

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

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NEWS DIGEST



*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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GEORGIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Cory Welt

Shortly after the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the Georgian government declared the launch of a “new wave” of democratic reforms to better balance branches of government, strengthen judicial independence and private property, and increase media freedom. The cornerstone of this effort was to be a constitutional reform that would devolve power away from Georgia’s traditionally strong presidency. After sixteen months of development, deliberation, and discussion, Georgia’s parliament approved a set of far-reaching constitutional amendments on October 15, 2010. These will go into effect in 2013, after Georgia’s next round of parliamentary and presidential elections.

BACKGROUND: Upon coming to power in 2004, Georgia’s new president Mikheil Saakashvili strengthened the country’s already powerful executive branch, particularly via a wide-ranging right of parliamentary dissolution that hangs over the legislature in the event it refuses to support presidential-appointed governments, legislation, and even budgets. As part of its postwar reforms, the government proposed piecemeal changes to Georgia’s political structure, but it ultimately launched a more fundamental reform process in response to the opposition street protests of spring 2009, which were led by Georgia’s non-parliamentary opposition (many of whom were boycotting seats in parliament) with the aim of forcing Saakashvili to resign. In March 2009, parliamentary opposition leader Giorgi Targamadze floated the idea of convening a constitutional “forum” to reshape Georgia’s legislative foundations. The idea took shape that June as the State Constitutional Commission, in which parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition parties were invited to participate (the latter declined), as well as NGOs, legal experts, and other scholars. A former constitutional court chairman, Avtandil Demetrashvili, was selected to head the Commission.

After nearly a year of deliberation, the Commission produced a first draft of the amendments in May 2010, and it released its final draft in mid-July. Feedback by domestic and international constitutional experts, NGOs, and the parliamentary opposition led to proposals for further changes. While parliament approved the July version of the amendments in the first of three required readings on September 24, Minister of Justice Zurab Adeishvili signaled the government’s approval for making more changes advocated by the Venice Commission (the Council of Europe’s constitutional advisory group) and opposition lawmakers. Several improvements were introduced in the second reading on October 1, and parliament approved the amendments with a few further adjustments in its final reading of October 15.

From an institutional point of view, the constitutional amendments are groundbreaking. Not only do they rollback the excessive concentration of powers granted to the presidency in 2004, they make parliament the source of executive power. The political party or bloc that wins the most votes in parliamentary elections will nominate a candidate for prime minister, who must be approved by a majority of deputies. Two failed

votes will give an alternative coalition of at least 40 percent of deputies the right to nominate a prime minister; a third failed vote will trigger new parliamentary elections. The government led by the prime minister will be the “supreme body of the executive branch”.

A directly elected president will remain in Georgia’s new political system. The president will have a relatively small role to play in the everyday governing of the country, and will not have the right to initiate legislation. While he or she retains veto power, a parliamentary majority will be sufficient to override the veto, rather than the 60 percent currently required.

Instead, the president will serve as “the guarantor of national independence and unity of the country,” according to the constitution. In practice, the president will serve as the kingmaker between a parliamentary majority and the government, in the event that a rift arises between them. Specifically, while the new constitution greatly reduces the president’s power to dissolve parliament, it grants him or her the discretion to do so after a parliamentary vote of no-confidence against the government. The president will be able to veto the no-confidence vote and dissolve parliament if a second vote of no-confidence fails to gain the support of 60 percent of deputies.

The president remains Georgia’s commander-in-chief and will be able to declare martial law or a state of emergency (though parliament retains the right to reject such declarations). Innovatively for Georgia, the prime minister will need to countersign nearly all the president’s legal acts – including appointments of military officers and the declaration of a state of emergency. The right to declare war remains the president’s own. Outside of war, foreign policy is to be shared by the president and government. While the latter “exercises”

foreign policy, the president “represents” Georgia in foreign relations and negotiates international treaties.

IMPLICATIONS: Georgia’s new constitutional reforms are not without controversy. While the government held a series of public discussions on the draft, these were held in the slow summer season and the government dismissed calls for lengthier debate. Opposition parties that refused to take part in the Constitutional Commission denounced the reforms and called on the government to postpone making changes to the constitution until after the 2012 parliamentary elections. While the Venice Commission was generally supportive of the amendments, its conclusion coincides with an alternative view within Georgian civil society that constitutional reforms have not gone far enough toward establishing parliamentary rule.

Such a view is concerned less with the relationship between the separately-elected institutions of president and parliament than with the relationship between parliament and prime minister. Under the new system, the Georgian parliament concedes budget-making authority to its chosen government. If parliament loses confidence in the government, it will not be able to replace the latter without a 60 percent majority (and risks dissolution if it tries), so long as the prime minister enjoys the support of the president. Finally, the prime minister enjoys the right to trigger a no-confidence vote if parliament refuses to pass legislation that it submits. In practice, this means that only a parliamentary majority of 60 percent can refuse to pass government-sponsored legislation without risking dissolution.

As for the specter of government paralysis in such a hybrid “parliamentary-presidential”



system (à la post-Orange Revolution Ukraine), the main ambiguities that the Venice Commission has noted lay not in the realm of domestic policy but foreign policy, where the division of powers between the president and the government remains unclear.

The most common objection to the constitutional reforms is that they pave the way for President Saakashvili to constitutionally extend his rule by enabling him to assume the post of prime minister after his presidential term expires in 2013. With no law barring an outgoing president from assuming another executive office, parliament could conceivably select Saakashvili as Georgia's next prime minister.

Such an outcome is based on at least two assumptions: that the ruling United National Movement (UNM) will be in a position to select the prime minister after 2012 parliamentary elections, and that UNM leaders will support such a move. The first of these assumptions is largely irrelevant, however, while the second may be unwarranted.

CONCLUSIONS: The UNM's political dominance in Georgia – and the absence of real multiparty democracy, in which incumbent

authorities are periodically compelled to concede power to their opponents – is not something that can be “fixed” by constitutional reform alone, be it this reform or any other. Such change must be accompanied by continued reforms in the electoral, judicial, internal security, and media spheres, as well as by the longer-term decoupling of economic power from political incumbency. In any case, endowing parliament with greater powers remains preferable to keeping a “strongman” presidency intact under contemporary conditions of single party political hegemony. It might even help spur opposition parties and their supporters to a stronger showing in 2012 by raising the stakes of parliamentary elections.

Moreover, the UNM has evolved as a political machine since 2003, when voters were asked to support the so-called “Saakashvili-National Movement.” The ruling party's leadership contains a number of strong and ambitious personalities who are eyeing the prime ministerial and presidential posts. After what will have been almost a decade of Saakashvili rule, it is not evident that other leading members of the UNM will agree to support his candidacy for prime minister. Even Saakashvili, while not ruling out a run for the premiership, has given no sign that he really intends to try to stay on. In the end, Saakashvili may be driven by a sentiment of a different sort – that by ushering in such grand constitutional change, he will assure his place in history as the last “great man” of Georgian politics.

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BP'S NEW DEAL WITH AZERBAIJAN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Stephen Blank

In early October BP and Azerbaijan concluded a long-discussed deal, granting both partners a 50 percent share to develop the Shafag-Asiman gas site for 30 years in Azerbaijan's sector of the Caspian Sea. This field is about 1,100 square kilometers in size and has never been explored before. The field holds an estimated 17,000 billion cubic meters (BCM) of gas and that size would put it on a par with the Shah Deniz field where BP has a 25.5 percent share. This deal has importance for both partners beyond the sheer size and fact of its announcement.

BACKGROUND: In the wake of BP's disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, speculation has been rife that it would have to sell its holdings in Azerbaijan and in other places to meet its obligations to compensate people and businesses injured by the oil spill there. In July, BP had even announced it was borrowing US\$ 2 billion from the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli field off the coast of Azerbaijan and US\$ 3 billion from Angolan operations to fund those obligations. Altogether, BP was seeking about US\$ 30 billion from global asset sales to meet its obligations in the Gulf.

This development naturally attracted Moscow's attention. The company it formed with BP where it has a majority stake, TNK-BP, is still seeking to buy BP holdings in Vietnam and Venezuela, that it believes will come up for sale. But during the summer and early fall, Moscow made clear its intention to buy up BP's Azerbaijani holdings as well. Stories appeared in the Azerbaijani press that BP was selling its shares, leading BP not just to deny those reports but also to say, correctly as it turned out, that it was expanding its operations in Azerbaijan. These reports of projected BP sales also projected that Russian companies like Lukoil might buy part or all of BP's shares.

At the same time, Russian energy figures like Igor Sechin, head of Rosneft, began to show support for BP during its troubles and to befriend the company. Indeed, Russia welcomed BP's former CEO, Tony Hayward, onto the Board of TNK-BP, allowing BP to explore the Arctic waters off Russia's coast, and refrained from criticizing BP during the whole time that its well in the Gulf of Mexico was spewing black gold into the Gulf and the U.S. Gulf coast. While this is a far cry from the rapacious tactics Moscow has previously pursued against Hayward and BP, repeatedly squeezing BP projects and trying to seize control of them, Moscow's motives for riding to BP's rescue are easily explainable.

First, BP remains vulnerable to Russian pressure. BP's Russian assets make up 840,000 barrels/day of oil, almost one-third of BP's global output and more than the 665,000 barrels/day it pumps in the United States. TNK also netted BP US\$ 1.7 billion in 2009 for its share of dividends and allows BP to claim vast reserves of oil on its books. BP has also on occasion been very helpful to Russia: for example, it agreed in 2007 to facilitate Gazprom's efforts to make foreign acquisitions well before other majors and governments acquiesced in doing so. In return, Gazprom was



supposed to help BP in its Russia business, buying back a major Siberian gas field that was in danger of having its license revoked due to the usual predatory tactics of the Russian government. In return for helping Gazprom obtain a foreign asset, Gazprom would then sell back 25 percent of the field to BP.

IMPLICATIONS: What Moscow now wants is quite simple and clear. To cover its expected costs in the Gulf, approximately US\$ 32.2 billion, BP must sell some of its assets abroad. Russia clearly wants those assets whether they are in Russia or elsewhere. For example, TNK-BP is in talks with BP to buy fields in Venezuela and Vietnam, places where Russia is already deeply invested. Indeed, BP offered Russia those assets before showing them to others, no doubt to gain Moscow's favor.

But desirable as these acquisitions might be, Russia's ambitions for BP assets do not end in those countries. Moscow clearly wants BP's

assets in the Caspian Basin. But BP has not offered to sell any of those to Lukoil, Russia's premier oil company. In the past, Russia's predatory government and energy giants have precipitated the bankruptcy of one major BP project and threats to its holdings in the Caspian. So while the velvet glove is currently on offer, inside it there is still an iron fist. Moscow also continues to seek to exclude foreigners

from the Caspian basin and maintain the greatest possible monopoly over those countries' energy exports. Although Central Asian gas and oil pipelines to China have broken any chance for a full Russian monopoly on Caspian energy, this has not deterred Moscow from attempting to exploit every opportunity to drive out foreign competitors. Russia seeks to eliminate the de facto independence of Caspian energy producers by controlling either the pipelines they must use or the prices they receive for their product. Second, it seeks to eliminate their economic independence by preventing them from turning to alternative buyers, producers, or funding sources like China or BP who can develop their energy holdings, help build alternative pipelines for them, and find other markets for their product.

In Moscow's perspective, BP's high costs and liabilities due to the oil spill in the Gulf of

Mexico provide Russia with just such an opportunity. Moscow quickly offered to buy up BP's Caspian holdings just as it has similarly offered to buy up Azerbaijan's gas exports. In fact, both initiatives occurred in tandem. Moscow only partly succeeded in getting Azerbaijan to double its relatively low gas exports to Russia from 1 to 2 BCM, but that was all.

Azerbaijan perfectly understands the game and it replied by diversifying its options, concluding the AGRI pipeline deal with Georgia, Romania and Hungary to transmit liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe through this Interconnector pipeline, and further opening up the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to Central Asian oil. It has also striven to improve ties with Turkmenistan so that it would feel encouraged to ship its gas and oil through Azerbaijani pipelines. In other words, Baku has continued to seek the diversification of its options, as it has been doing since 1993-94.

CONCLUSIONS: The new deal between BP and Baku allows Azerbaijan to continue its diversification policy and further enhance its already growing status in the energy business. It also relieves pressure on Azerbaijan to develop its gas reserves exclusively for Russia's benefit and expands Azerbaijan's standing as a gas producer. The size of the new field is quite large and it will enable Azerbaijan to meet its commitments to Moscow, its AGRI partners, and potentially to other European consumers if the Nabucco pipeline gets off the ground. For BP, this marks its first new deal since the disaster in the Gulf and its return to the fray,

suggesting as well that it may not need to throw itself on Moscow's not so tender mercies in regard to Russia's willingness to buy up BP's Azerbaijani or other holdings. Thus Russia's ability to dominate the energy business in and around Azerbaijan has been checked for the moment. The opening up of this new field also justifies continued work to build substantial gas pipelines from the Caspian to Europe such as the Nabucco pipeline, as it now appears that Azerbaijan will be able to contribute the required amount of gas to this pipeline should it come to fruition. In other words, this deal suggests that the questions hitherto raised about Azerbaijan's willingness and capabilities to support Nabucco are going to be answered affirmatively and that the pipeline has justification based on regional supplies.

Finally, this deal may have ramifications beyond Azerbaijan as it may convince or at least help nudge Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to believe in the validity of Nabucco and that they can take part in it without undue fear for the security of their contribution. And at the other side of that project, this deal not only shows that BP is back in the game, but also that Nabucco deserves more active support from Europe – it can realize its promise since the gas supplies needed to make it a worthwhile investment may truly be available by the time it is supposed to open in 2015.

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U.S. Army War College. The views expressed here do not represent those of the U.S. Army, Defense Department, or the U.S. Government.

NATO'S AFGHAN SUPPLY LINES UNDER THREAT

Richard Weitz

Despite the success of the October 20-22 U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, the recent confrontation between NATO and Pakistani forces along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier has complicated alliance efforts to supply their sophisticated and high-maintenance military forces in distant and land-locked Afghanistan. Allied planners must ensure the delivery of large quantities of food, fuel, munitions, and construction materials to their forces through Pakistan as well as Russia and a variety of transit countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, each with their own distinct conditions and motivations.

BACKGROUND: The main supply routes for delivering these bulk supplies to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan run through Pakistan. Alliance members hire private contractors to secure transportation of the goods on trucks and other vehicles. The route with the greatest capacity runs more than 800 miles from Karachi, Pakistan's largest port, to Peshawar, a major land transportation center in northwestern Pakistan. From there, the trucks carry the goods for 53 kilometers through tortuous, twisting roads up to the 1,070-meter high Khyber Pass to the Pakistan-Afghan border crossing at Torkham. Following passage through this gate, the trucks proceed to Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan and then to Kabul and other regions in central Afghanistan. Each day, an estimated 1,000 cargo trucks and fuel tankers follow this route from Karachi to Kabul through the Khyber Pass, which amounts to almost 2,000 kilometers. The other main overland route through Pakistan runs through the Chaman border crossing, located north of the city of Quetta in Baluchistan province, and then on to Khandahar, the main city in southern Afghanistan. Some 150 trucks or tankers use this southern variant each day. According to various sources, ground

transportation through Pakistan conveys between one-half to three-quarters of the non-lethal (and non-vital) supplies and equipment needed by the U.S. and other ISAF troops in Afghanistan.

The deteriorating security situation throughout Pakistan in recent years has seen the spread of militant extremism beyond the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan-Pakistan border into much of the rest of the country. The convoys have themselves come under direct assault by the Pakistani Taliban and other militants. These new attacks have compounded the longstanding harassment of the truckers by the Afghan Taliban as they entered the border region and Afghan territory. Petty pilferage by Pakistani middlemen and corrupt officials, along with outright looting of the vehicles' cargo by robbers who sometimes collude with drivers filing fraudulent insurance claims, has resulted in the trucks' cargo becoming major sales items in regional markets. NATO officials have regularly stated that the attacks have not significantly affected the flow of vital supplies, but at various times troops in Afghanistan have complained about shortages of grocery and drug store items such as favorite foods, beverages, and other commodities.



Developments in late September and early October 2010 heightened NATO concerns. In an incident resulting from the increased use of attack helicopters along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier, two U.S. Apache gunships killed and wounded several members of the Pakistani Frontier Corps stationed at the Mandata Kandaho border post inside Pakistan. In response, the Pakistani government closed the Torkham gate. The official reason was that the authorities could not provide adequate security for the trucking convoys at the crossing in light of the widespread anger at NATO over the deaths. The closing also allowed the Pakistani government to demonstrate its nationalist credentials and lay down a marker against further cross-border attacks.

At the same time, various groups of militants, perhaps with the complicity of the local Pakistani authorities, set fire to more than one hundred oil tankers and other vehicles that were conveying supplies to ISAF at various locations throughout Pakistan—including in Baluchistan, in southern Pakistan, and near the capital region of Islamabad. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for torching the trucks and said it would keep attacking the convoys until they ceased aiding NATO's war in Afghanistan. The vandals enjoyed a rich set

of targets since approximately 6,500 trucks were stuck on the road awaiting Torkham's reopening. But the Pakistani authorities kept the other main NATO logistics conduit through the Chaman gate open to shippers, averting any major supply shortages in Afghanistan.

IMPLICATIONS: The entire affair naturally heightened NATO's desire to reduce its dependence on Pakistani territory and goodwill for the transit of supplies into Afghanistan. Even

before the October 2010 closing, the Pakistani authorities have periodically constrained, and sometimes entirely halted, supply shipments through the Khyber Pass. These interruptions have generally been due to technical difficulties or the exigencies of fighting local extremists, but one stoppage immediately followed a controversial September 2008 U.S. Special Forces attack in FATA's North Waziristan, and was interpreted in Washington as a message not to conduct future commando raids on Pakistani territory.

NATO's problem is that it has not developed good alternatives to the Pakistani routes. The constrained capacity of ISAF strategic airlift restricts the goods that can be sent by air to Afghanistan to only small volumes of the most important supplies, such as weapons, ammunition, and critical equipment as well as soldiers, who enter and leave Afghanistan via Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan.

NATO opened the so-called Northern Distribution Network (NDN) in 2009 in part to hedge its risks. The NDN, which like the Pakistani routes is used for non-lethal supplies and equipment, connects Baltic and Caspian ports with Afghanistan via Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Today, approximately

30 percent of all NATO transit to Afghanistan goes through the NDN, either through Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, or alternately through the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. The 5,000 kilometer pan-Russian transportation network involves the delivery of supplies to European ports, where they are loaded onto railway carriages or airplanes and sent through Russia to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. From there, the cargo is placed on trucks or trains for shipment into Afghanistan.

Due to economic and political consideration, NATO countries make only limited use of the South Caucasus variant. Through this conduit, supplies are shipped through the Balkans and Ukraine, then across the Black Sea to Georgia, where they are brought by rail or truck to Azerbaijan. From the Azerbaijani port of Baku, ships transport cargo across the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan, where they are moved by road or rail to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the complex transportation issues involved in the South Caucasus variant, as well as NATO fears about deepening ties with Georgia given the alliance's dependence on transiting Russia's territory to Central Asia, has limited its viability.

The Central Asian countries have been logical partners to support a strong NATO presence in Afghanistan. They share Western concerns about a revival of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan given their past support for extremist Islamist movements in other Central Asian countries. All five Central Asian regimes have been targeted by Muslim extremist organizations linked to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and now fear the rumored revival of offshoots of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. They would also like to curb the flow of Afghan narcotics through their

territory. Central Asian leaders are also eager to maintain NATO's presence in Eurasia to help balance Beijing and Moscow, whose military and economic predominance raises the risk of a Sino-Russian condominium at their expense. Commercial considerations also drive their interest in supporting the operation. NATO's transit through their territory generates employment, service payments, infrastructure improvements, bulk purchases, and other economic benefits. Unfortunately, the Central Asian countries, like Afghanistan itself, lack direct access to the sea, requiring Western governments to secure Moscow's approval to transship goods through its territory, or ramp up use of the South Caucasus corridor.

CONCLUSIONS: The current situation puts Moscow in a pivotal position from the perspective of controlling NATO's logistical access through Eurasia. The recent violence in Pakistan has further increased Moscow's leverage. An analyst for the Russian Federal Security Service, Lieutenant General Leonid Sazhin, observed that, "If the Khyber Pass and the road to Kandahar get blocked by the Taliban, then the U.S. and NATO have no choice other than the alternative routes through Central Asia. And as airplanes can't deliver much, ground transport corridors are necessary and here Americans need Russia". Washington and its allies need to consider these geopolitical realities involved in sustaining its Afghan mission as they decide how much pressure to apply on Pakistan regarding other issues.

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NEW POLITICAL RISKS ARISE WITH THE NEXT GENERATION OF METALS MINING IN KAZAKHSTAN

J. Edward Conway

Kazakhstan is well known for its mineral riches. The country is a top producer of uranium, chrome and zinc, along with several other metals. Reputation sings in Kazakhstan – the successful mining companies operating in the country, mostly on legacy Soviet mines, know that strong relations with both the local and national governments via intensive and expensive social projects lead to investment security and new opportunities. However, as the next generation of mining companies – smaller exploration and development companies such as Frontier Mining Ltd. – begins to break ground on undeveloped or underdeveloped fields, new political risks emerge. What will the Kazakh government expect of them?

BACKGROUND: Obtaining the so-called social “license to operate” in Kazakhstan rests largely on reputation. Two of the largest operations in the country – Kazakhmys and Kazzinc (majority-owned by privately held Glencore) – have been operating in the country since the mid-1990s. After a trial period of a few years, Kazakhmys was able to expand its copper operations and Kazzinc its lead and zinc operations to a point in which both companies now have close to a virtual monopoly over production of their respective minerals in the country.

Since the early 2000s, the mining junior Frontier Mining Ltd. (FML: AIM) has been elbowing its way onto the Kazakh scene. It now has 50 percent ownership of an estimated 2.8 million ton copper resource in northwest Kazakhstan (which will likely soon become 100 percent ownership) and 100 percent ownership of an estimated 1 million ounces gold resource in the northeast region of the country. Frontier hopes to have Benkala, the copper resource, in production by late 2011, while Koskuduk, the gold resource under their Naimanjal License, has a recently downgraded estimate of 6,000

ounces (from 10,000) of gold production for 2010.

The successful mining companies in Kazakhstan to date have recognized that a positive reputation relies on supporting social projects at both the local and national level. At times these endeavors bear little resemblance to traditional community engagement strategies used by mining companies. Take, for instance, Kazzinc, which locally funds the Kazzinc-Torpedo ice hockey team (the ‘backbone’ of Kazakhstan’s Olympic team) and on the national level, contributes to the Astana cycling team (of Lance Armstrong and Alberto Contador fame). In 2009 they received the ‘Best Social Project’ award from a corporate social responsibility competition sponsored by the Kazakh government for setting up a foster care and adoption network in the country. Kazakhmys, one of the largest employers in Kazakhstan, recently announced that it will finance the national library in Astana – a US\$ 130 million facility located in the nation’s capital, hundreds of miles away from their main operations. Locally, they support several

nursery schools, orphanages, and trade schools, among other initiatives.

But these two companies – along with the other mining stars of Kazakhstan, such as ArcelorMittal and ENRC – share something in common that Frontier Mining does not: traditional metals mining operations in Kazakhstan since independence have primarily been extensions of legacy mines from the Soviet era (and in some cases date back to the Russian Empire). Lead has been developed in East Kazakhstan (where Kazzinc is located) since 1784, and in 1912 it was one of the largest mining operations in the Russian Empire. In the 1980s, the region supplied 60 percent of the lead and 50 percent of the zinc to the entire USSR. Because of this deep history, a host of issues that mining companies typically deal with in South America and Africa – specifically related to the considerable social and environmental disruption associated with mining, for example land resettlement – are bridges that the mining forefathers of Kazzinc and Kazakhmys crossed decades ago during the Soviet Union or Russian Empire.

IMPLICATIONS: This is not the case for Frontier Mining. Frontier's name is significant in more ways than one. Its growing gold and soon-to-be copper operations in previously undeveloped (or underdeveloped) fields in Kazakhstan represent a new social engagement frontier for mining in the country: what will the local and national governments of Kazakhstan expect of Frontier? How will it be different from companies like Kazakhmys and Kazzinc? And how will these expectations evolve over time? These are critical questions not only for Frontier but for the community of political risk analysts that are expected to understand and predict these issues for investors.

So far, Frontier is only in its infant stages of crafting a social responsibility strategy for the communities in which it operates. A recent technical review by the engineering consultancy Wardell Armstrong International of the company's Benkala copper project in northwest Kazakhstan specifically points out the lack of a formal social engagement plan as well as the company's apathy toward the Equator Principles, which are social and environmental requirements agreed upon by the world's largest investment banks for investment in projects with capital costs of US\$ 10 million or more, something Frontier will likely want to make itself eligible for in the coming years. According to the report, as of June 2010, 'there was no Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) in place for operations,' nor was there 'any formal policy pertaining to the social development of community engagement.' In fairness to Frontier, the company is equally in its infant stages of mining development. After all, the company has a market capitalization of roughly US\$ 90 million (compare to Kazakhmys, which spent close to that amount on social projects in Kazakhstan alone in 2009).

Frontier must recognize that as the company grows, so will its expectations from the Kazakh government, particularly with regard to social engagement. In recent correspondence with Frontier, they indicated that they have embraced the conclusions of the Wardell Armstrong International report and are currently developing a social and environmental engagement plan. In fact, according to CFO George Cole, public meetings were held in early September of this year for the Benkala project. He believes that all sites will likely implement a plan in the near future that will be specifically aimed at complying



with the Equator Principles, and that in the interim, Frontier Mining continues to operate under complete compliance with Kazakh legislation.

Of course, there is nothing in the Equator Principles, or in Kazakh legislation, about hockey teams or 130 million dollar libraries, and while political risk analysts will be watching Frontier to see how the company navigates itself through the social infrastructure of Kazakhstan, there will also be considerable focus on the Kazakh government to see how it responds in turn. At this point in the country's history, most of the fully developed Soviet era legacy mines have been doled out, and so a new chapter begins in which companies like Frontier attempt to develop previously undeveloped or underdeveloped deposits.

The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has high hopes for the future of the metals mining industry in Kazakhstan (he has called for significant increases in output as well as processing and finishing), but the country will need to think critically about a

strategy for staying attractive to mining companies as old deposits meet their life expectancy and new deposits are discovered. The closures of legacy mines in the coming decades have the potential for significant social unrest. And in the near term, the government will have an additional public relations hurdle to jump if it proceeds with plans for a possible minerals export tax to begin in 2011.

CONCLUSIONS: If history is any indicator, Frontier's reputation with the local and national government of Kazakhstan will play a large role in determining whether its current successes will be fleeting or enduring. How that reputation will play out via a social engagement plan remains unclear. The junior exploration and development companies are nowhere near the size of a Kazakhmys or a Kazzinc and yet in many ways, they will be faced with greater risks of social unrest. As Frontier outlines and executes a strategy for integrating its presence into the social fabric of the country, other junior exploration and development firms keen on Kazakhstan, as well as associated political risk analysts, will be watching to see what works, and what does not.

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FIELD REPORTS

TAJIKISTAN SEEKS TO CURB ISLAMIZATION

Suhrob Majidov

Tajik authorities have embarked upon an extensive campaign of fighting islamization in the country. The authorities are concerned with the fact that increasing numbers of Tajik citizens, and especially young people, are interested in religion. Even though state officials have so far not produced any legal directives, the state is becoming more active in appealing to the masses, calling for a moderation of their religious views. In addition to general calls for preventing the spread of extremist views among the Muslims of Tajikistan, the authorities have as part of the campaign prevented young people from studying religion abroad, banned girls from wearing hijabs in school, and imposed unofficial restrictions on wearing long beards.

The authorities claim that two thousand Tajiks officially receive religious education abroad on the basis of grants, quotas and intergovernmental agreements. However, Faridun Hodizoda, an expert on religious issues, says that only about five hundred young people from Tajikistan attend the Al-Ahzar university in Egypt officially, while two thousand do so unofficially (i.e. without authorized permission from the Tajik Ministry of Education). Many others study in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran and Pakistan.

Tajik officials have repeatedly emphasized that graduates of foreign religious schools, and especially of unofficial madrasah, often become sources of extremism and terrorism. Thus, before the beginning the current academic year, President Emomali Rahmon stated during his visit to southern Tajikistan that it is necessary to return these students from abroad; "otherwise they will become traitors, betrayers of their motherland". Perhaps as a consequence of this, more than seventy

students and professors were not allowed to embark on their flight from Dushanbe to Iran in September. Officials of the Ministry of Education later explained that the authorities did not have enough information about the purposes of their flight. Furthermore, as reported by Mavlon Muhtor, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Religious Issues, about fifty Tajik students returned from abroad voluntarily "heeding the call of the head of state". During a press conference on October 18 he also noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently identifying Tajik citizens who study in foreign religious institutions illegally, and that they will be returned in the nearest future.

Another target of the campaign is the traditional Muslim female head cover, the *hijab*. The popularity of this garment among Tajik women and girls has increased significantly during the last couple of years. Along with the campaign for a "secular appearance of women", the authorities especially stress the importance of following the dress code in educational institutions. Thus, as a part of the campaign women are recommended not to wear black *chadors*, or even hijabs. Educational institutions in Tajikistan have established a dress code for their students, which certainly does not include the hijab.

While most students comply with the norms of the educational institutions, Tajik officials still pay careful attention to cases of dress-code violations. For instance, while attending the opening ceremony of a lyceum in the Tajik national university in Dushanbe, Minister of Education Abdujabbor Rahmonov asked several girls and their mothers who were wearing hijabs to leave. President Emomali Rahmon also expressed discontent with

the fact that Tajik girls “like foreign Muslim styles”, stating during a meeting with students of the Tajik national university that traditional Tajik clothing suits them much better. In addition, the administration of a market in the city of Kurgan-Tyube prohibited saleswomen from wearing hijabs at the market. Those doing so will be fined 100 somoni (US\$ 22).

There is also an unofficial restriction on wearing long beards. While government officials say this is not prohibited, increasing numbers of men wearing beards report being stopped on the streets and asked to shave. As Mavlon Muhtor, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Religious Issues, explained: “Wearing a beard is one of the Islamic traditions, and we have no right to forbid it. Nonetheless, in

ministries, agencies, organizations, enterprises, and educational institutions, there are norms and discipline which should be followed”.

The influence of Islam in Tajikistan has become more appreciable during the last several years. Thousands of mosques have been built after Tajikistan’s independence, and major Muslim holidays have been announced as state holidays. At the same time the official clergy, which is largely controlled by the government, is not very popular and especially younger people have become receptive to young theologians who were educated abroad. Therefore, many local experts think that the popularity of radical religious groups in Tajikistan will inevitably grow over time.

KAZAKH PRESIDENT MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO EUROPEAN UNION

Georgiy Voloshin

On October 24, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev began his European tour, which included talks with the EU's and Belgium's top officials and then wrapping up his trip by visiting France. It was his first trip to Europe after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force on December 1, 2009, introducing the post of President of the European Council and seriously modifying EU foreign policy development and implementation schemes.

Nazarbayev met Herman Van Rompuy, current President of the European Council, which is the chief executive body acting at the level of heads of state and government, as well as the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso. Speaking at the ensuing press conference, the Kazakh President stated that trade and investment cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan is constantly on the increase, accounting for over US\$ 30 billion in trade turnover in 2009. The bulk of last year's overall investments from the EU rose to US\$

50 billion, thus making the European Union the top foreign investor in Kazakhstan with its 40 percent share of all FDI. Kazakhstan's leader also pledged to increase the supply of hydrocarbons towards Europe at a time when Kazakhstan is rated the third largest exporter of crude oil to the EU outside OPEC.

During his bilateral meeting with Barroso, Nazarbayev thanked the EU for its willingness to negotiate an updated and well-advanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, which is expected to replace the existing framework regarded as incompatible with the present-day status of the EU-Kazakhstan political and economic relationship. This process is complemented by the signing and implementation of separate bilateral agreements on strategic partnership, which Kazakhstan has so far concluded with France, Italy, Spain and Germany. Barroso expressed his hope that with the assistance of international partners, Kazakhstan would be able to join the World Trade Organization in the near future.

In another meeting with Philippe Maystadt, the President of the European Investment Bank, the President of Kazakhstan oversaw the signing of a trilateral memorandum between the EIB, the Development Bank of Kazakhstan and the Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Welfare Fund, a state-owned organization entrusted with the management of state assets and international cooperation in priority areas. In April 2010, the Kazakh Government and the EIB agreed on the modalities of a loan to implement a number of medium- and large-scale infrastructure projects on Kazakh soil in the fields of transport, energy, oil and gas.

Nazarbayev also met with NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen when visiting Brussels. He praised the positive trend in NATO-Kazakhstan cooperation and promised to send a few Kazakh soldiers to the International Security Assistance Force Headquarters in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is currently participating in the "Steppe Eagle" military exercises orchestrated by NATO planners within the Partnership for Peace Program and implementing the second phase of its individual partnership action plan.

On the eve of his visit to the EU, President Nazarbayev was interviewed by the New Europe Information Service, answering questions about Kazakhstan's collaboration with major powers present in Central Asia, its OSCE chairmanship and the prospects for stabilizing south Central Asia. When asked whether his country would prefer any specific foreign oil operator, Nazarbayev stressed the utmost openness of the Kazakh oil sector and invited all interested companies to help modernize

Kazakhstan's economy in line with the recently adopted Strategic Development Plan providing for accelerated industrialization up to 2020.

He also praised the commitment of the European Union to provide 118 million Euros in financial aid to Kyrgyzstan within the next three years and underscored Kazakhstan's pacifying role in relation to its southern neighbor, drawing on its positive experience with peaceful coexistence between various ethnic and religious groups. Nazarbayev paid special attention to the Afghan crisis which is now being actively dealt with under the umbrella of Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship. Astana has so far allocated US\$ 50 million for training Afghan civilian specialists and disbursed more than US\$ 4 million for the purpose of rebuilding schools, hospitals, roads and bridges across Afghanistan. Speaking about the threat of nuclear proliferation, the Kazakh President urged Iran to comply with IAEA safeguards in developing its peaceful nuclear technologies and hinted at the need to negotiate and adopt a new Global Treaty on horizontal and vertical nonproliferation.

Nazarbayev's visit to Europe concluded in Paris, where he met his counterpart President Sarkozy, Prime Minister Francois Fillon and the CEOs of France's top industrial and innovation companies. Numerous contracts worth a total of US\$ 2 billion were concluded, namely between AREVA and Kazatomprom in nuclear energy, Kazakh Railways and Alstom Transport in electric locomotives' construction, and the Kazakh Ministry of Defense and EADS for the supply of combat helicopters. Nazarbayev assessed both visits as truly historic.

ARMENIA'S PRIME MINISTER VISITS IRAN

Haroutiun Khachatryan

The visit of Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan to Iran on October 25-26 underlined the peculiarities of bilateral relations between these two countries. Armenia needs to entertain

good relations with its southern neighbor, first of all because Iran provides Armenia, under embargo by Azerbaijan and Turkey, with

alternative access to the outer world, along with its principal access through Georgia.

Armenia is seeking to activate the existing transport corridors by constructing a railroad connecting Armenia and Iran, which will bypass the existing and closed railroad through Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave. If constructed, this railroad would become an unprecedented route connecting the Gulf region and the South Caucasus. Conversely, Iran needs Armenia as a stabilizing factor on its northern border and Iran's neutral position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a valuable asset for Armenia. In particular, Armenia's decision not to join the UN's economic sanctions against Iran has contributed to improving ties between the two countries.

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian confirmed this in a special statement on October 21, just before the visit: "We do not believe that the use of force or sanctions can be helpful in finding solutions. We hope that agreements and solutions on the nuclear program of Iran can be found through negotiations, with combined efforts of Iran and the international community". For all these reasons, Sargsyan and his delegation, including eight ministers, were welcomed in Tehran, where Sargsyan had meetings with President Mahmud Ahmedinejad and Vice President Mohammadreza Rahimi.

Iran could also potentially serve as an important market for Armenian exports, which have suffered from the trade embargo by Azerbaijan and Turkey. Trade between the two countries is currently highly imbalanced, with Iranian imports from Armenia constituting less than 15 percent Iran's exports to Armenia. This is mainly due to tariff and non-tariff trade barriers applied by Iran. The Armenian Prime Minister said during the visit that the trade

potential between the two countries is estimated to US\$ 1 billion a year. The actual turnover for 2009 was US\$ 154 million, according to the Armenian Statistical Commission. For that reason, a major goal of Armenia has been to reach a free trade agreement with Iran, which if signed would be a rather unique arrangement between a World Trade Organization member (Armenia) and a non-WTO country (Iran).

The two countries have negotiated this agreement over at least four years and would potentially remove many of the trade barriers for Armenia which exist both at the state and the province levels in Iran. However, no such agreement was signed during Sargsyan's visit, which can be seen as a serious failure on Armenia's part. This failure was reportedly caused by the fact that the Iranian side "was not prepared legally," in the words of the Armenian officials. Instead, the Armenian delegation repeatedly stressed that major joint infrastructural projects between the two countries are underway. According to the Armenian side, there are currently four such projects. Two of these, a hydropower station on the Araks border river (near the town of Meghri) and a third high-voltage line for exporting electricity to Iran were officially inaugurated in Armenia, with the participation of the visiting Energy minister of Iran Majid Namju, shortly before Sargsyan's visit. Two other joint projects are the construction of an oil-product pipeline and a terminal for these products, the construction of which will reportedly start this year, and the new interstate railroad. In addition, the creation of an industrial zone in the southern Armenian province of Syunik was discussed and given the green light during the talks. This zone is expected to contain Armenian-Iranian joint

ventures for processing agriculture products, for which Armenia hopes to attract private investors.

Thus, Sargsyan's visit to Iran demonstrated the complex relationship between the two countries. The interests of 70 million population Iran and 3 million Armenia partly overlap and in most cases depend on the behavior of the largest partner, Iran. Armenia does its best to implement the joint projects and generally downplays the Iranian nuclear program. Iran supports these projects, and has

provided large loans to Armenia to fulfill them, as it did in the case of the hydropower station in Meghri. At the same time, Armenia has few means to influence the political processes in Iran, including its protectionist trade policy and the resistance of its bureaucracy. These two factors seem to have contributed to the failure of the free trade agreement. Nevertheless, the countries cooperate closely in a wide range of spheres as seen by the large size of the delegations during the Armenian Prime Minister's visit.

TAJIKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN CLASH OVER RAILWAY TRANSIT

Erkin Akhmadov

The uneasy relations between Uzbekistan and neighboring Tajikistan have deteriorated lately following continuous complaints from the Tajik authorities about delays in transiting goods through Uzbekistan's railways. In response to these claims, the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an official statement, calling Tajikistan's complaints "false and ungrounded".

Delays in transiting railway wagons heading for Tajikistan through the territory of Uzbekistan began last winter, delays which on several occasions throughout the year affected as many as two thousand Tajik wagons. The Uzbek authorities have explained the delays by technical problems in certain areas of its railways.

After the meeting of the Presidents of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in July this year in Tashkent, an agreement was reached that the Uzbek side will no longer impede transit of goods on its territory, except for those that carry materials for constructing the Roghun hydropower station. In mid-October, the head of the Goods Transportation Department of Tajik Railways, Andrey Tropin, reported that Uzbekistan started to let through

wagons for the Roghun station. However, this information was proven false after a couple of days and the Tajik railway authorities stated that thousands of Tajik wagons remain in Uzbekistan.

On November 1, the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement, calling all the accusations of the Tajik side false and ungrounded. Specifically, the Uzbek MFA explained that "facts and statistical data show that the statements of the Tajik authorities do not correspond with reality and have no grounds ... According to the official data of the customs service of Uzbekistan, the volume of goods to Tajikistan does not decrease and has a stable growth tendency". For instance, during the first nine months of 2010, the volume of goods transited by railway across Uzbek territory to Tajikistan amounted to 57,000 wagons, which is 1,780 wagons more than during the corresponding time period in 2009.

In addition, the Uzbek MFA stated that creating large-scale artificial delays which would gather thousands of railway wagons on the territory of Uzbekistan is technically impossible since this would require extremely long stretches of spur

tracks, and would potentially paralyze the economy of Uzbekistan itself.

Furthermore, the Uzbek MFA referred to the statement of the Tajik authorities, according to which Tajikistan's foreign trade turnover increased by 3.6 percent in 2010, and exports grew by 14 percent. Considering that the foreign trade turnover of Tajikistan depends on the major railway routes through Uzbekistan, the Tajik economy would hardly reach the indicated level in the case of a transportation blockade on Uzbekistan's part.

The MFA of Uzbekistan concluded that the existing problems with transit through Uzbekistan's territory are exclusively due to technical and logistical problems, and a significant increase in the cargo traffic and workload of the country's railway infrastructure, as well as the necessity to conduct maintenance work on certain stretches of the railroad. Moreover, the increase in cargo traffic is due to Uzbekistan's international commitment to provide transit of non-military and humanitarian goods to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, it was reported in the end of October that over one hundred Turkish and Iranian trucks were stuck on the Tajik-Uzbek border at the Dusti

checkpoint in Tajikistan's Tursunzade rayon for more than five days. The truck drivers say Uzbek border guards did not let their trucks enter the territory of Uzbekistan and did not provide reasons for this. The Tajik Customs Committee confirmed this information, and one of the committee's representatives noted that this problem is similar to the delays in railway transit through Uzbekistan. In addition, on November 1 Uzbekistan unilaterally closed the border checkpoint in the Penjikent rayon of Tajikistan without any explanation.

As the MFA of Uzbekistan warned in its note, "ungrounded claims and statements of Tajik authorities towards Uzbekistan ... do not promote the development of good-neighborly and mutually beneficial relations between the two states, and undermine the level of trust and mutual understanding in interstate relations". Indeed, relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have already been antagonistic for a long time, with a number of disputed political and economic issues such as water management, border control, etc. Therefore, the current exchange of accusations regarding railway transit does little to improve the state of affairs.



New Silk Road Paper:

***Reconciling Statism with Freedom: Turkey's
Kurdish Opening***

By Halil M. Karaveli

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NEWS DIGEST

PRESIDENTS OF KAZAKHSTAN AND FRANCE DISCUSSED BILATERAL COOPERATION

28 October

The meeting of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, took place yesterday in the Elysee Palace in Paris, the agency reports citing the president's press service. According to the press service, the leaders of two states held negotiations after the meeting. The officials, during the negotiations, discussed a wide range of questions of bilateral cooperation, defined some measures directed at strengthening of strategic partnership between two countries, and analyzed the course of realization of the provisions of strategic partnership contract between Kazakhstan and France. "The parties noted essential progress in political, economic and humanitarian directions. The leaders of two states exchanged opinions concerning the regional and global agenda." The Presidents of two countries also discussed the forthcoming presidency of France in "G20" and "G8" in 2011. Following the results of the negotiations, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev, and the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, signed the Joint Declaration, some bilateral agreements - between the government of Kazakhstan and the government of the French Republic on cooperation in peaceful use of atomic energy, the order of realization of joint activity in the field of manufacture of heat-generating installations between the National Company Kazatomprom JSC and AREVA, the memorandum of mutual understanding and cooperation in manufacture, delivery, and maintenance service of EC145 helicopters between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Kazakhstan and EADS and EADS-Eurocopter companies, contracts on delivery of electric locomotives between the National Company Kazakhstan temir zholy JSC, the joint venture Electric Locomotive of Kurastyru Zauyty,

the company Alstom Transport, and the company Transmashholding. (Kazakhstan Today)

EUROCOPTER, KAZAKHSTAN SIGN CHOPPER DEALS

29 October

Eurocopter has signed two strategic agreements with Kazakhstan aimed at the joint production of EC145 helicopters. Under the agreements, the first deal also includes the maintenance and training activities required to support EC 145 operations throughout a new trade zone created between Kazakhstan, Russia Belarus and most of the central Asia region. The second deal concerns a memorandum of understanding between the country's Defense Ministry and EADS, Eurocopter's parent company, and the commitment to proceed with purchases of EC145. Both agreements were endorsed in Paris this week during the visit of Kazak President Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev to France. Officials from both sides refrained to elaborate on other details of the deal but military experts say an order of 45 twin-engine EC145s have been placed for the next six years. "Eurocopter, together with its joint venture partner Kazakhstan Engineering, will develop a major aeronautical industry capability in Kazakhstan, thereby creating several hundreds of highly qualified jobs," said Eurocopter President and Chief Executive Officer Lutz Bertling. "This project will foster helicopter usage in Kazakhstan ... [and it] positions Eurocopter for future business development in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Russia and Belarus, providing helicopters that are well tailored for applications in the oil and gas, parapublic and government sectors, as well as for other applications." The deals signaled Kazakhstan's determination to continue bolstering its military and defense industries, especially the country's new elite airborne unit. It wasn't immediately clear how much the government of Kazakhstan was allocating for the purchase and production of the advanced helicopters. The EC145 ranks top in its class of

medium-sized, twin-engine helicopters. "This multi-mission helicopter brings together Eurocopter's latest developments in advanced cockpit design, avionics and rotor system," Defense Talk reported. "It is also perfectly adapted for demanding environments, especially in very low temperatures that can be found in Kazakhstan." To date, 400 EC145s have been sold worldwide. The production and customization of EC145s are expected to take place in Astana with the joint operational company established legally by the end of the year. Defense News reported that the helicopters to be created will be called KH145 and operational late 2011. The project will proceed as the initial batch of six EC 145s will be delivered in the coming year. Established in 1992, the Franco-German-Spanish Eurocopter Group is a Division of EADS, a world leader in aerospace, defense and related services. It employs more than 15,000 people. (UPI)

KYRGYZSTAN SENTENCES NEPHEW OF FORMER PRESIDENT TO 10 YEARS

2 November

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor's office claims members of the Bakiyev family looted the former soviet Central Asian country from the time President Bakiyev took power in the 2005 Tulip Revolution. He was deposed in popular protests this April, and then conspired to destabilise the country, it is claimed. "Sanzhar Bakiyev was sentenced to 10 years in a high-security prison," said Baktybek Rysaliyev, spokesman for the Kyrgyz Supreme Court, after the trial in a military courtroom in Bishkek on Tuesday. "He was charged with fomenting mass disorders, illegal possession of arms and its use against the authorities." Kyrgyzstan is set to form a new government after it held recent elections that were praised by international observers. Recent indications are that Respublika, which came fourth, is set to back the pro-government Social Democrat party, which came second, allowing it to form a government, instead of the nationalist Ata-Zhurt party, which won the most votes and includes many former supporters of President Bakiyev. Mr Rysaliyev said that more than 40 of Mr Bakiyev's family and allies would now be tried in Bishkek this month. The country, which hosts both a US and a Russian airbase, has had a tumultuous year, with a revolution in April, attempted counter-coup in May, and a brutal ethnic conflict in the south in June, which left more than 400 dead. Sanzhar Bakiyev was sentenced for organising the May protests,

when supporters of his uncle overran government buildings in the southern city of Jalalabad. The next senior figure to go to trial will be Akhmat Bakiyev, brother of the ousted president, who was arrested in July and stands accused of fomenting June's ethnic violence. Janysh Bakiyev, another brother of the former president and a powerful figure in Jalalabad, remains a fugitive, and stands accused, as head of the state security services, of authorising guards to shoot live rounds at protesters in April. Kurmanbek Bakiyev is being sheltered in Minsk by Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's President, while Maxim Bakiyev, who amassed great wealth during his father's reign, has claimed asylum in London. (Daily Telegraph)

IMAM KILLED IN RUSSIA'S DAGESTAN

2 November

Prosecutors in Russia's volatile North Caucasus republic of Dagestan are investigating the murder of an imam in the city of Khasavyurt. The 35-year-old imam was shot by an unknown gunman late on Monday near a mosque where he had led a service, prosecutors said. The imam died on his way to hospital. In a similar incident, another imam was killed in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region in Russia's Urals in October. Moscow announced an end to its decade-long antiterrorism campaign against separatists in Chechnya in April 2009, but militant clashes with police are still common in the North Caucasus. According to the National Anti-Terrorist Committee, more than half of all terrorist attacks in the region in 2010 have occurred in Dagestan. (RIA Novosti)

TWO KAZAKHS SENTENCED FOR ATTACK ON OPPOSITION LEADER

4 November

Two people found guilty of attacking a Kazakh opposition leader last week have been sentenced by an Almaty court, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Vladimir Kozlov, head of the unregistered Forward party, and members of the Communist Party were accosted and pelted by eggs at the National Press Club in Almaty on October 27. Talghat Rysqulbekov was sentenced to seven days in jail and Gulbakhram Zhunis was fined the equivalent of some \$100 on November 2 for their roles in the attack. The two said they were members of the Zheltoqsan (December) movement. Rysqulbekov and Zhunis were the most active members of a group that threw eggs and water bottles at Kozlov and the others. They also assaulted

some journalists after attacking Kozlov and the Communist Party members. No injuries were reported in the incident. Kozlov says the attack is connected with his announcement earlier in October that he will run for president in 2012. (RFE/RL)

AZERBAIJAN, KAZAKHSTAN TO SIGN MARITIME TRANSPORT AGREEMENT

4 November

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are expected to sign a maritime transport agreement at a summit of the heads of Caspian states on Nov. 18 in Baku, Kazakh Oil and Gas Minister Sauat Mynbayev said on Tuesday following the seventh session of an intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation held in Astana. Mynbayev is the co-chair of the commission. "We reached an agreement on maritime transport," he said. "The draft agreement is currently with the Kazakh Foreign Ministry and we hope that it will be signed at the upcoming summit." According to Mynbayev, the intergovernmental commission agreed on quotas to begin student exchanges between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. "We also discussed the opening of a branch of an Azerbaijani bank in Aktau," he said. "However, this requires the consent of the Kazakh Financial Supervision Agency." Mynbayev stressed that the question of distributing Kazakh oil between the various ports of the Black Sea remains unresolved. "As you know, there is Azerbaijan's Kulevi Port on the Black Sea and our Batumi Port and we have not decided on the volumes of Kazakh oil and how they will be shared between them," he said. (Trend)

GEORGIA ARRESTS 13 ACCUSED OF SPYING FOR RUSSIA

5 November

Georgia's government on Friday announced the arrests of 13 people, including six military pilots and four Russian citizens, who are accused of spying for Russia's armed forces. The arrests provoked an angry response from Russia's Foreign Ministry, which accused Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili of suffering from "chronic spy mania" because of his antipathy toward Russia. A series of spy flaps in recent years has aggravated already tense relations between the two former Soviet republics, which fought a brief but bitter war in 2008. The arrests, which took place in October, were announced on the day Russia's military intelligence agency celebrates its professional holiday, Day of

the Military Intelligence Officer. Georgia's Interior Ministry said its counterintelligence department had succeeded in planting its own agent, a former Soviet army officer, into the military intelligence agency, known by its Russian initials, GRU. The operation led to the exposure of dozens of people working covertly for GRU and the arrests of 15, the ministry said. Two were released under a plea-bargain agreement. The Georgian citizens arrested included six air force pilots, a naval radio operator accused of passing on secret military codes and the founder of a non-governmental group called the Globalization Institute. Most are accused of providing Russia with information about Georgia's combat readiness. The four Russian citizens were identified as Armen Gevorkian and Ruben Shikoian, both ethnic Armenians who are the director and deputy director, respectively, of the Georgian office of Saybolt, a Netherlands-based company that provides a range of services in oil, gas and chemical industries; businessman Pyotr Devrishadze and Yury Skrylnikov, described as a liaison with Russian military intelligence. Russia's Foreign Ministry condemned the arrests but did not directly deny any intelligence links. "In recent years the Georgian leadership has repeatedly resorted to the fabrication of such scandals, cynically hoping to receive domestic or foreign dividends," it said. The ministry said the arrests were aimed at damaging Russia's relations with the West ahead of two summits: the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in Portugal and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's meeting in Kazakhstan. A video released by Georgia's Interior Ministry shows one of the Russian citizens, Devrishadze, explaining how he was recruited in 2006. He said he was having trouble with his business in Moscow at the time, and a Russian Embassy official in Tbilisi offered to help and set up a meeting for him in Moscow. At the meeting he was told his business would be closed down and he could be arrested unless he agreed to cooperate. Otar Ordzhonikidze, deputy chief of Georgia's counterintelligence department, said the operation to round up the accused spies began in 2006, when the Interior Ministry offered an amnesty to anyone who voluntarily admitted to having worked for foreign intelligence services. Information provided by some of the people who accepted the amnesty eventually led to the latest round of arrests. Ordzhonikidze said about 60 people have been arrested in Georgia on suspicion of spying for Russia in the past six years. (AP)

DAY OF SILENCE BEFORE AZERBAIJAN'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

6 November

Azerbaijan has declared Saturday a day of silence before the parliamentary election on November 7. Campaigning is not allowed on the day before the election. At the current election candidates for 125 parliamentary seats get no financial support from the government as several months ago the legislative body cancelled the financing of candidates' campaigning from the state treasury. Candidates have to find own money and search for financial assistance from different funds, which is not prohibited by law. Azerbaijan's central election commission is the only body that has the right to call on voters to cast their ballots and to explain the voting rules on this day. (Itar-Tass)

KYRGYZ ARRESTED OVER LAND GRAB

8 November

Police in Kyrgyzstan's southern Osh region arrested at least 20 people today in the Uzbek-populated villages of Ishkevan and Kyzyl-Kyshtak on charges of illegally occupying land, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The standoff started on November 7, when a group of some 500 Kyrgyz, most of them from the city of Osh and the Nookat, Aravan, and Alai districts, showed up in the villages with plans to divide the land into plots. Activists from the Osh Sheyter (Martyrs of Osh) group joined them today, raising the number of protesters to about 1,000. They say they will not leave until the land is legally distributed among ethnic Kyrgyz. An RFE/RL correspondent reports that about 100 policemen are monitoring the situation. Deputy Osh Regional Governor Kushbek Tezekbaev told RFE/RL that the protesters' action is illegal. He said "some forces" are trying to destabilize the situation in the region. "Osh regional police forces are all there," Tezekbaev said. "First of all, they have to ensure the security of those people [mostly ethnic Uzbek landowners]. And secondly, those farmers have been working hard for the whole summer, and their harvest should be taken care of. So all of us, including Osh regional Governor Sooronbai Jeenbekov, are there. We are demanding that people obey the law." "Why did it happen? Who is behind it? Security agencies should find out." Violence broke out between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan in June, leaving more than 400 people dead and causing widespread destruction. Tensions remain high as the trials of the alleged perpetrators continue. International human rights

organizations note that most of those on trial are Uzbeks. (RFE/RL)

AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA EXCHANGE BODIES OF DECEASED CITIZENS

7 November

Armenia on Saturday reportedly returned to Azerbaijan the bodies of two deceased Azerbaijani servicemen, according to the Azerbaijani wire service Trend. The two deceased Azerbaijani servicemen were identified as Mubariz Ibrahimov and Farid Ahmadov. The bodies crossed the "contact line" at around four o'clock local time in the afternoon thanks to the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Armenia also transferred to Azerbaijan Eldar Tagiyev who had been held in captivity. Trend quoted ICRC as saying that Azerbaijan returned to Armenia the body of Manvel Saribekyan, a villager who reportedly committed suicide.

The exchange of bodies took place at the Bash Qarvand village near the contact line in the Agdam region.

"Although returning of the bodies is a sad case, their families are able to bury them and to organize a mourning ceremony," said Elen Plenevo, head of the ICRC Barda office. The ICRC has been operating on the Azerbaijani-Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since 1992 in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia - Ilham Aliyev, Dmitry Medvedev and Serzh Sargsyan - signed their Astrakhan declaration late last month to envisage the return of prisoners of war as well. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out in 1988 and the two countries signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994.

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, France and the United States - are currently holding the peace negotiations for these two countries. (Xinhua)

PARTS OF AFGHANISTAN UNDER KABUL CONTROL NEXT YEAR: CLINTON

8 November

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Monday she was "convinced" that parts of Afghanistan would be under the control of Afghan forces by next year. "We are convinced that starting next year there will be parts of Afghanistan that will be under the control of the Afghan government and its security forces," Clinton told reporters in Melbourne. (AFP)

KYRGYZSTAN URGES US TO SCRAP FUEL CONTRACT FOR CRUCIAL SUPPLY BASE

8 November

The Pentagon last week awarded the contract to the Gibraltar-registered company, which, together with its sister company Red Star Enterprises, has supplied fuel to the US base since 2003. The award ignored concerted lobbying from the Kyrgyz government to cancel the tender, and pass the contract instead to a joint venture between the Kyrgyz state oil company and Russia's Gazpromneft. "The government of the Kyrgyz republic urges the government of the USA to suspend co-operation with Mina Corporation, pending investigation by the public prosecutors," the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a formal statement, adding that the Kyrgyz government intended to "pursue the interests of the people of Kyrgyzstan on this issue, and conclude an international agreement." Fuel supplies to the Manas base are crucial to fighting the war in Afghanistan, with air tankers from Manas responsible for more than one third of in-air refuelling over the war zone. Mina has also been under investigation by the US Congress, although John Tierney, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which launched the investigation in April, said last week he had found no evidence to back up allegations that the family of the previous Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, had business with, or received financial benefits from Mina.

John Lough, a spokesman for Mina Corp, said: "We're pleased to be able to continue our partnership with the Department of Defence and are committed to clearing up any misunderstandings about Mina on the part of the Kyrgyz government. Mina has always operated lawfully and with the utmost integrity. As far as we're aware, the Kyrgyz investigators concluded that there's no case against Mina." A spokesman for the US Embassy in Bishkek would not comment but pointed out that there was a clause in Mina's contract which would allow more than one supplier. (Telegraph)

INT'L OBSERVERS: PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN AZERBAIJAN HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH INT'L AND OSCE STANDARDS

8 November

A mission of the OSCE PA considers the voting in Azerbaijani parliamentary elections as positive. The

voting in Azerbaijani parliamentary elections is assessed positively, Wolfgang Grossruck, the head of the OSCE PA long-term mission, said at a press conference. The observers of the OSCE mission stressed serious efforts by the authorities to ensure fair elections. "A peaceful atmosphere in the elections was stressed compared to the previous parliamentary elections. There were no incidents," he said at a press conference as a result of the mission's activity in Azerbaijan.

The head of the mission called participation of many political parties in the elections as a positive factor. He noted the good technical organization of the elections by the CEC as another positive feature at the elections in Azerbaijan. The observers of the OSCE mission observed about 90 percent polling stations, he said. However, the head of the OSCE PA mission noted some shortcomings in the electoral process, including the lack of criticism, the unequal access of political parties to the media, the reduction of the pre-election campaign.

Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were held in accordance with all international and the OSCE standards, Paul Wille, the head of the PACE observation mission, said at a press-conference.

"The elections were held in peaceful atmosphere. The elections were held at a high professional level from the technical point of view," he said He said that all this gives an opportunity to talk about the development of Azerbaijan as a democratic country. "One could observe that the candidates spoke only about themselves and their rivals in the pre-election debates on TV. No constructive proposals were voiced to improve the lives of citizens," he said. Anneli Jaatteenneaki, the representative of the European Parliament, said that the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were technically well-organized.

"The elections were held in a peaceful atmosphere. Unfortunately, we got the reports about the violation of human rights of the observers from the opposition", she said. Azerbaijan held the parliamentary elections Nov. 7.

The voter turnout hit about 50.14 percent (roughly 2.48 million voters) in Azerbaijan, the CEC's Elections Information Center told Trend. The CEC reported that 690 candidates are running for the parliamentary elections.

Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan are held by the majority system in 125 constituencies. Previous parliamentary elections were held in November 2005. (Trend)

MEDVEDEV DISPLEASED BY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CAUCASUS

8 November

President Dmitry Medvedev said he was displeased by how economic development is proceeding in the North Caucasus and specifically in Dagestan. "You are slow. You should work harder," Medvedev said at a meeting with Vice Prime Minister and presidential representative to the North Caucasus Federal District Alexander Khloponin on Monday, November 8. The president said he meant local leaders as well. Medvedev heard Khloponin's report on the implementation of his instructions regarding economic development of the North Caucasus. A strategy for the development of the region up to 2025 has been approved, and "an action plan for each republic will be approved before the end of November," Khloponin said. He recalled that "a development institution has been created with the authorised capital of 500 million roubles in order to help the republics form their investment plans", government guarantees worth 50 billion roubles for investment programmes, and private-public partnership mechanisms will be used actively to draw money from the Investment Fund. "As far as Dagestan is concerned, I have the impression that economic development is going very slowly," Medvedev said and demanded a report on concrete projects being implemented in the republic. (Itar-Tass)

EX-GEORGIAN PRESIDENT WANTS TO INTRODUCE 'RELIGION' SUBJECT IN SCHOOLS

8 November

Ex-Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze has called for the widespread teaching of religion in Georgian schools. "What is happening today?" he said in an interview with the Asaval-Dasavali newspaper. "The president ordered firstgraders to learn English, and religion has been forgotten altogether. The schools simply do not teach the subject." Even under Stalin's leadership, Shevardnadze said, religion was more of a priority than under the current government. "After World War II, more than 22,000 Orthodox churches, the Theological Academy and the Seminary were opened in the Soviet Union upon Stalin's initiative," Shevardnadze said, noting that he is proud that the Holy Trinity Cathedral was built under his leadership. (Trend)

KAZAKHSTAN TO SPEND \$1.5 BILLION ON IMPROVING IMAGE

9 November

Kazakhstan will invest \$1.5 billion in the development of tourism and creating a positive image of the ex-Soviet republic, which is perhaps best known in the West for the comic character Borat. "The 2011 Asian Winter Games will become one of the main stages in the promotion of the country. \$1.5 billion will be invested in image projects," the country's sports and tourism chief Nurlan Zhanibek said on Tuesday at a tourism presentation in New York.

Astana will also bid for the 2030 Winter Olympic Games, he said. Kazakhstan saw 800,000 foreign tourists in 2009, he added. "Two or three years ago we launched a PR campaign in Germany and now we see a growing number of German tourists," Zhanibek noted. Kazakhstan's global image was dealt a serious blow in 2006 with the release of the Hollywood comedy Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan, which portrayed its principal character, a Kazakh called Borat, as backward, incestuous, and racist. (RIA Novosti)

SAKASHVILI: 'WE DON'T WANT CONFRONTATION WITH ANYONE'

9 November

President Saakashvili awarded on November 9 Georgian counter-intelligence officers, who were part of the operation to uncover, as the President put it, "spy network of Georgia's occupant country" and said that Tbilisi was ready for talks with Moscow if the latter demonstrated "good will". "This operation was very important, important because our country is obviously under permanent pressure and threat of permanent destabilization attempts... We defend ourselves, and our counter-intelligence agents are on the forefront of this self-defense," Saakashvili said at the meeting with the Interior Ministry leadership. "A real monster is in struggle against us." "I would like to thank you and wish you further success in your attempts to stop the actions and tricks of Georgia's enemy... We've managed to create small, but efficient counter-intelligence service." "We do not want confrontation with anyone; we defend ourselves. If Russia shows good will and decides to launch negotiations with us, Georgia will always be ready for that. If we are talked to as a sovereign state, which has its democratically elected government, we will be ready for [talks] without

any preconditions like we have always been," he added. (Civil Georgia)

AFGHANISTAN DROPS CHARGES AGAINST KARZAI AIDE

9 November

The Afghan government has dropped corruption charges against a top aide to President Hamid Karzai who was indicted by a US-backed task force for taking a bribe, an official said Tuesday.

Mohammad Zia Salehi, a senior official in Karzai's National Security Council, was arrested by the Major Crimes Task Force, a US-funded anti-graft body, in July after he was caught on a wiretap soliciting a bribe. In return, Salehi reportedly held up an investigation into a company suspected of moving money for Afghan leaders, drug traffickers and insurgents. At the time, Karzai ordered Salehi to be released, saying that his arrest was unconstitutional and violated human rights. Rahmatullah Nazari, Afghanistan's deputy attorney general, told AFP that Salehi had been cleared of the charges, seemingly on a technicality. "Under Afghanistan's laws, voice-tape can become evidence only in drugs-related cases. Mr Salehi's case involved corruption," Nazari told AFP. "Because the voice-tape could not become evidence he was cleared of the charges. He was investigated. His file will be closed in a couple of days," Nazari added. Weeks after his arrest, US media reported that Salehi, head of the administration in Karzai's National Security Council, was on the CIA payroll. Karzai is under pressure from his Western backers, chiefly the United States, which leads a 150,000 military force in the country, to crack down on official graft gripping all levels of the Afghan administration. Nazari said about 20 senior Karzai government officials including former ministers were being investigated over corruption charges. Mohammad Amin Farhang, a former commerce minister, and ex-transport minister Hamidullah Qaderi were expected to be tried in "weeks" over allegations of corruption, Nazari said. The prosecutor said former senior government officials will be tried in a special tribunal set up for the trial of ministers. Under Afghanistan's law a minister cannot be tried in an ordinary court. Once sentenced, the officials will not be able to appeal the court ruling, Nazari said, citing the new tribunal established in recent months. (AFP)

TAJIK STUDENTS QUIT RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS IN EGYPT, PAKISTAN

10 November

Tajik diplomats in Pakistan and Egypt say hundreds of Tajik students have "voluntarily" abandoned their studies at religious schools in those countries and returned home, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Speaking by phone from New Delhi on November 10, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Zubaydullo Zubaydov, said that to date 204 Tajik students who were studying at unofficial or illegal Pakistani religious schools have returned to Tajikistan voluntarily at the expense of their parents or relatives. He added that up 100 more students at such colleges are waiting for money from their relatives or sponsors to pay their fare home. More than 130 Tajik students similarly returned home from Egypt on November 8, Muhammadi Muzaffarov, Tajik Consul in Egypt, told RFE/RL. Muzaffarov explained that Tajik Airlines planes that took Tajik pilgrims to Mecca for the hajj stopped on the return journey in Egypt to pick up the students. Muzaffarov told RFE/RL the students returned home from Egypt of their own volition. But at Dushanbe airport, a man who gave his name as Salmon, and who was waiting for his grandson to return from Egypt, said the Tajik authorities pressured them to persuade their children to return home. Salmon added that his grandson was a student at one of the schools of the prestigious Al-Azhar Islamic University, but had to abandon his studies. Tajik Education Ministry official Rajabali Sangov said that the decision to return home is wise, because students at illegal and semi-official madrasahs studied only the Koran. He stressed that diplomas from such schools are not recognized in Tajikistan. The head of Tajikistan's Islamic University, Umarali Nazarov, told RFE/RL that they will try to enable returning students to continue their education in his university or other religious schools.

Sayidumar Husayni, deputy chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan who is also a member of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (the lower parliament chamber), told RFE/RL that recently appointed Tajik Mufti Sayidmukarram Abduqodirzoda is himself a graduate of an Islamic school and university in Pakistan. A woman called Ruqiya told RFE/RL that some women and girls leave Tajikistan to study abroad because Tajik schools and universities do not allow women who wear the hijab to attend lectures. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in August urged parents to recall

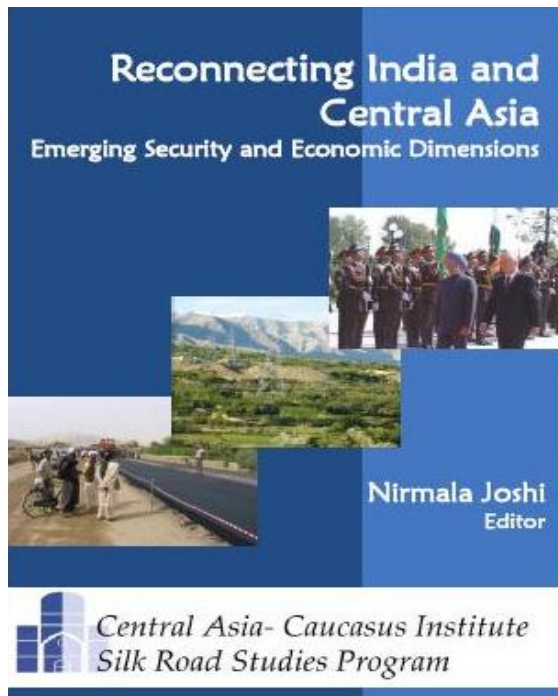
their children from foreign madrasahs, saying otherwise they risk falling under the influence of foreign radical groups. For that reason, Rahmon argued, it is better that such students return to Tajikistan and continue their studies there. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ ELECTION PROTESTERS FORCE WAY INTO COURT

10 November

Some 500 supporters of the United Kyrgyzstan party forced their way into Bishkek's Birinchi Mai district court, demanding a meeting with the judge who is currently evaluating their complaint regarding the results of the October 10 parliamentary election, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Additional police have been sent to the court building. United Kyrgyzstan representatives say the party was deliberately excluded from the new parliament. The Central Election Commission

says the party did not receive the minimum number of votes required to qualify for parliamentary representation. Early on November 10, the commission officially presented badges and certificates to lawmakers from the five parties represented in the new parliament prior to the start of its inaugural session. Some 50 activists from the Meken Sheyitteri (Martyrs of the Homeland) movement tried to prevent the new legislators from entering the parliament building by throwing eggs at them. The movement claims that the new deputies include many former officials who served under President Kurmanbek Bakiev. It is demanding repeat elections. The Martyrs of the Homeland movement consists mainly of relatives of the 87 people killed and hundreds injured during clashes between antigovernment protesters and security forces in Bishkek on April 7 that culminated in Bakiev's ouster. (RFE/RL)



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