces in Russia that sought to send troops to Kyrgyzstan during the height of the anarchy in the summer of 2010. Bishkek also supported this idea, but Russia eventually reneged. Of course, there are several reasons for Russia's reluctance to deploy troops (See [CACI Analyst archives](#)). Still, at least judging by comments in the Russian press, these proposals actually alarmed some of

the members of the Russian elite. Shamil Sultanov, an Islamic Russian intellectual, noted that the plan to send Russian troops to Central Asia was part of an American plot. In his view, the U.S. elite understand that it could not pacify Afghanistan and the Muslim world in general. Thus, it sought to divert Islamist attention from the U.S. to Russia; and a full-fledged involvement in Afghanistan and Central Asia on Russia's part would mean that the U.S. would indeed have induced Russia to swallow the bait.

Even those Russian pundits who do not regard the U.S. as deeply hostile to Russia still complain that the U.S. does not want to cooperate with Russia on an equal footing, and plainly ignores Russia's interests. For example, they claim that the U.S. does nothing to prevent the flow of drugs from Afghanistan and Central Asia to Russia. Finally, those skeptical of Russian/U.S. cooperation voice yet another argument. While for some Russian observers the U.S. elite is made up of cunning, skillful Machiavellians who calculate each of

their steps and have long-range plans for the future, others have diametrically opposite views. They assume that the U.S. elite is driven either by wishful thinking or by utopian plans for dealing with the outside world. According to this theory, the Americans invaded Iraq and Afghanistan without understanding the cultures of these countries. Chaos is the result of these actions, and the U.S. will depart leaving everybody else to deal with the problems.

While a considerable share of the Russian elite views the U.S. and the West in general with suspicion, there are also problems within the Central Asian states themselves, including Kyrgyzstan. Some residents of South Kyrgyzstan, for example, protested the appearance of even a limited number of law enforcement officers from Europe. Local representatives of South Kyrgyzstan said they protested the Westerners because they were afraid of a repetition of the Kosovo scenario. In their view, the foreign troops had arrived to protect Albanians from the Serbs in Kosovo, but the Albanians took advantage of this arrangement and purged the Serbs from Kosovo. This could well happen in Kyrgyzstan, they suggested, where local Uzbeks could use the presence of foreign troops or police to purge ethnic Kyrgyz from the South.

While there is suspicion about Western motives, the Central Asian elites are also quite skeptical regarding Russia's intentions and, of course, those of each other. As a result, the recent meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which includes Russia and the Central Asian states, produced no

visible results. It seems that the more effective regional organization is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes the Central Asian states, Russia and China and which plans to conduct military exercises in Kyrgyzstan. Still, it remains to be seen whether these exercises will have any practical implications. Even more important, they will provide China with an important justification for a closer engagement in Central Asia in the future.

CONCLUSIONS: The continuous instability in Afghanistan, along with the revolution and outbreak of anarchy in Kyrgyzstan led the U.S. and Russia to move closer together. On Russia's part, this rapprochement was at least partially due to the emergence of those members of the Russian elite who could be defined as "orange to brown," i.e. nationalists who share at least some premises with liberals. Both these groups assume that Russia, all problems with the West notwithstanding, should cooperate with the U.S. in dealing with the Islamic threat. Some concrete steps have been taken. Still, suspicion of the U.S. runs high, while the discord between Russia and the Central Asian states, as well as their suspicion of the U.S. and of each other, complicates the situation even more. All of this creates additional problems for effective coordination in dealing with the threat of chaos in Central Asia. In any case, Russia and some of the Central Asian states appear to prefer to cooperate with China rather than with the West.

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FIELD REPORTS

KYRGYZ ELECTIONS PRECEDED BY HEATED ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Joldosh Osmonov

The electoral campaign for the October 10 parliamentary election in Kyrgyzstan proved highly competitive. Twenty-nine political parties ran for the national parliament, and according to local experts, for the first time had equal opportunities for reaching out to the electorate. The country never experienced such a dynamic electoral campaign in its history. However, despite the level playing field and the more or less civilized campaigns that political parties reportedly conducted, a number of events and incidents related to the campaign made the political struggle more complicated and aggressive, and perhaps even posed a threat to the conduct of the election itself.

Experts claim that there are two reasons for the “electoral craze” that surrounded the parliamentary elections. Firstly, as a result of the Constitutional referendum held in July, Kyrgyzstan is transitioning to parliamentary system of government, conferring powers to the legislative branch that will form a cabinet of ministers. Secondly, political forces in the country had a clear understanding of the opportunity presented by the elections in a more open political environment. So far, the interim government led by President Roza Otunbaeva succeeded in providing equal rights for all parties in the elections.

In its midterm report on the campaign, the ODIHR Observation Mission noted progress toward a democratic campaign period, but also noted some minor problems, such as the lack of specialists in election conduct. The pre-election campaign was commended for being held without serious violations, according to the ODIHR Mission

Representative Jens-Hagen Eschenbacher, who said the campaign was very competitive because all parties had equal opportunities to communicate their agendas to the electorate.

Numerous independent non-governmental organizations, both international and domestic, affirmed the ODIHR statement, saying that the authorities succeeded in ensuring fair competition among all political forces. At the same time, they also claimed that competing parties themselves were violating the rules by practicing “old methods”, such as buying votes and discrediting opponents in unethical ways.

The government’s outspoken commitment to the “free and fair elections” principle did not provide a guarantee for smooth and calm elections. The campaign was accompanied by numerous scandals and incidents, which threatened to derail the elections. On October 8, the headquarters of the leading opposition party, “Ata Jurt,” was attacked. Approximately 100 protesters burst into the party office and threw the party’s campaign materials out the window of the building, then burned them outside. The protesters claimed to be relatives and family members of those who were shot by the police and security services during the April 7 events and came to the party office to demand an explanation for party leader Kamchybek Tashiev’s statement that the party, if elected, would bring back former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Tashiev denied the statement, which was caught on video during a meeting with voters in southern Kyrgyzstan, saying that the footage was fabricated

and that he considered the attack an attempt to disrupt the upcoming elections.

One day later, on October 9, unknown men burned the campaign posters of one of the opposition parties, “Butun Kyrgyzstan”, in the region of Talas. The party officials blamed pro-governmental parties for the incident.

Despite these worrisome incidents, the authorities remained firm on conducting the elections. During her meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions in Kyrgyzstan, President Otunbaeva stated that there is no reason to cancel or postpone the parliamentary elections, saying that “we are confident that the elections will be held and will be successful”.

Otunbaeva claimed that the authorities would take unprecedented security measures in case of unrest on Election Day, with additional police patrolling beginning on October 7. Interior Minister Zarylbek Rysaliev stated that 7,000 policemen and 13,000 citizen volunteers would be maintaining public order on Election Day, and that taxi drivers and private security companies would help the police ensure order.

The parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan also attracted a great deal of interest from the international community and, allegedly, attempts from some states to influence the outcome of the elections. Meetings of some opposition political party leaders with the leaders of Russia and Kazakhstan, and the airing of discrediting evidence against leaders of other parties in Russian and Kazakh mass media, were considered attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Kyrgyzstan, stated local political expert Mars Sariev: “Russia is attempting to influence the campaign by supporting pro-Russian parties and using mass media against other forces.” Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev was also reported to say in a meeting with foreign political experts on September 10 that parliamentarism in Kyrgyzstan will lead to disaster.

President Otunbaeva considered foreign mass media involvement and the statements of foreign leaders as unacceptable. “There are many who want to dictate which way Kyrgyzstan should go, but Kyrgyzstan is a sovereign country and no one can interfere in domestic issues”, she stated at a ceremony dedicated to the Day of Teachers on October 8.

UZBEK PRESIDENT TAKES PART IN UN SUMMIT

Erkin Akhmadov

On September 20, Uzbekistan’s president Islam Karimov took part in the UN “Millennium Development Goals” plenary meeting in New York. Identifying wars and conflicts throughout the world as the major obstacles to development, Karimov’s speech at the meeting covered three major topics: ways for bringing peace to Afghanistan, stabilizing the situation in Kyrgyzstan, and issues of water usage in the Central Asian region. These topics were not accidental – each one touches upon Uzbekistan’s international and regional interests. Moreover, of President Karimov’s speech shed light

on the positions Uzbekistan takes on the above-mentioned issues.

Speaking of Afghanistan, which remains a center of international tensions, President Karimov underlined that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem; rather, it should be resolved by the Afghans themselves together with the states interested in ending the war and stabilizing the situation in this state. Thus, the Uzbek president recalled the initiative of his country that was voiced in 2008 – a “6+3” Contact Group under UN auspices that would consist of countries which are interested in ending the war in Afghanistan and bringing the

country to stability out of their own security concerns. Interestingly, Uzbekistan identified the U.S., NATO, Russia and the three Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as potential members of this group. The group's main goal would be to propose the conflicting parties a program for cessation of military operations, finding a compromise solution on key problems and contradictions which divide the country, ensuring security and providing necessary guarantees.

Referring to the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, President Karimov called it "a thoroughly thought out and well organized action by third parties". He went on to state that the aim of the action was not only to instigate chaos and an uncontrollable situation in Kyrgyzstan, but also to draw Uzbekistan into the bloodshed, and finally to turn an interethnic conflict into an inter-state confrontation between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

In light of this, Islam Karimov stated that it would be reasonable to expect that the UN should assist in conducting an independent international investigation of the tragic events that took place in the southern Kyrgyzstan on June 11-14, 2010. That would allow for preventing an escalation of events in neighboring Kyrgyzstan.

The last issue brought up by the Uzbek president was the use of water resources and construction of dams in the Central Asian region. The issue was raised in light of the ongoing drying of the Aral Sea in the northwest of the republic. Thus, President Karimov once again emphasized that any dam projects of the upper riparian states of the region may cause irreparable ecological damage and dangerous anthropogenic catastrophes. Referring to international ecological organizations and experts,

Islam Karimov noted that the construction of small hydropower stations would be much more rational and less dangerous.

Finally, Uzbekistan expressed support for the Global Action Plan for accelerating progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals that was proposed by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. President Karimov reported on different aspects of his country's progress towards reaching the goals. For instance, since independence, i.e. from 1991, the nation's GDP grew by 3.5 times, the GDP per capita by 2.5 times, and the average salary by 14 times. Furthermore, he noted that 82.5 percent of Uzbekistan's population currently has access to safe drinking water, and 83.5 percent is provided with natural gas. The level of maternal mortality decreased was halved and child mortality decreased by two thirds.

In spite of the reported progress, it should be remembered that Uzbekistan ranked 119 out of 182 in the 2007 Human Development Index report, and is still considered to have one of the lowest per capita incomes in the region. Nonetheless, the President emphasized that Uzbekistan's development progress was possible only because his country went for its own model of democratization and transition to a socially oriented free market economy. The UN meeting thus provided an opportunity for justifying the current political and economic regime before the international community.

It seems that Karimov's speech aimed to accomplish two main goals. First, to assure the international community that Uzbekistan is a successfully developing country with bright prospects. Second, to communicate Uzbekistan's position on certain issues of international and regional importance which otherwise do not receive much coverage.

TAJIK ARMY SUSTAINS LOSSES WHILE AUTHORITIES BLAME MEDIA FOR SUPPORTING TERRORISM

Suhrob Majidov

The security situation in Tajikistan has destabilized lately. On September 19, a military convoy transporting national army servicemen was attacked in the Rasht region. Twenty-six officers and soldiers were killed and ten wounded. The Tajik authorities accused former field commanders of the United Tajik Opposition for the attack. Starting on September 22, a large-scale military operation for eliminating the militants was underway in the Rasht region. However, news from the field has not been positive – every other day new casualties from among national army soldiers are reported. Meanwhile, the Tajik Ministry of Defense criticized some independent media sources, accusing them of being “provocative” and providing subjective coverage of the events in Rasht. It should be noted that all means of communication with the Rasht region are cut off since the military operation started, and no journalists are allowed into the region.

Some sources suggest that from the beginning of the military operation in Rasht, fifteen militants had been killed (as of October 5). Furthermore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that 50-60 militants have been isolated and that the army currently seeks to eliminate them.

Nonetheless, the army has suffered significant losses as well. For instance, on October 4 it was reported that several members of a Khatlon special police squad (OMON) were killed, among them the squad commander and police colonel Zoirsho Kalandarov and senior lieutenant Yatim Salimov. The National Guard of Tajikistan reported that on October 6, a truck carrying soldiers hit a landmine. As a result, six soldiers died and the number of wounded is still under investigation. On the same day, a helicopter of the National Guard crashed in Rasht. Some sources report twenty eight military personnel dead, among them soldiers of the elite state security division “Alpha” and soldiers of the

National Guard. The press service of the National Guard stated that the helicopter crash was due to “technical problems”. However, some news information sources claim that the crash took place four days earlier than officially stated due to the helicopter taking fire from the ground.

Simultaneously, a confrontation has erupted between Tajik media and the Ministry of Defense. On October 4, the Tajik Minister of Defense, Sherali Khayrulloev, harshly criticized some of the local independent media sources, stating that their coverage of the attack on the convoy was “provocative” and “not corresponding to reality”, and that media intentionally underlined mistakes and shortfalls of the national army. Thus, he claimed that by doing so these media sources “support” the terrorist activities of the militants.

In response to the statement of the Minister, media representatives requested official apologies from the Ministry for libel, and some even intended to file a case in court. The Minister, however, showed no intention of apologizing for his words and said that “journalists are the ones who should be apologizing, if they have at least a bit of conscience”.

Furthermore, some internet sources are blocked in Tajikistan. For instance, Zafar Abdullaev, director of the local news agency “Avesta”, stated that from September 29, a number of internet service providers in Tajikistan blocked access to the web sites of www.tojnews.tj and www.tjknews.com. By September 30, access to the web site of www.avesta.tj was also blocked, and www.centrasia.ru had limited accessibility. Abdullaev assumes that this initiative came from higher authorities, and that there could be different reasons for this, “from discontent with the information policy of these web sites to temporary measures on controlling the information space in light of the military operation in the east of the

country". In addition, some publishers refused to print the outlets of certain independent agencies, providing no convincing reasons.

The security situation in the east of Tajikistan is far from stable. The complete isolation of the region where the military operation is taking place, and a resulting information vacuum, aggravate the situation even further. Thus, on the one hand there is no concrete information about the actual success

and losses of the government military forces in the operation, and therefore it is difficult to make any estimations about the total number of casualties on both sides. At the same time, media that tries to provide information on the situation in Rasht gets accused of providing "one-sided" and "provocative" information by the Tajik security authorities. This, in turn, adds even more confusion and less awareness of the situation among the public.

TURKEY SEEKS TO PURCHASE TURKMEN GAS AT ISTANBUL SUMMIT

Tavus Rejepova

On September 15-16, the presidents of Turkey, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan came together for the 10th summit of the Turkic speaking countries to strengthen economic ties and foster solidarity over a common cultural heritage. Within the framework of the summit, the energy ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan held three-way talks on the construction of gas pipelines including the EU-backed Nabucco pipeline project and export of gas from Turkmenistan to Turkey with further routes to Europe.

The leaders of these Turkic speaking countries have been meeting regularly since 1992, when the first summit took place in Ankara under the auspices of Turkey. As a result of the 10th summit in Istanbul, the participants agreed to establish a secretariat and appointed the Turkish diplomat Halil Akinci as the first Secretary General to be located in Istanbul. The sides issued an official declaration covering 60 points, which called for enhancing the role of the Turkic speaking states regionally and internationally and also spelled out their common desire for closer cooperation in the fields of trade and economy, energy, agriculture, transport, communications and tourism.

"We are from now on one nation, but we are also six states", Turkish President Abdullah Gul said in

his opening remarks. This resonates well with Turkmenistan's late president Niyazov's frequent description of the common heritage and increasing bilateral partnership between Turkey and Turkmenistan as "One Nation, Two States," itself replicated by late Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev's use of the same terminology in an address to the Turkish parliament in 1995. Although Niyazov constantly offered Turkey natural gas at reduced prices while in power, Turkey never took the offer seriously until the EU started showing interest in importing gas from Central Asia through its proposed Nabucco pipeline project. The trilateral energy talks during the summit again brought this issue to the surface.

According to Taner Yildiz, Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Turkey is interested in purchasing gas extracted by the Malaysian company Petronas on Turkmenistan's Caspian Sea seabed. The Minister said that a number of projects are currently underway aimed at extracting gas from non-disputed areas of the Caspian Sea. "We are confident that in coming months we will sign an agreement to support new regional projects such as Nabucco", ITAR-TASS quoted the Turkish Minister as saying. Turkey confirmed that an official request to purchase gas from Turkmenistan has already been sent to the Ministry of Energy and

Industry of Turkmenistan. It was not clear whether Turkey wants to purchase Turkmen gas for its domestic consumption or sell it on to Europe. Eurasianet.org reported that the Nabucco pipeline partner RWE AG won exploration rights last year for developing Block 23 in the Turkmen portion of the Caspian Sea and is investigating the possibilities for delivering gas directly to Europe. It is noteworthy that Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Austria signed an intergovernmental agreement on Nabucco in July 2009 in Ankara and Turkey's request to purchase gas from Turkmenistan appears to serve this end.

The unresolved dispute among the littoral states over the demarcation of the Caspian Sea basin has delayed the consideration of the Nabucco pipeline. However, the presidents of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan appeared optimistic about Turkey's initiative to import gas. "We have no intention of spoiling our friendly relations with Azerbaijan", President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov said at a press conference following the summit. Commenting on the bilateral partnership, Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev said, "we have high-level relations with Turkmenistan. We solve major disputes in cooperation and we should share both the natural gas and the oil". Despite the friendly exchange of words and verbal agreement over the energy partnership, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan refused to sign an agreement on establishing and joining the Turkic Speaking Countries' Cooperation Council established at last year's summit.

It is noteworthy that Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a memorandum of understanding over natural gas sales and transit agreements, opening for exports of gas from the Caspian Sea basin to Europe. Speaking to the heads of the Turkic speaking countries at the

summit, Aliyev called on the participants to join the regional energy transit projects. The projected 20 billion cubic meters per year (bcm/y) that Azerbaijan intends to supply to Turkey as phase two of the Shah Deniz project comes online is scheduled for 2016 only, and additional Turkmen gas could alleviate Turkey's domestic gas deficits and provide 10 bcm of the projected 30 bcm that would constitute Nabucco's full capacity. If the energy talks materialize further, this could provide additional supply for the Nabucco pipeline through already existing projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline.

Turkmenistan's opening for dialogue on exporting its gas to Turkey and allowing a feasibility study backed by the U.S. government in 2007 were received as positive signals internationally. It is also expected that Turkey's interest in purchasing gas from Turkmenistan might help resolving disagreements between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan over the demarcation of the long-disputed offshore Kyapaz field (referred to as Serdar in Turkmenistan). However, critics claim that the construction of any seabed Trans-Caspian pipeline would require the consent of all five littoral states including Russia, which has already expressed objections based on "environmental concerns".

Commenting on the feasibility of Nabucco and Turkmenistan's participation in the project, Berdimuhammedov said that Turkmenistan is currently constructing the East-West pipeline along the Caspian coast and that Nabucco is "associated with that project". Speaking to the Russian daily Kommersant, the EU Energy Commissioner Guenther Oettinger has earlier said that Nabucco is a priority project for the EU and that the materialization of this project would significantly alleviate the EU's dependence on Russian gas.

NEWS DIGEST

GEORGIA POSITION ON RUSSIAN WTO MEMBERSHIP “UNCHANGED”

5 October

Georgia will not support Russia's WTO membership unless issue of border-crossing points in breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia is resolved, spokesperson for the Georgian President said on October 5. "Georgia's position remains unchanged," Manana Manjgaladze said. "Georgia can not support Russia's WTO membership, unless conditions put forth by the Georgian authorities are met, including issues related with border-crossing points [in breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia] and set of other issues persisting between Georgia and Russia." Speaking to investors and government officials at the International Economic Alliance forum in New York on September 22 President Saakashvili said, that Georgia was not the only impediment to Russia's WTO membership. "There are many issues out there between them [WTO] and Russia," Saakashvili was quoted by Reuters. "So we were not the last ones left and you should give us some time until we are maybe the last ones ... Maybe we won't be the last ones. But right now there is a long line of countries." (Civil Georgia)

SEVEN KILLED IN MILITARY HELICOPTER CRASH IN EASTERN TAJIKISTAN

6 October

Seven people were killed when a Tajik Defense Ministry helicopter crashed in eastern Tajikistan, a source in the republic's law enforcement services told Interfax on Wednesday. "At least seven people were killed. Others sustained injuries," the source said. "The Defense Ministry's helicopter crashed in Rasht today. Seven people were killed, mainly National Guard servicemen," he said. A sweep operation to trap militants, who had attacked a Defense Ministry and National Guard convoy, is on in the Rasht region in eastern Tajikistan. The operation

involves helicopters and heavy armored military hardware. (Interfax)

OVER TEN KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN SEIZED FROM TAJIK MAN IN NOVOSIBIRSK

6 October

Drug control service officers have confiscated more than ten kilograms of heroin from an apartment rented by a Tajik citizen in Novosibirsk. "No one is living in the apartment. More than ten kilograms of heroin, weighing instruments and packaging material intended to divide drugs in smaller doses were confiscated from the apartment," a spokesman for the regional branch of the Federal Drug Control Service said on Wednesday. The 38-year-old Tajik citizen who rented the apartment and sold drugs in the region was detained as well. "The information available to us confirms that he transferred all of the money received by him to bank accounts in Tajikistan," the spokesman said. A criminal case based on drug dealing charges has already been opened against him. (Interfax)

KYRGYZ AUTHORITIES SEIZE MONEY ALLEGEDLY SENT BY BAKIYEV FAMILY TO FINANCE SUPPORTERS

7 October

Family members of former Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, are taking part in the financing of some political parties that are now running for parliament, according to Keneshbek Dushebayev, chairman of the Kyrgyz State National Security Service. "Bakiyev has provided huge amounts of money to finance parties representing their interests," Dushebayev told Interfax on Thursday. Dushebayev also said a car carrying a large amount of money intended for a Kyrgyz political party was recently intercepted. "The money, which was provided by the Bakiyevs through Kazakhstan, was brought to Kyrgyzstan and the social services seized the car. We seized \$700,000 intended for a party to destabilize the

situation before and during the elections," he said. (Interfax)

DISPUTES POSSIBLE AFTER KYRGYZ PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – OFFICIAL 7 October

The Kyrgyz Central Elections Commission is ready for the parliamentary elections on October 10, chairman Akyzbek Sariyev said on Thursday. "All is ready for the election, and technical and financial means have been allocated," he said. Kyrgyz authorities are trying to prevent the use of administrative resources, yet candidates may attempt pressure on election commissions. "Authorities want transparent and fair election. We shall see what we can do," he said. Twenty-nine out of 50 political parties registered in Kyrgyzstan are taking part in the election campaign. "The winner needs over 5% of votes nationwide, and no less than 0.5% of votes in every region," Sariyev said. Kyrgyzstan may have new elections if no party wins outright, he said. "Theoretically, that is possible," he said. "There is no mandatory turnout threshold, and the election will be valid regardless of the turnout," Sariyev said. As for the distribution of parliament seats between parties, Sariyev said, "that the election code norm will apply in case one party wins the election and has the right to all parliament seats." The existent constitution limits the rights of a victorious party to no more than 65 out of 120 parliament seats. The remaining 55 seats will be distributed proportionately between parties, which gain a sufficient number of votes. Sariyev did not rule out post-election discontent of certain parties. "If any questions are asked, they will be resolved in court," he said. (Interfax)

RUSSIA, PAKISTAN TO COOPERATE IN FIGHTING AFGHAN DRUG TRAFFICKING 7 October

The anti-drug agencies of Russia and Pakistan have signed a cooperation document, the Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) told Interfax on Thursday. The cooperation on cooperation in countering the illicit trafficking of narcotics, psychotropic substances and their precursors was signed during a visit by State Anti-drug Committee Chairman and FSKN Director Viktor Ivanov to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The agreement was signed by Ivanov, on the Russian part, and by State Minister of Narcotic Control Arbab Muhammad Zahir, on behalf of Pakistan. The signed document involves developing professional contacts,

conducting joint operations to smash networks that traffic Afghan drugs, exchanging information and implementing staff training and professional development plans. The visit by the FSKN chief is part of an effort to fulfill Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's order to form an anti-drug coalition between Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Ivanov held talks with the Pakistani deputy defense and foreign ministers, the first deputy minister of narcotic control and a Pakistani representative from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The parties discussed prospects for both regional and bilateral cooperation in countering illicit drug trafficking. The meetings also focused on Russia and Pakistan's measures to fight drug trafficking from Afghanistan. (Interfax)

VOICE OF AMERICA REPORTER ON TRIAL IN UZBEKISTAN

7 October

A journalist for a U.S.-funded radio station went on trial Thursday in Uzbekistan on charges including slander and posing a threat to public order, an Uzbek rights group said. Abdumalik Boboyev, an Uzbek journalist with U.S. government-funded Voice of America, is accused of insulting state officials and police through his reports. Other charges include illegal entry into the country, a charge that Boboyev's colleagues say stemmed from a clerical error with his passport. The U.S. and British ambassadors sought to attend the court hearing, but were denied entry, the Independent Human Rights Defenders Group said in a statement. Boboyev, 41, faces up to eight years in prison if found guilty of all the charges against him. The United States has expressed grave misgivings about the charges brought against Boboyev and urged Uzbekistan to stop the criminal prosecution of journalists. "Use of the criminal justice system to punish journalists for freely expressed views ... has a chilling effect on journalists throughout the country," Ian Kelly, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said last month. VOA has spoken up in defense of Boboyev, who has been reporting for its Uzbek Service for more than five years. "Mr. Boboyev, like all VOA journalists, is required to present accurate and balanced reports, and he should not be penalized for doing his job," VOA director Danforth Austin said in a statement last month. Rights activists say that using charges such as defamation, slander and "insulting the nation's honor" have become favored methods of the Uzbek

authorities for silencing critics and stifling independent reporting. Free media are virtually nonexistent in Uzbekistan, and independent journalists are routinely denied accreditation, putting them at further risk of prosecution. The Associated Press has been routinely denied accreditation by Uzbek authorities. Boboyev's trial echoes a similar case against a filmmaker who was convicted of slander earlier this year, and released on amnesty, after making a documentary on wedding rituals in the authoritarian former Soviet state. (RFE/RL)

BP INKS DEAL FOR DEEP AZERI WATERS

7 October

An agreement between BP and the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan could lead to new discoveries in the Caspian region, a BP executive said. British energy company BP and SOCAR announced Thursday that they signed a production sharing agreement on joint exploration at the Shafag-Asiman development in the Azeri waters of the Caspian Sea. "We in BP very much hope that the combination of our leading technology and expertise with Azerbaijan's experience and potential will lead to new discoveries in the Caspian," BP Chief Executive Officer Bob Dudley said in a statement. BP has been unloading assets to cover expenses from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. BP remains steady in Azerbaijan, however, approving a \$6 billion plan to increase oil production at the offshore Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil field early this year. The 30-year deal with SOCAR gives BP the operator role at the site with a 50 percent stake. The block outlined in the PSA is about 80 miles southeast of the Azeri capital Baku in roughly 2,100 feet of water. The reservoir depth is about 22,000 feet. Deep-water exploration is under fire in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon accident. The rig was drilling in 5,000 feet of water when a gas eruption triggered an explosion that sank the platform. (UPI)

KAZAKH PRESIDENT REPLACES HEALTH MINISTER

8 October

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has appointed Salidat Qayirbekova to replace hospitalized Health Minister Zhaqsylyq Dosqaliev, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Dosqaliev was hospitalized on September 27 with an apparent stroke after being interrogated by the police. On September 29, a court in Astana refused to issue an

arrest warrant for Dosqaliev due to his reported poor health. The financial police said last week that Dosqaliev, 54, may have faked a stroke to avoid being detained. On October 5, financial police spokesman Murat Zhumanbai told journalists that doctors treating Dosqaliev had confessed that they made a false diagnosis of a stroke at Dosqaliev's request. Zhumanbai told journalists that Dosqaliev is suspected of embezzlement, bribe taking, and the illegal sale of real estate. Qayirbekova, who was appointed by Nazarbaev on October 7, had served as Dosqaliev's deputy. (RFE/RL)

BAKU-TBILISI-CEYHAN PIPELINE PUMPS

2.4% MORE OIL IN JAN-SEPT

8 October

Azerbaijan pumped 27.964 million tonnes of oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline in the first nine months of the year, 2.4% more than in January-September 2009, State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) told Interfax. "In September, the BTC oil pipeline transported 3.139 million tonnes of Azerbaijani oil. In general, from the moment the pipeline was put into use [June 4, 2006] to October 1 this year - 134.501 million tonnes of oil," a SOCAR representative said. The oil terminal at Ceyhan shipped 27.892 million tonnes of Azerbaijani oil in January-September, including 2.975 million tonnes in September alone and 132.511 since shipments began on the pipeline. The BTC pipeline stretches 1,769 kilometers, with 443 km in Azerbaijan, 248 km in Georgia, and 1,078 km in Turkey. Throughput capacity is 50 million tonnes of oil per year. Project members are: BP (30.1%), SOCAR (25%), Chevron (8.9%), Statoil (8.71%), TPAO (6.53%), ENI (5%), Itochu (3.4%), ConocoPhillips (2.5%), INPEX (2.5%), Total (2.5%), and Amerada Hess (2.36%). (Interfax)

GEORGIA SAYS WILL NOT ABSTRACT RUSSIA FROM JOINING WTO

8 October

Georgia will not make attempts to block Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Georgian Prime Minister Nika Gilauri said in Washington on Thursday. "The WTO is an organization that sets the rules of conduct. Russia's membership of the WTO could make Russia a more civilized country," Gilauri said at the Atlantic Council, an American think tank. Georgia will continue pressing for the end of occupation of its territories, but it will not link Russia's membership of the WTO to troop withdrawal from Abkhazia

and South Ossetia, he said. The WTO rules require transparent customs and border checkpoints, he said, noting, however, that two of the three such checkpoints between Russia and Georgia "have no transparency." Georgia has been a member of the WTO since June 2000. On Georgia's membership of NATO, Gilauri said that this issue "remains on the table," but needs to be negotiated with many countries. "Most of Georgia's citizens want Georgia to be a member of NATO," he said. Gilauri announced that Georgia would take part in NATO's Lisbon summit next month. (Interfax)

PAKISTAN TO REOPEN KHYBER PASS BORDER CROSSING

9 October

Pakistan says it will reopen its key Khyber Pass border crossing that is used to ferry supplies to NATO and U.S. troops in Afghanistan "with immediate effect." The Foreign Ministry said in a statement today that authorities on both sides of the border were working "to ensure smooth resumption of the supply traffic." Pakistan closed the northwest crossing at Torkham on September 30, the same day a NATO air strike killed two Pakistani soldiers along the border. The closure had exposed stranded supply trucks in Pakistan to militant attacks that destroyed more than 100 vehicles this week. (RFE/RL)

IRANIAN DEFENSE MINISTER IN BAKU FOR SECURITY TALKS

11 October

Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi arrived today in Baku on a two-day visit to discuss expanding bilateral military cooperation and regional security, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Vahidi told journalists at the Baku airport that his meetings with Azerbaijani officials will be beneficial for both countries and for the region. He said he will also discuss Caspian Sea-region security and stability issues with Azerbaijani officials. Azerbaijani Defense Minister Safar Abiyev told Vahidi that Baku wants stability in the region but that Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan undermines regional security, the Defense Ministry's press service reported. "Some states have not recognized Armenia as an aggressor state. They render economic and military assistance to the aggressor while declaring Azerbaijan a friendly and brotherly country," Abiyev said. Iran has political and economic ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Yerevan and Baku went to war from

1991-94 over the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is controlled by ethnic Armenians. Some analysts say Iran wants to use the Qabala radar station, which Azerbaijan currently leases to Russia. Azerbaijani military expert Uzeyir Cafarov told RFE/RL that Iran is concerned with its own security. "Iran is concerned that U.S. soldiers could come to the region and create a threat to Iran. But Azerbaijan has its own interests, and the final decisions [regarding Qabala] will become known early next year," Cafarov said. Niyaz Yaqublu, who heads a Baku think tank, says Iran is taking diplomatic steps in the South Caucasus because it fears international sanctions. "But Iran has not changed its basic attitude toward Azerbaijan; this country's political existence and economic development are not advantageous for Iran," he said. Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadiynejad and parliament speaker Ali Larijani -- who is on a visit to Armenia today -- are scheduled to visit Baku in November. Iran canceled its visa requirement for Azerbaijanis early this year, but Azerbaijan has not reciprocated as it fears an influx of migrants from Iran. An estimated 15 to 25 percent of Iran's population of some 74 million people are ethnic Azeris. (RFE/RL)

IRAN WANTS S-300 MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEMS

11 October

An Iranian parliamentarian called on his government to take legal action against Russia for failing to deliver the S-300 missile defense system to Iran. "According to the S-300 contract, our country should take legal action in accordance with the contents of the deal in a bid to restore the inalienable rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Kazzem Jalali, spokesman for the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, told the Fars news agency. Certain powers out to harm ties between Tehran and Moscow are the reason Russia failed to deliver the S-300 air defense system, Iran's Defense Minister General Ahmad Vahidi told reporters Monday shortly after arriving in Azerbaijan for a visit. "The contract for purchasing S-300 systems does not violate laws or the international obligations of either party and this has been explicitly included in the aforementioned contract," he told Iran's Press TV. Russia should have delivered the missile defense system to Iran in 2008, two years before the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1929 in June this year, ISNA, the Iranian students news agency, quoted the

defense minister saying. The \$800 million contract signed in 2007 requires Russia to provide Iran with at least five S-300 systems, the Iranian television network said. (UPI)

KYRGYZ PARTY MEMBERS PROTEST ELECTION RESULTS

12 October

The United Kyrgyzstan party says it will hold nationwide protests to challenge the official results of last weekend's elections after it failed to clear the threshold to get into parliament, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Nurlan Shakiev, a member of United Kyrgyzstan's political council, told RFE/RL that party supporters have told party leaders that they plan protests across the country to "protect their voting rights." They did not specify a date for the protests. Central Election Commission Chairman Akylbek Sariyev announced today that United Kyrgyzstan received 4.84 percent of the vote, just short of the 5 percent threshold. Shakiev claimed the commission first informed party leader Adakhan Madumarov that 142,000 votes represent 5 percent of the vote and United Kyrgyzstan officially received 145,455 votes. But earlier in the day, Sariyev met with Madumarov and told him that 5 percent is actually 149,000 votes. United Kyrgyzstan members and supporters denounced the discrepancy as a "political game." Party supporters in southern Kyrgyzstan say they plan to block the Bishkek-Osh highway to protest the election results. Some 500 supporters of United Kyrgyzstan gathered in front of the CEC building in Bishkek where Sariyev's office is located. More than 1,000 others have gathered in the central square in the southern city of Osh to protest the results. The parliamentary elections were praised by international observers and foreign governments for being free and fair. (RFE/RL)

5 BODIES FOUND AFTER AFGHANISTAN PLANE CRASH

13 October

Five charred bodies were recovered Wednesday from the wreckage of a cargo plane carrying NATO supplies that slammed into a mountaintop east of Afghanistan's capital with eight people aboard. Searchers scoured the blackened site high up the mountainside for three other crew members missing and feared dead, said police Gen. Zulmayi Horya Khail. The plane went down east of Kabul shortly after taking off Tuesday evening from Bagram Air Field, the main U.S. military base in Afghanistan.

The cause of the crash wasn't immediately known. Weather conditions were clear at the time. Kabul Airport Director Mohammad Yaqub Rassuli said the aircraft was carrying supplies for NATO forces. Six Filipinos, one Indian and one Kenyan were aboard the flight. Rassuli said all eight were believed dead. Hundreds of Afghan security forces in fatigues carrying M-16 rifles gathered at the bottom of the mountain Wednesday. Smoke could be seen rising from the scattered wreckage. The plane, owned by United Arab Emirates-based TransAfrik, was under contract by the U.S.-based company National Air Cargo. "The company has confirmed that a TransAfrik L-100 aircraft flying from Bagram to Kabul went down shortly before 8 p.m.," National Air Cargo said in a statement. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the crew and their families." The L-100 Hercules aircraft is the civilian equivalent of a military C-130 plane. NATO said in a statement the crash occurred about 16 miles east of Kabul International Airport. In May, a passenger plane operated by Pamir Airways, a private Afghan airline, crashed while traveling from Kunduz in northern Afghanistan to the capital. All 44 passengers on the plane died. Associated Press photographer Gemunu Amarasinghe, cameraman Ahmad Seir, and writer Robert Kennedy contributed to this report. (AP)

KYRGYZSTAN TO HAVE VOTE RECOUNT

13 October

Kyrgyzstan agreed to a formal recount of ballots from a weekend vote after one party fell just short of the 5 percent threshold for inclusion in a coalition. The election committee said preliminary results showed that the Kyrgyz nationalist party Ata-Jurt won the election with 8.88 percent of the vote. Four other parties passed the 5 percent threshold, meaning at least five parties will be represented in the 120-member parliament. Party leaders agreed to a recount after the Butun Kyrgyzstan party missed the 5 percent threshold by 1-10th of 1 percent, Russia's state-run news agency RIA Novosti reports. "The leaders of the five parties discussed the issue and agreed on a recount," the deputy leader of the Ar-Namys party, Akylbek Zhaparov, was quoted as saying. The elections came six months after supporters of Roza Otunbayeva rallied to remove Kurmanbek Bakiyev from power in an April coup. Otunbayeva won international praise when she passed a summer referendum that allowed votes to usher in a parliamentary republic in the former Soviet enclave. Otunbayeva serves as

president, a relatively symbolic position, until next year. There were 29 parties that took part in the election that created a parliamentary republic. The new parliament is tasked with picking a new prime minister by a majority vote. (UPI)

AZERIS SET TO DOUBLE DEFENSE SPENDING **13 October**

Oil-rich Azerbaijan hopes to nearly double its defense spending to \$3.1 billion next year to boost its military capabilities, senior officials said. Azeri Finance Minister Samir Sharifov said the plans would increase the defense budget by 89.7 percent, explaining that roughly half of the amount would be spent directly on the purchase of state of the art military hardware while the rest would involve funding of special projects. He didn't elaborate. "Defense spending in 2011 will account for 19.7 percent compared with 10.7 percent in 2010, so the share of defense spending in the budget will almost double," he told lawmakers considering next year's draft budget. His remarks came as Azerbaijan continues to be embroiled in a conflict with Armenia over the rebel region of Nagorno-Karabakh and energy exports. A former Soviet republic, Azerbaijan had already nearly doubled defense spending in the previous two years to sustain its fight in the long-simmering conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which the country's President Ilham Aliyev has vowed to win back. Ethnic Armenian separatists backed by Yerevan seized control of the region during a war in the 1990s. An estimated 30,000 were left dead and 1 million displaced after a ceasefire in 1994. A peace accord though has never been signed and the region remains outside Azerbaijani control. Last month, the Azeri government approved a 2011 budget forecasting a growth of 3.8 percent, the country's slowest economic growth in a decade. The slump stems in the drop in oil prices. It remains unclear what hardware the Azeris are eyeing and from which countries. Ending an official visit to Azerbaijan, Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said Tehran was willing to help Azerbaijan bolster its military capabilities. He didn't elaborate but said the two countries were planning military war games in the Caspian Sea. By some accounts, Iran is bolstering its military ties with Caspian states in a bid to fortress its frontier from a potential attack. Analysts have indicated Tehran's interest in using the Gabala radar station which Azerbaijan already leases to Russia. "Iran is concerned that U.S. soldiers could come to the region and create a threat to Iran," military expert Uzeyir Cafarov was quoted telling Radio Free Europe. "Azerbaijan

however, has its own interests and the final decision will become known early next year." (UPI)

RUSSIAN MFA: GEORGIA'S VISA-FREE RULES FOR NORTH CAUCASUS IS 'PROVOCATION' **14 October**

Georgia's unilateral decision to introduce visa-free rules for Russian citizens residing in seven North Caucasus republics is "a provocation" and an attempt "to destabilize" situation in the region, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on October 14. President Saakashvili's decree, according to which residents of North Caucasus republics can enter into Georgia and stay in the country without visa for 90 days, went into force from October 13. "An attempt to divide population of Russia on various categories contradicts norms of civilized inter-state communication. It is also clearly visible a link [of this decision] to Tbilisi's drive to destabilize situation in North Caucasus and to distract attention from destructive policy of the Georgian leadership towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia," the Russian Foreign Ministry said. "Russia is consistently advocating for friendly relations in the Caucasus, for securing normal, calm life, which Saakashvili tried to undermine by waging war in August, 2008. He cut diplomatic relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation and by doing so created obstacles in communication between our citizens. It was the Georgian side which was dragging out reopening of Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi border crossing point. And now, when it is reopened, the Georgian leadership has decided to find means to use this channel of communication for its unscrupulous goals." Georgia said that visa-free entry rules for North Caucasus residents was part of its policy of "united Caucasus" outlined by President Saakashvili in his UN speech in September. Officials in Tbilisi also say that the decision is motivated by purely humanitarian purposes and aims at easing residents of the North Caucasus to easily access Georgia through Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi border crossing point, which was reopened in March but Georgian visas are not issued there. Visas are only available either in the Georgian interest section at the Swiss embassy in Moscow or upon arrival in Tbilisi airport. "Russia has no problems with Georgia, with the Georgian people," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in the same statement. "We have problems with Saakashvili's regime, which fails to calm down." "It is clear that these convulsive actions [of Tbilisi] are aimed at searching new and new irritants, which are not in the interests of the Georgian people and which may only lead to additional problems for the Georgian people," it said. (Civil Georgia)