

# Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

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# THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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**KEY ISSUE:** A short 100-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

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

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

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

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

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

## Svante E. Cornell

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# RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON GEORGIA: THE U.N. REPORT

David J. Smith

*Four months ago today, Georgia's Upper Kodori (Upper Abkhazia) region was attacked by ground-to-ground rockets and an anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), apparently fired from a helicopter. The area is the only part of Abkhazia controlled by the Tbilisi government. UNOMIG has been investigating the incident and is about to publish its report, likely to be inconclusive. The procedures of the Joint Fact-finding Group require consensus among the U.N. staff, Georgia, Russia and the Russian-backed de facto Abkhaz authorities. This has caused delay, but the bickering is down to one sentence. What already appears between the lines of the latest draft points straight to Russian culpability.*

**BACKGROUND:** Between the hours of 2110 and 2300 on March 11, three villages in Upper Abkhazia – Adjara, Chkhalta and Zima – came under attack. The challenge to the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was to piece together the evidence, hobbled by Russian obduracy.

The draft report documents – without comment, of course – that Georgia cooperated fully with the U.N. investigation, while Russia obstructed at every turn. The U.N. team asked the Russian Federation to provide air traffic control records for the area and time in question. Moscow replied, “Since there were no Russian Air Force flights on March 11-12 in the mentioned zone, there are no recordings of such flights.” Instead, Russian representatives quibbled with the authenticity of information derived from Georgia's radars, which the International Civil Aviation Organization has approved.

Equally telling, UNOMIG asked the Russian government to trace the serial numbers found on munitions fragments, particularly on remnants of the Russian-manufactured AT-6 *Shturm* or AT-9 *Ataka* ATGM that struck the first floor of the regional administration building in Chkhalta. UNOMIG did not receive a reply.

The report proceeds to tell its story through implicit deductions about what happened on the night of March 11. In the sentence still in dispute, UNOMIG writes, “Except for statements from a majority of witnesses in the Upper Kodori Valley, no further evidence positively and conclusively denies or affirms the presence of helicopters during the incident.” In other words, except for the evidence of scores – reportedly 63 – witnesses, there is no further evidence of helicopters.

The people of Upper Abkhazia may not be qualified aircraft spotters, but they are presumably smart enough to distinguish between something flying above them and, say, a horse-drawn cart. Moreover, a Georgian helicopter crew on the ground at the time identified one of the helicopters as an Mi-24. Nonetheless, Russian representatives are holding out for language that casts doubt on the very presence of helicopters in the valley that night, not to mention from where they came. Then UNOMIG presents the supposedly inexistent further evidence: “The missile appears to have entered the building from a relatively high angle,” an angle only a helicopter could achieve.

In a further twist, although the report is inconclusive about whether helicopters were involved at all, it provides rich hypothetical details about how the

helicopters carried out the attack. Terrain and weather made tough flying conditions that night; conditions only Russian pilots and equipment could surmount. Considering fuel consumption, Mi-24s could not have loitered for the entire time that witnesses reported helicopters to have been in the area. However, writes UNOMIG, they could have come and gone sequentially or refueled at an improvised location. And the helicopters must have maintained sophisticated

Despite clearly indicated Russian obstruction, the drafters left a set of implicit deductions for the attentive reader. The contentious sentence is a perfect example. The testimony of 63 witnesses is rather convincing evidence that helicopters were present. Though circumstances forced the authors to use an awkward turn of phrase, they manage to acknowledge this by saying that there is no "further evidence" [emphasis added] to deny or affirm the presence of helicopters.



communication with those directing the artillery attack in order to skirt the ground-to-ground rocket barrage.

UNOMIG found 16 impact craters from those rockets, 12 of which it attributes to 122mm 9M22 rockets. Circumstances rule out man-portable or improvised single launch systems, so the rockets must have come from a BM-21 Grad multiple launch rocket system aboard a Ural truck. The exact launch point could not be determined, but UNOMIG rules out both maximum-range and close-range fire. That leaves medium-range fire in perfect timing with the Russian helicopter assault.

**IMPLICATIONS:** No matter the fate of the 29 words yet in contention, the UNOMIG report will be inconclusive. Nonetheless, this report is a step above common UN-speak. UNOMIG did an excellent job of gathering and analyzing facts – and laying some clear indications between the lines.

Then, nonetheless, they proceed to present further evidence, saying that the ATGM struck the Chkhalta administration building at an angle only a helicopter could achieve. One must also wonder why the UNOMIG team would have conducted such painstaking analysis of exactly how the helicopters might have carried out the attack, given that they cannot say for sure that there really were helicopters present.

What is clear between the lines is that there were helicopters in Upper Abkhazia that night and – all other possibilities ruled out by logical deduction – they were Russian. Their well-trained pilots coordinated their movements with the medium-range ground-to-ground rocket attack. Considering the coordination with Russian helicopters and the range of fire together, the implicit deduction between the lines of the UNOMIG report is that the 122mm rockets were launched from territory controlled by the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities. This is why Moscow stonewalled the U.N. investigation.

A Russian helicopter hop into Georgia may be considered bizarre, but in the Caucasus, truth is often stranger than fiction. Furthermore, behavior attributed to Moscow in recent months and years can only be understood with willful suspension of disbelief – dioxin poisoning, assassination by irradiation and defenestration, mysterious gas pipeline explosions are only some examples. Wackiness is part of the plan – Moscow delivers its message, plausibly denying any involvement. Western countries receive the message,

while the episode is so weird that they can plausibly deny having seen anything amiss.

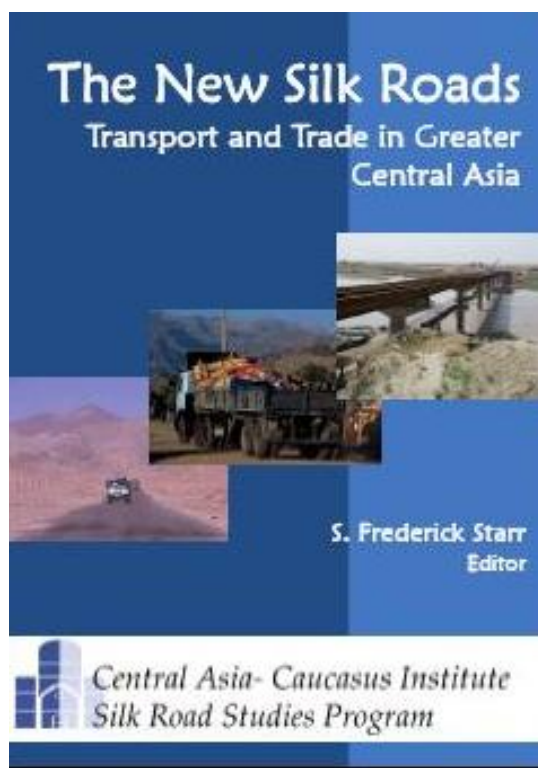
Similarly in the case of the shelling of the Upper Kodori, when UNOMIG officially delivers its report, the document itself will allow western governments either to look away or to draw the inferences from between the lines and face the issue squarely.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Georgia will no doubt seek to raise the March 11 attack on Upper Kodori in the U.N. Security Council. It should have the unequivocal support of the western countries, particularly the Permanent Members of the Council, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. For the same reason that there could not be a more explicit UNOMIG report, there can be no formal action in the Security Council – Russia would veto it. Nonetheless, there should be a thorough airing of the matter and

Moscow should get a clear message that this sort of behavior is unacceptable.

If this does not happen, Moscow will understand that western countries continue to tolerate its brand of international juvenile delinquency. “If Russia thinks it can bomb Georgian territory and get away with it, that is dangerous not just for Georgia, but for all its neighbors – for Ukraine, for Azerbaijan, for the Baltic States,” Georgian Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili recently told the *Wall Street Journal*. Eventually, this kind of Russian behavior is likely ignite a blaze somewhere in the former Soviet space that the western countries cannot ignore.

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New Book:

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## SCO SEEKS TO EXPAND, CONSOLIDATE AFTER BISHKEK SUMMIT

Erica Marat

*On July 9 the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Ministers of Foreign Affairs convened in Bishkek to discuss the agenda for the upcoming summit. The summit will collect the presidents of nine Eurasian countries in Bishkek and mark an unprecedented geopolitical development in the Central Asian region. Today, the SCO is quickly gaining international weight, aiming to eventually become an Asian alternative to NATO. In a two-year period it has risen from a five member state organization into an international institution that provides a platform for additional countries including Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. It is therefore turning into a more unfamiliar and unpredictable organization for the West.*

**BACKGROUND:** At the July 9 meeting, the foreign ministers of the SCO's member states – China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan – agreed to further strengthen cooperation within the organization and focus on security and energy cooperation. As they have unanimously agreed, the SCO must develop its own energy strategy. While Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Endan Karabayev assessed the July 9 meeting as a successful step towards strengthening the SCO, his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov expressed confidence in the upcoming summit.

In total, the following countries will be represented at the summit in Bishkek either by presidents or foreign ministers: Afghanistan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Turkmen president Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov will attend the summit on the observer and distinguished guest status, respectively. Considering Ashgabat's strengthening relations with Moscow, Turkmenistan is the next probable member of the SCO. Especially Russia might be interested in having Turkmenistan under the SCO's wing to

incorporate it in the organization's energy strategy. Last year, the SCO announced a moratorium on further expansion, arguably to withhold the joining of Iran and to avoid open confrontation with the U.S. Nevertheless, Turkmenistan is likely to be welcomed by both the SCO's weaker and stronger actors. For the SCO, this would be a crucial stage in its evolution as it is taking a large step forward in increasing its geopolitical weight.

Currently the SCO is spending the bulk of its funds on security, especially on organizing joint military exercises. This August the SCO will stage military exercises in Russia's Povolzhsk-Uralsk military district that will involve more than 6,300 troops, mostly Chinese and Russian.

Two months before the summit, U.S., Russian and Chinese top government officials all traveled to Kyrgyzstan. In early June, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia Richard Boucher visited Bishkek to secure the status of the U.S. military base. Russian officials, including Lavrov, paid their visits as well.

Since the early 2000s, China has been actively developing bilateral energy agreements with Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Chinese bilateral agreements have often been presented as multilateral in nature as they were achieved within the SCO framework. The SCO fostered the resolution of contested border areas between China on the one hand and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the other. The organization also allowed for increasing transparency of border control regimes. However, Kazakhstan's border demarcation with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Russia remain incomplete. This shows that the SCO was useful primarily for solving border issues between China and its immediate members, and not between all member states. Indeed, the SCO's weaker members, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are interested in stronger multilateralism to avoid political pressure from the SCO's most powerful members.

**IMPLICATIONS:** For the Kyrgyz government, the summit constitutes a show of serious support from its powerful neighbors. The successful organization of the SCO summit is an imperative for the current Kyrgyz leadership. President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's popularity at home is at rock bottom, and he will need external support before the next presidential election. Indeed, shortly after being elected president, he resorted to an explicitly pro-Russian foreign policy. Since the transfer of power in March 2005, Kyrgyzstan has become a convenient arena for international competition between its northern, eastern and western partners. Upon taking over the chairmanship of the SCO a year ago, the Kyrgyz government has made a series of moves to curb the presence of the U.S. military on its territory. In the past year, the president and government have shown the SCO members that Kyrgyzstan is currently unhappy with the U.S. military presence on its territory. The summit represents an opportunity for SCO participants to collectively voice anti-American attitudes. But Kyrgyzstan in fact appears more interested in increasing its cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) ahead of the SCO. This year, Kyrgyzstan will take up the CSTO

chairmanship and seems set to continue its steadfast pro-Russian foreign policy.

Today, Kyrgyzstan is perhaps the weakest member of both the SCO and CSTO. Within the SCO, for instance, Kyrgyzstan enjoys only minute benefits, lacking long-term visions about its role and surplus from membership. As one civil servant in Bishkek told this author, Kyrgyzstan's current political leadership, similar to its predecessor, is experiencing a considerable lack of domestic legitimacy and therefore is unable to succinctly formulate a set of national interests to be presented within the SCO framework. Even Tajikistan, having made considerable progress among other in developing its hydro-electricity sector in the past two years, is able to better promote its national interests within the organization than Kyrgyzstan is – although Tajikistan is only emerging from the devastation of its civil war in the 1990s. “The vertical structure of state power in Tajikistan allows greater efficiency of public and economic institutions”, says one Kyrgyz expert. Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, has been struggling with reforming its energy sector in the past decade and no visible improvement was made either under former president Askar Akayev or under Bakiyev's rule.

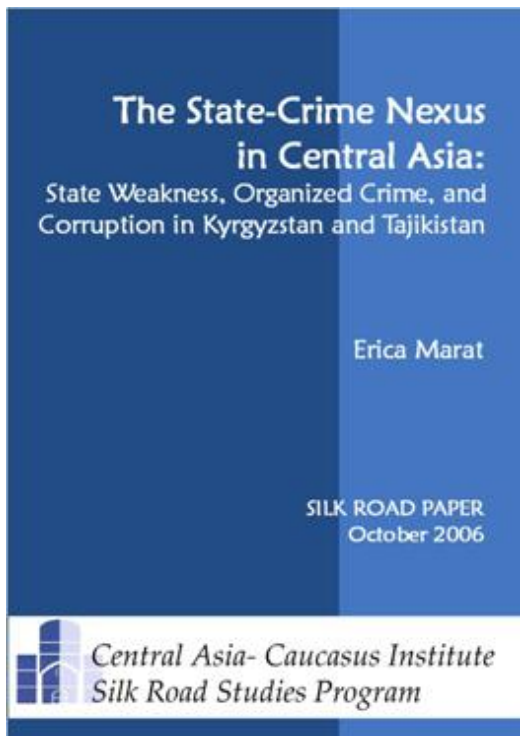
Many Bishkek residents see the summit as a positive development that considerably increases the country's geopolitical importance. As one public employee comments from Bishkek, “The summit is important both for the organization itself and Kyrgyzstan”. The entire government apparatus is mobilized for the summit's preparations. A month ahead of the summit, central Bishkek is transforming into a city with better roads, new hotels and fountains. Local residents are urged to repaint their fences and plant trees. By enhancing the city's appearance before the distinguished guests, the Kyrgyz government is trying to parade its loyalty to the organization. Early this year the Kyrgyz government was unsure if it was in fact able to bear all the financial costs of organizing the summit. But China came to its rescue with \$2 million for the summit's organization. The Kyrgyz government is also seeking all available funding

through increasing various taxes and creating special SCO summit funds. According to one Bishkek entrepreneur, even the Bishkek road police is now collecting additional fines in order to gather funds for the summit.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The August SCO summit is likely to be a mostly symbolic event that will boast the organization's international importance by collecting leaders of Eurasia's nine states. The organization's key agreements on security, energy, and political issues have been discussed among its member states during weeks preceding the summit. As it stands today, it is the biggest Eurasian organization that seeks to increase its leverage

through military exchange and energy cooperation. Turkmenistan and Iran's participation at as summit instantly increase the SCO's potential membership pool. The agreement to create an energy strategy points at the SCO members' wish to consolidate in the economic and political areas. The summit, as well as Kyrgyzstan's future chairmanship of the CSTO, will allow China and Russia further avenues to restrain the West's role in the country as well as in Central Asia as a whole.

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### **New Silk Road Paper!**

## **The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**

by Erica Marat

This paper analyzes the divergent forms that relationships between organized crime and the state have taken in the two worst hit Central Asian states in the past decade.

This 138-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org) or [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).



## THE STAVROPOL RIOTS: TRENDS IN THE RUSSIAN EXTREME-RIGHT

*Dmitry Shlapentokh*

*Russia experienced ethnic riots in Kondopoga, Karelia, in 2006 and in Stavropol in the southern part of European Russia in May and early June 2007. Patterns were similar; both centered on clashes between Russians and Chechens. These events begin to form a trend of the type of nationalist movements developing in Russia, which are decidedly different from the Yeltsin era. The proliferation of such movements, if it does take place, would hold important consequences for Russian politics and society, particularly for the North Caucasus and adjoining regions.*

**BACKGROUND:** In Stavropol, an ordinary brawl quickly evolved into a virtual battle involving up to 200-400 people. At the beginning, the police were passive observers; when rioters started to attack them, they fired, mostly in the air. Militia and riot police dispersed the crowd; one person was killed and apparently several dozen were seriously injured. Several days after the brawl, two Russians were killed; according to some reports, their throats were cut. Local Russians attributed the killings to Chechens, and several hundred people assembled on the square in what was described by authorities as a “non-legitimate” (i.e. not approved by the authorities) meeting.

As in Kondopoga, the protestors demanded the protection of ethnic Russians from Chechens, a purge of the local authorities, whom they regarded as bought by Chechens, and the creation of local detachments of ethnic Russians. Despite attempts by the authorities to appease the crowd, they screamed “Long Live Russia!” (Slava Rossii) and some made Nazi-type salutes. Later, some members of the crowd started a rampage in the city, beating people they assumed to be Chechens. Eventually, the authorities restored order.

Some generalization can be made about the Stavropol riot and similar events in other parts of the country. It is true that the violence was localized and the authorities were able to stop it fairly quickly. But popular receptiveness to this pogrom type of violence indicates that the Kondopoga and Stavropol riots cannot be regarded as isolated events. They represent a new trend that, as acknowledged by well-known Russian journalist Yulia Latynina, could not be found in Yeltsin’s Russia. Paradoxically enough, one could see in these riots a sort of twisted rise of Western modernity with Russian nationalism as its manifestation.

A common assumption among historians of Russian thought is that Russian nationalism emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the Slavophiles. This assumption ignores the fact that the idea was an intellectual construct for a few members of the Russian elite. Peasants – the vast majority of the population – had absolutely no notion of Russian nationalism and basically equated being Russian with Orthodoxy. Similarly, for most ethnic Russians in the Soviet period, “Russianness” was dissolved into “Sovietness.” Both groups had allegiances to their relatives, friends, and so on, people with whom they had personal relations. If

they had an allegiance outside what Ferdinand Tönnies called “*Gemeinschaft*” relationships – based on interpersonal connections – it would be to the state, personalized in the Czar or Secretary-General.

The emergence of capitalist modernity, with ideas of private property and law that transcended personal connections, led to the percolation of nationalism into the fabric of daily life. And it seems to be emerging in present-day Russia for the first time since the brief period at the end of the tsarist regime. As in the past, nationalism corresponds with solidarity among groups whose members have similar characteristics but are not personally related to each other. To judge by internet discussions, this can apparently be seen among those who participated in the Stavropol riot.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Participants in the Stavropol riot demonstrated a high level of national solidarity. The rioters easily enlisted local Russians, not just friends but passersby and taxi drivers; some were even ready to come from other cities. The protesters met and elaborated on the need to create a grassroots Russian party/organization and detachments to protect ethnic Russians, mostly from Chechens. The plans for action and the high level of organization on the basis of common ethnic origin transcend kinship/friendship or even territorial limits: the operational model of a modern Western *Gesellschaft* civic society which internalized nationalistic discourse. The transformation of Russian radicals’ nationalist model can be seen in their approach to sexual culture.

The skinheads and other Yeltsin era groups who used Nazi attributes were often not much different from plain criminals and shared their sexual culture, centered on immediate gratification and quick change of partners. Those who participated in the Stavropol riots put forward quite a different set of values. In their internet discussions, they explicitly condemned promiscuity. For example, they attack Russian girls for being excessively concerned with being attractive and sexually promiscuous. They juxtaposed them to Chechen women, who they see as being strict in their sexual mores. The Russian

nationalist radicals praise – at least judging by their internet discussions – not sexual promiscuity as would have been the case with similar groups during the Yeltsin period, but family values and regarded the procreations as patriotic acts. Indeed, they stated that the decline of the Russian population would lead Russians to perdition. All of these values and actions are quite similar to that of values of members of modern Western society, regardless of their social affiliations.

The Internet forum participants’ nationalism is also enmeshed in a strong social animus and a desire to act, often in a violent way. From this perspective the new generation of Russian radicals are quite different from the radical nationalists of the Yeltsin era, such as Aleksandr Barkashov, leader of RNE (Russian National Unity), who, despite Nazi-sounding symbols and blasting Jews and the regime for selling Russia to the West, was quite tame in his activities. In fact, RNE tried to present itself as a party of order and collaborate with law enforcement agencies.

While some of the positions of the participants in the Stavropol and Kondopoga events such as grassroots politics, ethnic solidarity, and a sense of family might be compared with some elements of the modern West, others are more specific to this group. A first is the criminal implications of the penchant of considerable numbers of those who were engaged in events to lapse into pogroms. Their activities are quite similar to those of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pre-revolutionary Russia, where social-national conflicts were enmeshed in waves of pogrom-type violence and common crime.

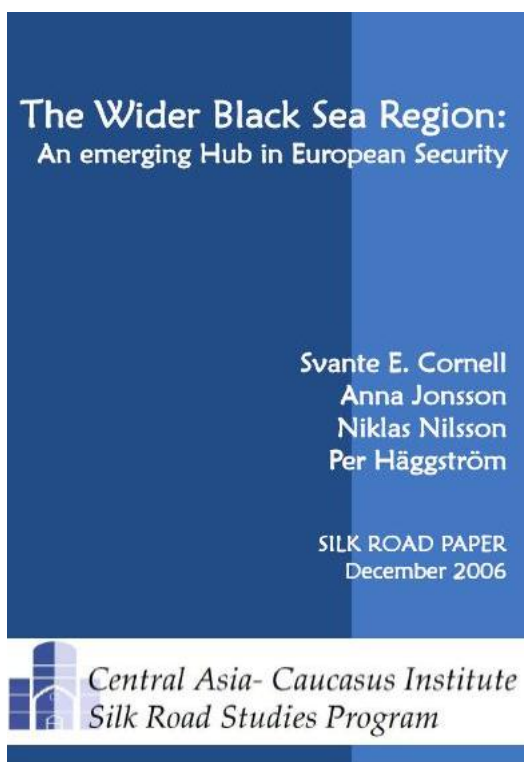
Second, and possibly a unique aspect of the Kondopoga and Stavropol events, is the participants’ dislike and in some cases hatred of Moscow, the central government, which is often explicitly defined as non-Russian. Several models emerge. The first holds that Putin is ethnically Russian but under the control of Kadyrov, the Chechens’ overlord. According to this interpretation, Putin is ready to accept Kadyrov, even as a thug and bandit and Chechen nationalist,

because he is fearful of instability and sees Kadyrov as the only force that could bring some order in Chechnya. Another interpretation makes Putin actually submissive to Kadyrov, whose cutthroat retinue dominates Russia. In the last interpretation, Kadyrov and his Chechen thugs actually become rulers of Russia. One contributor to the Internet discussion stated in a semiserious way that pundits should not much discuss Putin's successor, for it will clearly be Kadyrov.

**CONCLUSIONS:** As for other signs of discontent, one should be cautious about the immediate implications of the riots. Like the one in Kondopoga, the revolt in Stavropol did not spread and was put down comparatively easily. Still, it might portend other, more serious conflicts, like the anti-Jewish violence in the second half of the nineteenth century, one of the first manifestations

of social conflict and a harbinger of the much more serious shake-up of Russian society several generations later in 1905-1921. The violence could also lead to the emergence or proliferation of terrorist activities committed by ethnic Russians, especially in the provinces. In fact, one contributor to the internet exchanges pointed out that since Moscow and the authorities in control are not actually Russian, Russian people should engage in acts of terrorist violence that would prevent Moscow from gorging on the rest of the country. Finally, ethnic violence would encourage Chechens and other ethnic minorities to be hostile to Russia and engage in turn in terrorist acts.

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### New Silk Road Paper!

#### The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security

by Svante Cornell, Anna Jonsson, Niklas Nilsson, and Per Häggström

This 120-page paper analyzes emerging role of the Wider Black Sea Region in European Security, and European interests there. It provides concise analysis of major challenges in the region, and policy recommendations for Europe's future policies there.

This 120-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org) or [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).

## GETTING A STEP AHEAD: THE WEST'S ROLE IN THE NEW INFORMATION WAR

*Benjamin Abner*

*Media is in no short supply in Uzbekistan, but state media and access to independent and international media is tightly controlled by the state. Historically, Western governments have actively promoted alternative information in the region through shortwave radio broadcasts, satellite television, and Internet media. In recent years however, Uzbekistan has almost completely stamped out independent and international voices as well as Western-funded programs to support them. The international community has done little to condemn these developments and the West's will to counter Uzbekistan's censors appears to be wavering.*

**BACKGROUND:** The honeymoon of relations between Uzbekistan and the West, though long over, gave Uzbek citizens and interested international observers a taste of the information streams the country could send and receive. Following the Soviet collapse, Western interest in Central Asia grew steadily and international appetite for print media on the region increased accordingly. This demand for information was satisfied not only by a sharp spike in the number of ex-Peace Corps adventure novels and think tank newsletters, but also by a number of factual and analytical news websites dedicated to the region.

As tourists, NGO workers and diplomats came to town, they brought with them a number of western ideals including freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Seeking to exercise the new liberties the USSR's collapse permitted, media organizations such as the BBC and Internews encouraged and facilitated the flow of independent information in and out of the country. Satellite dishes made their way to the wealthy and public access to the Internet increased exponentially, as the establishment of

internet cafes and local language websites fed off of one another.

Uzbekistan's experiment with media and personal freedoms was always a tentative one, however, and in the early 2000s the government began to tighten the noose on critical reporting. Following the May 13, 2005 events in Andijan, Uzbekistan opened a full-out assault on foreign and independent journalists and media outlets.

Even before it pushed independent and international voices out of the country, Uzbekistan had begun to put its state news services online in local languages and English for audiences both at home and abroad. In apparent simulation of the UK's BBC or France's France 24, Uzbekistan developed slightly less flashy and substantially less objective state mouthpieces such as [uzreport.com](http://uzreport.com), [uza.uz](http://uza.uz), [pv.uz](http://pv.uz), [uzbekistonovozi.uz](http://uzbekistonovozi.uz), [narodnoeslovo.uz](http://narodnoeslovo.uz) as well as presidential, legislative, judicial and executive branch websites.

Western consumers of authoritarian media can pick and choose from among these news sources,

examine them against Western media and consume them with a grain of salt. The majority of Uzbeks do not have this luxury. Although most western media outlets publish online, most Central Asian consumers cannot read it because it is not in a local language.

The West has created websites intended to bridge the language gap. Government-sponsored services such as the BBC, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty and Voice of America publish sections in Uzbek. Many more public and private-run sites publish in Russian.

But due to Uzbekistan's insistence on controlling information flows, websites that catch the attention of the Uzbek authorities are often blocked. Local independent sites such as muslimuzbekistan.org, ferghana.ru, forum.arbuz.com, uzmetronom.com, uznews.net and opposition party websites such as uzbekistanerk.org and sunshineuzbekistan.org are all almost universally, permanently blocked in Uzbekistan.

English-language websites which focus specifically on Central Asia or Uzbekistan are also likely to be blocked, particularly if they carry articles critical of the regime and its policies. Eurasianet.org and tol.cz have long been subject to sporadic blocking and Registan.net was blocked for the first time on March 17 this year. Those sites which the government typically permits to function freely are almost always cut off in the run-up to national elections, or in times of crisis, such as the May 2005 events in Andijan. State controlled news is often the only source of information that remains available to local citizens.

Uzbekistan is not unique in preventing access to certain websites, but alongside Turkmenistan, the completeness of the information block is notable, placing the country on par with countries like Burma, Cuba and Tunisia. By showing little response to the forced exodus of Uzbekistan's independent and international media scene, the West appears to be giving up.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Uzbekistan's system of state-run media and effective censorship is largely

paralleled throughout the Former Soviet Union, the Middle East and beyond. The private sector responded long ago by providing proxy-server connections to paying customers, but this solution is prohibitively costly and complicated for the average internet user. In recent years, the international community has made some positive inroads for enabling information freedom, notably in hot spots such as Iraq, North Korea and Cuba. These successes support the idea that efforts from outside an authoritarian country can be pivotal for ensuring public access to independent and international media.

There is a battle for the airwaves and internet bandwidth. Al-Jazeera, BBC, and now France 24 are all competing for viewers, just as Radio Moscow, Radio France and Radio Beijing fight for listeners. The Internet represents a newer battleground and the rise of high-tech censorship tools indicates that the world is entering into a new type of information war.

The West has the tools it needs to rise to this challenge and work to protect access to independent and international media. Radio programming and websites with expertise in providing region-specific information on and for Uzbekistan and other authoritarian countries already exist, although they often lack the necessary support to penetrate government blocks on radio and the Internet.

One important development is the advent of Psiphon, censorship circumvention software that allows users in authoritarian countries to view websites securely and anonymously over an encrypted connection. Developed by the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, the project was funded by the Open Society Institute, whose representative office in Uzbekistan was one of the first foreign organizations to be forced out of the country when the country's courtship of the West began to sour.

Programs like Psiphon require upkeep, as they must be constantly updated to counter the technological blocks and attacks authoritarian regimes like Uzbekistan's develop and share with one another.

Creating new and varied versions of technologies such as Psiphon is costly and time-consuming, and requires the support of forward thinking individuals and deep-pocketed institutions and governments.

**CONCLUSIONS:** If ensuring populations in authoritarian countries access to independent and international media is not motivation enough to invest in openness, the information the West stands to receive from open lines of communication with countries like Uzbekistan should be. Secure, anonymous internet connections are a two-way

road. Not only can they ensure access to independent media, but they provide privacy for local journalists, human rights activists and bloggers who have greater insight and access than most foreign journalists. Given the near total lack of field reporting from Uzbekistan and similarly internet-unfriendly countries, the West has a compelling reason to get at least one step ahead of authoritarian state-run censorship efforts.


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New issue of the

### *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*

The May 2007 issue of the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, edited by Dr. Niklas Swanström, is online.

The issue contains articles by Daniel Burghart, Michael Mihalka, Braekhus & Overland, Olga Oliker, and Sebastien Peyrouse, among other.

The issue is freely available online through [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).

## FIELD REPORTS

### RENEWED CONTACTS BETWEEN ARMENIANS AND AZERBAIJANIS BRINGS NEW HOPE TO STALLED CONFLICT

*Haroutiun Khachatrian*

The recent visit of the joint delegation of intellectuals of Azerbaijan and Armenia to the capitals of both countries and to the unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic may mark a turn in Azerbaijan's tactics into a more flexible approach. If this policy is continued, it may have good impact for decreasing tension among the participants of the conflict and make the search for compromises easier.

On July 28, a joint delegation including five Armenians and five Azerbaijanis, led by the ambassadors of Armenia and Azerbaijan to Russia, Armen Smbatian and Polad Bul-bul Oglu, made a joint trip to Stepanakert, Yerevan and Baku to meet, respectively, the president of the unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Arkady Ghukasian, the presidents of Armenia Robert Kocharian and of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev. It was reported that the move was initiated by the two ambassadors shortly after the latest unsuccessful summit between Kocharian and Aliyev in St. Petersburg on June 9. However, this trip marked a sharp turn in Azerbaijan's policy towards the Armenian counterparts in the conflict. Since the start of the conflict in late 1980s, Azerbaijan has cut land communications with Armenia, and in 1993, Turkey also closed its border with Armenia as a sign of

solidarity with Azerbaijan. A cease-fire was established in May 1994, but efforts to find a political solution to the conflict have so far failed. During these years, official Baku has increasingly restricted the possibilities of contacts between officials and ordinary citizens of Armenia and Azerbaijan, seeing this as another way to exert pressure on the enemy. This policy has sometimes caused international incidents (for example, the NATO command cancelled its Partnership For Peace exercises in Baku in September 2004 as Azerbaijan did not let the Armenian delegation enter the country). Few dissident Azerbaijanis agree to meet Armenians (especially those living in Nagorno Karabakh), and these meetings often take place in third countries. In contrast, both Armenia and the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh call for the activation of contacts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, seeing them as a means to decrease mutual tension, enhance public trust, and make possible concessions easier. This stance has been supported by all international mediators but rejected by Azerbaijan.

When an Azerbaijani ambassador calls his Armenian colleague a "friend," this implies a possible radical change in Azerbaijan's policy towards Armenia and Armenians. What was even

less expected was the contact of the Azerbaijani delegation with the de facto leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh, who were usually presented as criminals in Baku. The slogans heard from both sides were of the order that the two sides are “doomed to coexistence on this land by God and history”, as one of the Azerbaijani members of the delegation observed.

It remains to be seen if Azerbaijan will be consistent in its decision to lift the ban on the contacts with Armenia and Armenians. It appears that the administration is under pressure from both the opposition and some of its supporters. And, if continued, will the contacts with representatives and inhabitants of Nagorno Karabakh continue? The official argument for such contacts is that they are citizens of Azerbaijan, but on the other hand, the fear on the Azerbaijani side is that such contacts could be taken as a de facto recognition of the current authorities of the region, which Azerbaijan has constantly opposed. This somewhat distinguishes Azerbaijan’s stance from that of other conflicting parties in the former USSR, as contacts between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, Tbilisi and Sukhumi, and Chishinau and Tiraspol are less complicated.

Even if continued, these contacts will not, of course, mean any immediate changes in the political position of the sides concerning the central issue of the conflict, the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. These positions are, as before, mutually exclusive: full independence sought by Nagorno-Karabakh against the region being an inseparable part of Azerbaijan, as claimed by Baku.

If continued, the contacts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis will most likely address issues not directly linked to the Karabakh conflict. They may be dedicated to cultural problems, such as architectural monuments on each other’s side; or environmental issues, such as forest fires or water disputes. Contacts along the border settlements for de-mining or other purposes are also not excluded. The possibility of participation of government officials in such contacts is also an open question. Progress in economy-related issues is unlikely, as are possible initiatives to de-block some parts of borders or communications. Azerbaijan would hardly make such steps, and, on the other hand, Armenia has deeply modified its economy, and does not need most of the communications whose discontinuation heavily hit it 15-18 years ago. A possible exception is the railroad link with the Nakhichevan Republic, as it would give Armenia access to Iranian railroads. On the other hand, Azerbaijan could also reap benefits from some joint economic projects. For example, Armenia could supply power to its border regions which are power-deficient, but again, such developments are highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Importantly, the contacts, if held regularly, may result in a significant decrease in enmity, which may bring such fruits as defusing the situation along the border line, where dozens of soldiers from both sides are killed yearly by snipers, and a more tolerant attitude to the opposite party in public opinion. This would no doubt improve the atmosphere in the region in general and, as a result, create improved chances for finding a political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem.

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## PRESIDENT ALIYEV SACKS BAKU POLICE CHIEF

*Azer Kerimov*

Last week, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev sacked the long-serving chief of Baku police department Maharram Aliyev (no relation to the President) in an attempt to further distance himself

from his father’s old guard. Maharram Aliyev headed the influential central police department of the capital city since early 1990s, as a favor given him for the political support he provided to then



President Heydar Aliyev. He belongs to the so-called “Western Azerbaijanis” group, commonly referred to as Azerbaijanis who were deported from Armenia throughout the twentieth century. He possessed significant influence not only in the law enforcement field but in the general political landscape of the country.

The firing of Maharram Aliyev, who according to the Day.az News site submitted his own resignation letter – a usual procedure to avoid public embarrassment – has two significant implications. Foremost, Maharram Aliyev is a close relative of former Minister of Health Ali Insanov. Insanov, another prominent political figure, is the rumored head of the “Western Azerbaijanis” clan, and is serving a prison term as a result of a court verdict passed two months ago. Insanov was accused of a coup attempt in the wake of the Parliamentary elections in November 2005, yet the real reason for his arrest remains a subject of debate – some allege it was his split and disagreements with President Aliyev.

The departure of Maharram Aliyev from such a crucial post means that the political leadership of the country has decided to replace him with a more trustworthy person prior to the Presidential elections of 2008. The loyalty of the Baku police chief is always a crucial factor in a post-election situation, as many disturbances and clashes with police have taken place after past elections. Keeping Maharram Aliyev in this position was no longer viable for the interests of the central authorities.

Secondly, Maharram Aliyev was engaged in a long-standing feud with the Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov. Their battle was so fierce and ugly that often it spilled over into the newspapers and caught the public’s attention, thus causing much damage not only to the reputation of the police, but also to the image of unity of the central authorities. Specifically, the relations between the two officials worsened after the arrest of Haji Mammadov, a head of department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who was accused and found guilty of murder and the kidnapping of businessmen and public officials. Maharram Aliyev blamed the

Minister himself for patronizing this gangster group and concealing information about their misdoings from the President.

Later on, Maharram Aliyev went on to say that his life was in danger and that high officials in the Ministry planned to kill him. Minister Usubov fought back with all means he could, accusing the Baku police department of patronizing brothels and other illegal operations.

The sacking of Maharram Aliyev will certainly put an end to this ugly dispute, which significantly harmed the public image of the authorities. It could also open up new opportunities for the departure of Minister Usubov himself, who is publicly perceived as a corrupt and outdated minister. President Aliyev has seemed to be seeking to remove Minister Usubov for a long time, but has been thought to be looking for the right moment to do so.

It is clear that this cadre change is another step in the gradual process of replacing old cadres with new ones, and securing more loyal persons to President Aliyev in the political hierarchy of Azerbaijan. Although many expected President Aliyev to replace the old guard with his loyalists overnight after being elected President, such a traditional western-style change of government officials appeared too risky, considering the complexities of the political situation in the country and the informal power wielded by the old guard. Therefore, President Aliyev chose a more gradual approach to the issue, replacing ministers and other key officials at a slower pace.

In the aftermath of Maharram Aliyev’s departure, a very important question is who will replace him. The position is still vacant, and the authorities seem to be looking for a very loyal person, who will guarantee the stability in the capital city during the election period. As for Maharram Aliyev himself, the former police boss indicated a desire to stay in politics and be loyal to the President. “I will serve in any position which the President will suggest,” he said upon his resignation.

## RULING PARTY STRENGTHENS HOLD IN KAZAKHSTAN, RESTRUCTURES

*Marat Yermukanov*

While opposition parties in Kazakhstan are making faltering attempts to consolidate their forces in anticipation of snap parliamentary elections set for August 18, the pro-presidential Nur Otan party, in a bid to win the overwhelming majority of votes, trumpets its ambitious pre-election program the central point of which is the improvement of living standards. With such a powerful propaganda trump card bolstered by administrative resources accumulated at the hands of the ruling party, the outcome of the elections is easily predictable.

The most widespread fear among the opposition camp is that if the pro-presidential Nur Otan party gets up to 90 percent of votes as forecast by some experts it may lead to one-party rule and the de facto elimination of political pluralism in the country. The threat of return to a communist-type party rule loomed ahead again as President Nursultan Nazarbayev, addressing the party congress of the Nur Otan on July 6, alluded to the American two-party system. "It would be nice for us to have, like in the USA, two powerful parties capable of offering to people their programs", he argued. It is not quite clear, which of the existing parties would rival Nur Otan in real terms if the presidential scheme would be materialized. More than once over the past decade, the masses have come to realize that all roads to authoritarian rule are paved with silver-tongued promises of political freedom and economic prosperity.

Leaders of the Nur Otan party made good use of the economic success of Kazakhstan in Central Asia, promising to increase per capita GDP up to \$13,000 and to double the average income of the population. But independent experts warn that these most frequently used populist slogans are out of touch with reality. Poverty is rampant, particularly in

rural areas. Corrupt officials use the money allocated for the development of social infrastructure to line their own pockets. According to the head of the Sotszashita public foundation Ludmila Zhulanova, last year the consumer basket of 43 basic items was estimated at 8,410 tenge. As of May this year, the minimal subsistence level rose to 7,945 tenge. The government did not keep promises to bring the cost of housing down to \$350 per square meter – housing prices shot up to \$1000 over the last two years. Repayments on home loans are simply unaffordable for families with average monthly incomes of \$250. The failures of government programs in other areas, including health service, education, and pension reform weakens Nur Otan's position.

For all that, however, no other party can offer anything better. Nur Otan wields enormous administrative power propped up with seemingly unlimited financial and material leverage. Practically everything, from donations of a computer to a village school to nationwide charity campaigns, is carried out in the name of Nur Otan.

The ruling party, led by Nazarbayev as its chairman, made an undisguised effort to purge the party of politically unreliable elements. As part of this move, the deputy chairmen Alexandr Pavlov and the daughter of president, the divorced wife of the renegade Rakhat Aliev, Dariga Nazarbaeva, were removed from their posts to be replaced by the head of the Kazyna foundation Kairat Kelimbetov and the less known figure Sergei Gromov. Dariga Nazarbayeva was also excluded from the list of party candidates. The father of Rakhat Aliev, Mukhtar Aliev, disloyal publisher Andrei Shukhov, and former deputy justice minister Sergei Nugmanov were ousted from the political council of

the party. At the same time, the political council of Nur Otan includes new prominent figures, such as former foreign minister and speaker of the Senate Kasymzhomart Tokayev, head of the presidential administration Adilbek Zhaksybekov, mayor of Astana Askar Mamin, and governor of South Kazakhstan region Umirsak Shukeyev.

The success of Nur Otan party is partly due to the permanent infighting in the opposition camp. Alikhan Baimenov, the leader of the influential Ak Zhol Democratic Party, which goes to the polls strengthened with the Adilet party, boasted before a television camera that the merged party will get 30

per cent of the votes. The problem of Ak Zhol is that it will face a strong challenge not only from Nur Otan, but in the first place from Nagyz Ak Zhol, another opposition party and its uncompromising political rival. Gani Kasymov, one of the contenders in the last presidential elections and the leader of Aul Social-Democratic Party hopes his party will not only surmount the seven percent threshold of votes but will reap up to 20 percent of the votes. He believes that Nur Otan's current attempt to amass all political power in its own hand is a time bomb ticking for the end of the establishment.

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## TENSIONS ESCALATE OVER SOUTH OSSETIA

*Niklas Nilsson*

During the last few weeks, tensions have mounted in South Ossetia. One concrete issue under dispute has been a shortage of drinking water to both Tskhinvali and Georgian villages, something both sides have ascribed to sabotage. The water dispute began in May, after residents of Georgian villages north of Tskhinvali extracted water for irrigation purposes from a pipeline supplying Tskhinvali with drinking water. The South Ossetian de facto government has since claimed that it has not been allowed to repair the pipeline, while Tbilisi officials state that repairs are concluded and the remaining water shortage is an effect of Ossetian mismanagement of its pipeline system. Simultaneously, Georgian villages south of Tskhinvali have been left without irrigation water, which has triggered protests at the Ergneti checkpoint. Demonstrations on the Georgian side dispersed on July 4, as the water supply was partly restored, while South Ossetian authorities claim water to Tskhinvali is still suspended.

A second strain of Georgian-South Ossetian problems relates to construction work on a road linking two Georgian villages. On June 27, Georgian workers resumed reconstruction of the

road between Nikozi and Avnevi, two Georgian-controlled villages in the conflict zone, work on which had previously been interrupted on June 15, following the deployment of South Ossetian militia near the road. South Ossetian de facto authorities state that this road will grant Tbilisi a strategic advantage should hostilities resurface, and the Russian peacekeeping contingent opposes reconstruction until this is acceptable to both Tbilisi and Tskhinvali. Russian peacekeepers thus moved in to block the construction work, triggering a public protest involving several hundred Georgian villagers. On June 28, Russian troops left the scene and construction work was resumed with the oversight of Georgian peacekeepers. Boris Kochiev, the South Ossetian minister for special affairs, commented on the incidents as conscious attempts by Tbilisi to escalate tensions in the region, while Georgian officials stated that the interference by Russian peacekeepers was a clear sign of their destructive influence on the peace process.

Simultaneous with these disputes, exchanges of fire have been reported between Georgian and Ossetian villages close to Tskhinvali. These have involved snipers and small arms fire leaving several wounded

and reportedly killing an Ossetian policeman, while Tskhinvali has been shelled on several occasions. Georgian media has reported a transfer of fighters from North Ossetia to Tskhinvali via the Roki tunnel, and North Ossetian president Taimuraz Mamsurov expressed support for providing armed volunteers to South Ossetia should violence escalate. Tskhinvali authorities claimed a Georgian build-up of forces on Georgian-controlled territory around Tskhinvali, but this was later denied by both Georgian and Russian peacekeepers in the region. The Georgian side instead claimed snipers had been deployed by the Ossetian side near Georgian villages. Kokoity on July 9 stated to a South Ossetian newspaper that South Ossetia possesses the capacity to carry out “combat operations” on Georgian territory, interpreted by the Georgian side as a threat of conducting terrorist acts.

Events over the last few weeks should be viewed in the light of changes in Tbilisi’s tactics toward the conflict since last fall. This strategy involves increasingly focused efforts to isolate Kokoity’s de facto government and denounce it as a criminalized regime, lacking legitimacy and support among the region’s population at large. Instead, Tbilisi has put much effort into setting up a provisional administration on Georgian-controlled territory under Dmitri Sanakoyev, and in promoting him nationally and internationally as the legitimate

leader of South Ossetia. This has recently been accompanied by statements by Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili, claiming that the conflict is coming close to a peaceful resolution, that Kokoity’s time is running out and that Georgia will negotiate on South Ossetia’s future status with Sanakoyev. The quest for international credibility is part of Tbilisi’s overall strategy for changing the conflict resolution format. This has previously focused on internationalizing the process through demanding the replacement of Russian peacekeepers with ones representing neutral states, and on EU participation in the negotiation format. However, gaining international acceptance for Sanakoyev as a stakeholder in the negotiations and including him as a party in the Joint Control Commission would add a component supporting Tbilisi’s position, whereas it is currently opposed by South Ossetia, Russia, and North Ossetia. While Tbilisi has had some success in promoting Kokoity to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, both Moscow and Tskhinvali denounce him as a puppet of Tbilisi. Recent events on the ground in South Ossetia, the increasingly inflamed rhetoric between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi, and Kokoity’s refusal on July 7 to take part in a JCC meeting in Tbilisi, indicates that Tbilisi’s new strategy is indeed affecting the conflict dynamics, for better or worse.



## NEWS DIGEST

### U.S. CHEVRON TO OPEN OFFICE IN TURKMEN CAPITAL

**29 June**

Turkmenistan's official TDH news agency on June 28 reported that the U.S. oil major Chevron has decided to open an office in Ashgabat. TDH said the announcement was made the same day at a meeting between Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov; Jay Prior, Chevron's vice president for business development; and Ian MacDonald, the head of Chevron's operations in Russia. Early last month, Berdymukhammedov invited Chevron to prospect and develop oil fields in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea shelf. The invitation was seen as a sign of Berdymukhammedov's willingness to open Turkmenistan to Western investment. Also on June 28, Berdymukhammedov authorized the government to sign a \$42 million drilling contract with the state-controlled China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) and another deal for the construction of a \$53 million polypropylene-film plant with France's Darlet Marchante Technologies. (RFE/RL)

### ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN EMBARK ON LANDMARK VISITS

**29 June**

The ambassadors to Russia of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armen Smbatian and Polad Byulbyulogly, together with a group of cultural figures and academics from both countries, traveled on June 28 to the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and thence to Yerevan, Azerbaijani media reported. In Stepanakert, the group met with Karabakh President Arkady Ghukasian, who was quoted as saying that all disputed issues should be resolved at the negotiating table, and nothing can be resolved by a new war. The group then traveled to Yerevan where they met with Armenian President Robert Kocharian who, like Ghukasian, welcomed the initiative as contributing to an "atmosphere of

mutual trust" between the conflict sides. Then in Baku, the group met with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, who reaffirmed that any solution to the Karabakh conflict must respect Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, day.az reported. Nizami Bakhmanov, head of Karabakh's small Azerbaijani community that fled the enclave in the late 1980s, hailed the group's visit to the town of Shusha (Armenian Shushi), where many Azerbaijanis lived. But Akif Nagi, chairman of the radical Karabakh Liberation Organization, denounced the trip as an insult to the Azerbaijani people and argued that by meeting with the leadership of the unrecognized republic, the Azerbaijanis recognized their legitimacy. Nagi called for Byulbyulogly to be stripped of the post of ambassador. (RFE/RL)

### SUPREME COURT RULES ON TERRORISM SUSPECTS' BURIALS

**29 June**

The Russian Federation Supreme Court ruled on June 28 that legislation stipulating that the bodies of "terrorists" should be buried in an unmarked grave rather than handed over to their families does not violate the constitution, the "Kommersant" daily reported on June 29. But the court also ruled that the bodies should not be buried until an investigation has proven that the participation of the dead in terrorist acts, and that the burial should be undertaken in accordance with the customs and religious traditions of the dead person. The former conclusion highlights a legal discrepancy insofar as such investigations are automatically closed on the suspected person's death. The court ruling was handed down in response to a formal appeal by the mothers of two men killed during the October 2005 multiple attacks by militants on police and security facilities in Nalchik, capital of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. Tatyana Psomiadi, a lawyer representing the families of some of the approximately 80 men killed, was quoted by kavkaz-uzel.ru as saying that the Supreme Court's ruling is tantamount to an admission that the

cremation in June 2006 of the bodies was illegal. Relatives learned of the cremation only a few weeks ago from a response the European Court for Human Rights received from the Russian authorities. (RFE/RL)

### **ILHAM ALIYEV: "WE ARE GETTING CLOSER TO LIBERATION OF KARABAKH"**

**2 July**

"We are getting closer to liberation of Karabakh. We have enough power for defending our territories. Azerbaijan's position regarding the conflict settlement is supported globally," Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev announced today, speaking at a meeting with graduates of the Police Academy, a REGNUM correspondent informs. "The Karabakh territories will be liberated sooner or later. From the military point of view, Azerbaijan is the most powerful country in the region. Nobody wants a war or new suicide bombers. However, Azerbaijan is ready to launch any operation at any moment. The sooner Armenia recognizes it and liberates our territories the better," Aliyev stressed. (Regnum.ru)

### **CHINA DENIES INVOLVEMENT IN SPY SCANDAL IN KYRGYZSTAN**

**3 July**

China's Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Jian Jichen "was surprised to hear that one of Kyrgyz parliament employees is allegedly a Chinese spy." Speaker of the Kyrgyz parliament Marat Sultanov informed reporters on it today, a REGNUM correspondent reports. The Chinese ambassador and the parliamentary speaker discussed the fact of detaining a female employee of the Kyrgyz parliament and a foreign citizen. According to Jian Jichen, cited by Marat Sultanov, "Kyrgyzstan is quite a transparent and open country, and in this connection, there is no need for spying." The chair of the parliament supported the ambassador: "There are no grounds for espionage. Any information China might need, they could have asked through an official inquiry." "The detained Zhymparkul Arykova had no access to classified documents, as there are no such documents at the parliament," Marat Sultanov noted. Earlier, employee of the Kyrgyz parliamentary press office, Zhymparkul Arykova and a foreign citizen were detained by

security officers at the moment, as the Kyrgyz State National Security Committee press office said, at the time they were handing over classified materials to each other. Now, Zhymparkul Arykova is in custody; she is charged with high treason. Under the charge, she faces from 12 to 20 years sentence with expropriation. (Regnum.ru)

### **BAKU HOPES TALKS ON KARABAKH WILL CONTINUE IN PREVIOUS FORMAT**

**3 July**

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov hopes talks with Armenia on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem will be continued in the framework of the Prague process. "We've been in talks within the framework of the Prague process for three years now and would be disappointed if it came to a halt," Mamedyarov told the press. He said talks with Armenia would hopefully continue in this format.

"But the choice of the format also largely depends on the co-chairmen of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group," Mamedyarov said. (Interfax-Azerbaijan)

### **RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR IN GEORGIA DOES NOT SUPPORT TBILISI'S INITIATIVE TO INVOLVE "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT" OF SOUTH OSSETIA IN SETTLEMENT PROCESS**

**5 July**

Russian Ambassador to Georgia Vyacheslav Kovalenko finds ungrounded an initiative of the Georgian side to engage head of the South Ossetian "provisional government" Dmitry Sanakoyev into the process of settling the Georgian-Ossetian crisis. "The only way to resolve South Ossetia's problems is a negotiation process between two internationally recognized parties – Georgia and South Ossetia. There is no other way here. No new parties, no new actors must be engaged in the process," Vyacheslav Kovalenko is quoted as saying by a REGNUM correspondent. The South Ossetian provisional government was established under a law that was passed by the Georgian parliament on April 13, 2007, and came into force on April 16. Dmitry Sanakoyev was appointed head of the provisional government by a Georgian presidential decree of May 10. (Regnum.ru)

## **“BAKU WILL RISE, BUT YEREVAN WILL GO DOWN” – ARMENIAN POLITICIAN ON POSSIBLE RUSSIAN-US EXPLOITATION OF GABALA RADAR STATION**

**6 July**

If an agreement is reached on joint Russian-American exploitation of the Gabala radar station, Azerbaijan will climb another stage in the eyes of the United States, and Armenia will go down, deputy chair of the Armenian National Movement Party Aram Manukyan announced at a news conference in Yerevan. As a REGNUM correspondent informs, according to Manukyan, if the United States does not give up the idea of deploying its missile defense in Czechia and Poland, it will affect Russia negatively. “Taking into consideration that Moscow is Armenia’s major strategic partner, it will have the same effect for Armenia,” he said. As Manukyan noted, as for other neighbors, Georgia and Turkey, their alliance with Baku in projects isolating Armenia today is the main foreign policy challenge in Yerevan. Moreover, according to Manukyan, if Turkey and Azerbaijan’s actions against Armenia are understandable, it is evident in Georgia that Armenia is not treated as a friendly nation. This, according to him, is stipulated by a recent statement by Robert Kocharyan that Armenia’s joining NATO will be a step backwards for its sovereignty. The international community believes that negative attitude of one of South Caucasian countries towards joining European institutions hampers the process of uniting the whole region with Europe. Manukyan also believes that such pro-Russian direction of Armenia’s foreign policy is not justified. Russia “caused damage” to Armenia, and withdrawal of Russian military bases from the territory of Samtskhe-Javakheti, mostly populated by Armenians and the base was practically the only working place for them. At the same time, he noted that Moscow even paid to Tbilisi for deploying its forces in the Georgian territory. “Why is Russia not paying to Armenia for its military base in Gyumri?” asked Aram Manukyan.

## **TRIAL OF ALLEGED COUP PLOTTERS OPENS IN ARMENIA**

**3 July**

The trial began on July 2 at a district court in Yerevan of two Karabakh war veterans and one of

their former comrades in arms charged with plotting to overthrow the Armenian leadership, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Lebanese-born Zhirayr Sefilian and Vartan Malkhasian were arrested in December, shortly after presiding over the founding conference of an organization that opposes the return of occupied Armenian territory to Azerbaijan as part of any Karabakh peace deal. They have both rejected the charges against them as politically motivated. Their colleague Vahan Aroyan was arrested in late December after the National Security Service claimed to have found a huge cache of arms at his home in the southern village of Lusarat. (RFE/RL)

## **PROTESTERS DEMAND COALITION AIRBASE BE REMOVED FROM BISHKEK AIRPORT**

**7 July**

About thirty people held a picket at the international antiterrorist coalition's Ganci airbase at Bishkek's Manas Airport on Saturday. The protesters arrived at the base on three buses and held a Soviet flag and red banners saying "Americans, Get Off of Kyrgyz Soil!", "Hands Off Iraq!", "Manas Airport is For Civilian Aircraft", "We Want Peaceful Skies Above Our Heads", and others. The demonstrators chanted anti-NATO and anti-American slogans and played the Soviet national anthem. Alexander Tiperov, a coordinator of the movement for the airbase's withdrawal, said at the demonstration that "the participants demand the immediate withdrawal of the airbase from Kyrgyz territory, the severance of the Kyrgyz-American intergovernmental agreement on deploying the base, concluded in December 2001, and the extradition U.S. Air Force serviceman Zachary Hatfield, who shot Kyrgyz citizen Alexander Ivanov, a fuel truck driver, dead at a Manas airport checkpoint on December 6, 2006." Ivanov's widow and their two sons also took part in the protest. (Interfax)

## **OSSETIAN PEACEKEEPERS TO SET UP CHECKPOINT NEAR GEORGIAN POSITIONS – CHOCHIYEV**

**8 July**

South Ossetia plans to set up an Ossetian peacekeeping battalion in the area, where the movement of Georgian special police forces was

reported, Boris Chochiyev, the chairman of the Mixed Control Commission for Georgian-Ossetian settlement, said. "We'll set up an Ossetian peacekeeping checkpoint in this area, but the attitude of the Georgian side has been negative thus far," Chochiyev told Interfax from Tskhinvali on Sunday. The situation remains tense in the conflict zone, he said. "The Georgian side has declined to attend a meeting of the Mixed Control Commission co-chairmen in Tskhinvali, and offered to meet in Tbilisi in late July without a prior discussion of the agenda, which is unacceptable," he said.

"Reports were circulated on Sunday morning, citing a Georgian deputy minister for conflict resolution, as saying that Cossack troops and military hardware had entered the conflict zone. This is not true," Chochiyev said. "Should tensions arise, not only Cossacks will assist us, but other aid will come, as well. But there are no formations other than those already in place right now," he said. South Ossetia's spokesperson Irina Gagloyeva earlier said that all of the South Ossetian armed forces were alerted on Saturday evening on reports about the movement of Georgian special police forces outside the Ossetian village of Khod. "Leaving their positions near Khod, Georgian special police forces moved towards the Dzhava road and stopped at a distance of 70 meters from our police checkpoint," Gagloyeva told Interfax from Tskhinvali. Ossetian authorities got in touch with Georgian officials and delivered an ultimatum. "We warned that if the Georgian special police force does not move back to its positions before 6 a.m., July 8, it will be destroyed," she said. The Georgian side claimed, meanwhile, that a South Ossetian armed contingent of about 200 men assumed positions on Friday near the Nikozi - Avnevi road under construction, which Tbilisi thinks could seriously worsen the situation. Georgia placed responsibility for further tensions in the conflict zone near Tskhinvali entirely on the Russian peacekeepers who, it said, have been declining to fulfill the duties documented in the peacekeeping mandate. Dmitry Madzhavidze, Georgia's deputy minister for conflict resolution, told the press on Saturday that, "the situation in the conflict zone is extremely serious and even explosive." (Interfax)

#### **AZERBAIJAN MOVES TO CURTAIL RUSSIAN, TURKISH TV BROADCASTS**

#### **9 July**

As of July 11, the Russian television channel ORT will no longer be permitted to use a local frequency to broadcast to Azerbaijan, National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council Chairman Nushirevan Magerramli told journalists in Baku on July 9. ORT's agreement on rebroadcasting to Azerbaijan expired in January, and talks on renewing it failed to yield an agreement on the terms whereby ORT would continue rebroadcasting to Azerbaijan and the state-run AzTV would be broadcast in Russia. Magerramli said talks will continue with a second Russian television company, RTR-Planeta, and if no agreement is forthcoming within the next month, it too will no longer be allowed to rebroadcast to Azerbaijan. Similarly affected is the Turkish channel Samanyolu, whose frequency will be offered for tender on July 17, and which will have to cease broadcasting by September 17. Meanwhile, Azerbaijani Minister of Communications and Information Technology Ali Abbasov told day.az on July 9 that the technical problems involved in making Iranian television broadcasts available to the population of Azerbaijan's southernmost districts will be solved "very soon." (day.az)

#### **SUSPECTS ESTABLISHED IN ATTACK ON ABKHAZ PRIME MINISTER - PROSECUTOR**

#### **9 July**

A number of people suspected of involvement in an attempt to assassinate Abkhaz Prime Minister Alexander Ankvaba have been identified, the breakaway province's Prosecutor General Safarbei Mikanba told journalists on Monday. "We know a number of people who could be involved in the assassination attempt," he said. The owner of the car the attackers are believed to have used to escape has already been identified, Mikanba said, refusing to provide further details. (Interfax)

#### **ABKHAZ PRESIDENT: ATTACK ON ANKVAB IS A POLITICAL ORDER FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRY**

#### **9 July**

Abkhaz President Sergey Bagapsh expressed serious concern about an attempt on life of Abkhaz Prime Minister Alexander Ankvab today, reports a REGNUM correspondent. "Repeated attempts to liquidate the prime minister prove only one thing: some groups are trying actively to hamper the



changes started in the republic and activity of the presidential team, aimed at economic reforms and fighting organized crime, is on their way. Probably, those people are trying to destabilize the domestic situation in Abkhazia. No matter was it deliberate or not, they are implementing order of our opponents, the country with which our country is in a state of war," the republican president believes. Sergey Bagapsh thinks that finding and punishing the attackers is a task of the law enforcement authorities, but Abkhaz society must assist governmental institutions in this matter. A 500,000-ruble reward (\$20,000) is announced for those who will assist in investigating the attack. The president finds inadmissible any action that can destabilize the situation in the republic and paralyze activities of the government. "Policy of the government will not change and such acts of pressure will not make the republican leadership to turn off the road we have chosen," Bagapsh announced. The prime minister's jeep was fired upon by unknown gunmen earlier today. His life is not under threat. It was not the first time Alexander Ankvab was attacked. In February and April 2005, soon after the presidential election, his car was twice fired at from a machine gun. (Regnum.ru)

### **TOSHIBA EYES KAZAKHSTAN FOR URANIUM**

**9 July**

Toshiba Corp. plans to sell a 10-percent equity stake in its subsidiary Westinghouse to Kazakhstan's state-run uranium monopoly Kazatomprom to secure a stable supply of uranium, sources said. Toshiba, which owns 77 percent of the U.S. nuclear technology company Westinghouse, aims to win nuclear power plant contracts by forming a conglomerate capable of covering everything from uranium mining to plant construction, the sources said. More than 100 nuclear power reactors are expected to be built around the world over the next 20 years as concerns about global warming are rekindling interest in the technology, which emits no greenhouse gases. Industry officials say access to uranium will be key to clinching contracts as prices of the raw material have soared to about 19 times the level of late 2000. Kazakhstan has the world's second-largest reserves of uranium after Australia. Toshiba's president, Atsutoshi Nishida, visited the Central Asian country in April with industry

minister Akira Amari and leaders of the nuclear power industry. The company's officials agreed to start negotiations for a strategic alliance with Kazatomprom centered on the purchase of uranium, an area in which the Japanese company remains weak. The Shaw Group Inc., a U.S. engineering contractor, and IHI Corp., a Japanese heavy machinery manufacturer, together hold 23 percent of Westinghouse. If Kazatomprom acquires a 10-percent stake in Westinghouse, the Kazakh enterprise will become its third-largest shareholder. Toshiba, with Westinghouse as a subsidiary, has the technology to build both boiling water reactors and pressurized water reactors.(asahi.com)

### **EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BLAMES RUSSIA FOR DEATH OF FORMER CHECHEN PARLIAMENT SPEAKER**

**9 July**

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on July 5 found Russia guilty of the detention in May 2000 and subsequent death of Ruslan Alikhadjiyev, who served as Chechen parliament speaker from 1997-99, kavkaz-uzel.ru reported. Ruling in response to an appeal lodged in December 2005 by Alikhadjiyev's mother, the ECHR ordered the Russian authorities to pay 40,000 euros (\$54,500) to his family. Alikhadjiyev was detained, together with five neighbors, by Russian troops at his home in Shali, southern Chechnya, in May 2000. On May 25, 2000, the then-deputy commander of the Russian forces in Chechnya, Colonel General Valery Manilov, confirmed his detention, but the Federal Security Service subsequently denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. On September 2, 2000, the press service of Chechen President and resistance commander Aslan Maskhadov reported that Alikhadjiyev died under torture the previous month in Moscow's Lefortovo prison (RFE/RL)

### **17 KILLED, 30 WOUNDED IN A SUICIDE BLAST IN AFGHANISTAN**

**10 July**

A suicide bomber targeted a NATO patrol in a crowded marketplace filled with schoolchildren Tuesday, killing 19 people, including 13 elementary students — an attack the U.N. and NATO quickly criticized for harming so many civilians. The bombing — one of the deadliest of the year —

injured at least 35 Afghans and eight Dutch soldiers patrolling on foot, whom the bomber apparently had targeted. Both the United Nations and NATO criticized the Taliban, which claimed responsibility for the attack, over the civilian deaths — an issue the U.S. and NATO have taken heat for this year because of dozens, if not hundreds, of innocent Afghans killed by Western military action. The governor of northeast Kunar province, Shelzai Dedar, meanwhile, said a government investigation found NATO military action in Kunar last week killed 27 civilians along with 37 militants. NATO has said it had no evidence of civilian casualties from the battle. Details about Tuesday's bombing varied. The deputy district police chief, Jahih Kawi Khan, said 19 were killed and 35 wounded, while the Interior Ministry said 17 died, and the provincial health department chief said 51 were wounded. Afghan officials said the suicide bomber was on foot; NATO said it was a vehicle-borne bomb. (AP)

#### **AZERBAIJANI AUTHORITIES ACCUSED OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ETHNIC MINORITIES**

**10 July**

In a statement addressed to foreign diplomatic representations in Baku, Khilal Mamedov, who heads a committee to defend the right of Novruzali Mamedov, the arrested editor of the Talysh-language newspaper "Tolyshi sado," accused the Azerbaijani leadership of Turkic nationalism and of seeking to suppress non-Turkic minorities, including the Talysh, an Iranian ethnic group. He said the Azerbaijani leadership seeks to minimize contacts between the Talysh communities in Azerbaijan and Iran and to run Azerbaijan into a monoethnic state. Novruzali Mamedov was arrested five months ago and has been formally charged with spying for Iran. (day.az)

#### **GEORGIAN MEDIA CLAIM TWO RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS ARRESTED BY GEORGIAN POLICE**

**10 July**

Georgian police reportedly detained two Russian peacekeepers in Zugdidi in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone last night. Russian servicemen Andrei Kuts and Maxim Korenev were detained on suspicion of "carrying out an illegal raid while entering Zugdidi," the Georgian television station

Rustavi-2 has reported. Both are servicemen of the peacekeeping force based in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone. No official confirmation of these reports from Georgian authorities or from the command of the peacekeeping force is available to Interfax. (Interfax)

#### **TURKEY STEPS UP TALKS WITH NON-RUSSIAN GAS EXPORTERS**

**10 July**

Turkey is stepping up talks with gas exporters Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Iran to put projects on stream in the face of Russian Gazprom's expansion in the region, energy officials said on Tuesday. Turkish and EU energy plans for the Nabucco pipeline, which would cross Turkey, were rattled last month after Gazprom announced a deal with Italian energy company Eni to construct a pipeline that would enter Bulgaria via the Black Sea. "Turkey has made contacts with the Turkmen and they will be ending with some kind of result. Included is a framework within which we can carry Turkmen gas through Iran or bring to life the Trans-Caspian pipeline," said a high-level energy official. Ankara secured in 1991 a 30 billion cubic metre agreement with Turkmenistan, rich in Caspian gas, but the project has so far failed to materialise. Under the accord, 16 billion cubic metres would go to Turkey and 14 billion cubic metres to European markets. Routes for the export of the gas are being discussed with Ashgabat, including a pipeline across the Caspian, which would link on to the existing Azeri Shakh Deniz pipeline, and additional shipments of the gas through existing pipelines between Turkey and Iran. Both Iran and Azerbaijan want to be part of the project, said the energy official, however a new pipeline would be necessary if gas is channelled through the Azeri infrastructure and into Turkey along the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipeline. "Here carrying gas along the BTE is a possibility, but new pipelines may play a role in the case that the capacity is not enough. If the second phase of the Shakh Deniz comes on line on the BTE, we can't talk about current pipelines," he said. The \$4 billion Shakh Deniz project is expected to have a total capacity of 12 bcm by 2012. (Reuters)

### **THREE SERVICEMEN KILLED, TWO WOUNDED IN LANDMINE BLAST IN CHECHNYA**

**10 July**

The servicemen of the Russian interior troops were killed and five others wounded when a land mine exploded in Chechnya's Vedeno district, sources in law-enforcement services told Interfax. "The mine went off when interior troops were carrying out a field engineering mission near the village of Dyshne-Vedeno on Monday morning. A BTR-80 armored vehicle carrying interior troops was hit. Gunfire was opened at sappers. A unit commander, a sapper and the driver were killed. Two unit commanders, two sappers and an instructor sustained wounds," a source said. "The wounded servicemen were rushed to a hospital. An operation to track down the assailants is under way," he said. (Interfax-AVN)

### **CHECHEN REPUBLIC HEAD SUBMITS ANNUAL ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT**

**10 July**

Ramzan Kadyrov's annual address to the Chechen parliament was posted on July 9 on the Chechen government website, chechnya.gov.ru. In that missive, Kadyrov called on the parliament to work closely with the government in preparation for next year's local elections. He noted that the draft project for socioeconomic development in 2008-11 envisages doubling gross domestic product (GDP) and reducing unemployment and poverty. He argued against relying primarily on Chechnya's oil sector to generate economic growth, advocating instead expanding into machine building for the oil and petrochemical sector and resurrecting the agro-industrial sector. He further proposed resolving the acute housing shortage by introducing a mortgage program, but did not explain how that would benefit the estimated 75 percent of the population that is unemployed and thus has no regular income. Kadyrov advocated measures to expand the use of the Chechen language, including switching to Chechen as the language of instruction in primary education. Finally, he called for the "maximum transparency" in the work of the government bureaucracy in order to preclude corruption. (RFE/RL)

### **KYRGYZSTAN, KAZAKHSTAN TO SET UP \$120 MILLION JOINT INVESTMENT FUND**

**11 July**

The prime ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan signed Wednesday an agreement to establish a joint investment fund worth \$120 million for rehabilitating the Kyrgyz economy. "We have signed an agreement to establish a Kyrgyz-Kazakh investment fund worth \$120 million," Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Masimov said after talks with his Kyrgyz counterpart Almaz Atambayev. "Kazakhstan will contribute \$100 million and the other \$20 million will come from Kyrgyzstan." The Kazakh premier said the fund would be meant to develop the Kyrgyz economy. Atambayev said that Kyrgyzstan would receive an interest-free non-refund investment, not a loan, to develop its economy. Among other things, Masimov said, the parties agreed that Kazakhstan would allow Kyrgyz railway carriers to use Kazakh domestic tariffs. "A decision was taken to cancel Kyrgyzstan's debt to Kazakh railway carriers," he said. Kazakhstan also plans to take part in a tender for the privatization of Central Asia's largest Kambaratinskaya hydropower plants, located in Kyrgyzstan. Masimov said the initiative was favorable since "Kazakhstan needs additional energy resources." The two officials will also attend a Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan business forum later Wednesday to discuss promising Kyrgyz economic projects. (RIA Novosti)

### **CONSULTATIONS ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT SETTLEMENT HELD IN PARIS**

**11 July**

Armenia's Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan met OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia) and Bernard Frassier in Paris yesterday. Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk and Office Director of the US State Department's Office of Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts Elizabeth Rood participated in the meeting too. As Regnum was told at the Armenian foreign ministry press office, during the meeting, the sides gave their assessments of the meeting of the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents held in St. Petersburg on June 9. They discussed opportunities of closing in Armenian and Azerbaijani positions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement and further steps in the negotiation process. (Regnum.ru)