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Wednesday/July 28, 2004

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EXPECTATIONS OF ROSE REVOLUTION PROVE PREMATURE IN ARMENIA.....3

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The “revolution of the roses” in neighboring Georgia had a contagious effect on the Armenian opposition, which launched its own campaign of rallies three months ago, aiming to force president Kocharian to resign. Even though rallies are still held periodically in Yerevan, it is safe to assume that this campaign has already failed as several others before, and no revolution of any kind is imminent in Armenia.

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On June 4, after talks between the Tajikistani and Russian Presidents, Vladimir Putin’s website announced an agreement on the future of Russia’s base in Tajikistan. This agreement gave Russia a “free and unlimited” use of Tajik territory to establish a base, while territories currently used by Russian forces as military testing grounds will be transferred to Russia under similar conditions. Russian border guards currently in Tajikistan will change their format of work and will cooperate with their Tajik colleagues against drug trafficking and the infiltration of terrorists. This agreement brings to an apparent close a serious political dispute between the two governments. This agreement was surprising as it had seemed clear that Tajikistan wanted its own troops to replace the Russians and had also considerably improved its relationships with the United States in the meantime.

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The chain of exciting crises in Georgia has taken much attention away from the ‘big issue’ that shapes Caucasian security – the development of the Caspian hydrocarbons. It was President Putin who implicitly reminded about the forthcoming breakthrough in the Caspian area in his May 26 address to the Russian Parliament. That speech consisted mostly of feel-good Brezhnev-style generalities but the point on a new pipeline bypassing the Bosphorus straits was taken in a remarkably direct manner. Moscow might have been caught unprepared by president Saakashvili’s peaceful ‘blitzkrieg’ in Ajaria but it certainly keeps a watchful eye on the race of Caspian pipelines that comes to the final stage.

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The Georgian government has taken decisive steps to address some of the most pressing political and economic problems related to the post-conflict area of South Ossetia and proposes revision of the current peacekeeping mandate. Recent developments in South Ossetia have shown the inadequacy of the current peacekeeping arrangements to the complex state-building and conflict resolution tasks that the new Georgian administration pursues. Pro-active economic rehabilitation and social assistance programs that are offered to South Ossetian residents hold promise for boosting the political negotiations, but also a risk for a militant backlash. Somewhat paradoxically, the international organizations involved in conflict resolution could prove the least ready to catch up with the new developments.

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EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

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

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Analytical Articles:

Analytical articles require a three to four sentence introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples.

Analytical article structure:

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

BACKGROUND: 200-300 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: 200-300 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.

Specifications for Field Reports:

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 500-700 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: svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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KYRGYZSTAN'S POWER INTRIGUES INTENSIFY AHEAD OF PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Ainura Cholponkulova

Kyrgyzstan's presidential and parliamentary elections are due in 2005. The possibility of a "Rose Revolution" or peaceful transfer of power is the centerpiece of the political debates in the country. Although President Akayev denied the idea of his reelection during talks with high officials from the European Union, it is increasingly apparent that he will attempt to control the political process ahead of the parliamentary and presidential elections.

BACKGROUND: The interim Constitutional Council – consisting of state officials, parliamentary deputies, political parties and non-governmental organizations – suggested amendments to the Constitution in 2002. One of the recommendations was the introduction of a party list electoral system. However, in February 2003, the party list electoral system provision was removed from the agenda by a presidential task force. All candidates for parliamentary election must run as individuals, not party nominees.

In December 2003, an array of parliamentarians appealed to the Constitutional Court to preserve the party list electoral system. This petition was recently rejected by the Court. Since 1995, changes in the parliamentary structure had increasingly impeded the development of political parties as functioning and policy-oriented institutions. As a result of these changes, the activity of political parties in the next parliament are set to be considerably diminished after the forthcoming elections.

Last March, during the visit of Kyrgyz opposition parties to the United States, high-ranking State Department officials stressed that elections should lead to changes in the power structure of Kyrgyzstan. In late May, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe and U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE Stephan Minikes visited Bishkek to remind the Kyrgyz leadership that Kyrgyzstan still ranks as the most democratic country in Central Asia. Widespread and influential Russian mass media nevertheless rapidly shaped opinion among the Kyrgyz political elite regarding the possibility of an export of the Georgian "Rose Revolution". The statements of U.S. officials were perceived by the Kyrgyz authorities as a threat to the existing political regime. Top officials of Kyrgyzstan appear to have come to believe that another "Rose Revolution" is being promoted by the U.S. and western governments.

IMPLICATIONS: In late May, former Security Council Secretary Misir Ashirkulov founded the Civic Union For Fair Elections. It includes four opposition leaders and one pro-presidential deputy. In an interview with local mass media, Mr. Ashirkulov states that he strives to be a mediator between the Government and the opposition, as well as to provide for fair and open parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, without "any velvet revolutions". Ashirkulov's statement was officially welcomed by the new pro-presidential party "Alga, Kyrgyzstan". Thus, the Georgian Rose Revolution has brought to light many concerns and challenges within the political leadership of Kyrgyzstan itself, that are mouting as elections are nearing.

Concerned with the international support for opposition leaders as well as increasing resistance from political opponents in the south of the country, key strategists of the presidential administration are working to prevent the scenario of a "velvet revolution" in Kyrgyzstan.

However, the following question arises: what common interests unify Misir Ashirkulov, Akayev's close associate, with the President's rivals and opponents like Omurbek Tekebaev, Adakhan Madumarov, and Emil Aliev (of the "Ar-Namys" party)? First, some might argue that having used Mr. Ashirkulov as the mediator, the presidential strategists struck a bargain with opposition figures, promising them financial support during the next election in exchange for a promise not to provoke a "Rose Revolution". Second, another aim of this political maneuver might be to prepare favorable conditions for the transfer of power to a successor, if the current head of the state is aggressively pressured by the world community. In an interview with local opposition newspapers, Akayev's potential rival Feliks Kulov (who is still in prison), points out that Akayev will not run in the next presidential election. Therefore, by joining this Union, Kulov hopes to push his party members into the parliament, thus creating preconditions for his long-term political plans.

Another rival, the President's opponent and former Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev, has been recently nominated as a presidential candidate by several members of the radically-inclined southern opposition. As a reaction to this, Kyrgyz authorities set up the Presidential Support Fund in the south, which collects voters' signatures in favor of nation-wide referenda. As a second choice, supporters might suggest conducting a referendum to extend Akayev's term.

Despite the ongoing crisis of presidential power over the past several years, the Kyrgyz Head of State has attempted time and again to prolong his tenure. For the decision to quit his post depends not only on Akayev himself, but also on his family clan. During the past few years, Akayev's family has become his "key advisor" on many presidential initiatives. His family clan has profoundly penetrated all spheres of politics: from personnel policy to business. It has been able to surround itself with Kemin and Talas fellows, from Akayev's and his wife's native regions in the northern part of Kyrgyzstan. To a certain degree, the family shares its power with fellow members of the tribes, and thus bears certain responsibilities for them. Representatives from other parts of the north are still in power as well, thanks to old communist ties and patronage. Because of fear of losing power and access to

finance, they also stand behind President Akayev. Meanwhile, there are among state officials those who have been selected for their reformist initiatives, professional background, or technical skills. However, they are few and represent neither support for, nor a threat to, the incumbent power.

CONCLUSIONS: Current political events suggest that “Rose Revolution” will not occur during the Kyrgyz election. First, unlike their Georgian colleagues, the Kyrgyzstan opposition figures have so far failed to become a consolidated driving force against the ruling regime, as most of them discredited themselves by championing private rather than party interests. The majority of the political parties are shaped around personalities or narrow, tribal, or regional interests. Second, although as in Georgia some Kyrgyzstani non-governmental organizations and mass media outlets demonstrate strong independence, they are still unable to replace the incumbent ruling elite. The political space for arguments and debates among opposition NGOs and mass media are becoming increasingly limited. Since their financial sustainability is fragile and depends on grants, civil society

organizations do not have the additional financial resources to confront governmental policies.

Unlike was the case in Georgia, in Kyrgyzstan many private mass-media are controlled by pro-presidential business groups that shape a positive perception of ruling regime among public. Truly independent corporate businesses able to support mass media or NGOs have not been formed yet.

In the meantime, the upcoming national elections may become crucial and decisive not only for Kyrgyzstan, but also for neighbors whose political regimes are more autocratic. A positive democratic outcome of both the parliamentary and presidential elections could have a regional effect and spark political reform in neighboring countries.

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ASSANDI TIMES NEWSPAPER EFFECTIVELY CLOSED DOWN IN KAZAKHSTAN

Assandi Times, one of Kazakhstan's few opposition newspapers, was effectively closed July 15, when the court fined the paper 50 million tenge—about \$370,000—in the country's most expensive moral compensation case to date. The court also issued its decision to quickly seize all the newspaper's property and its bank accounts. *Assandi Times'* editorial staff claim the immediate seizure of the paper's assets proves the presidential administration was attempting all along to close the paper.

Despite the seizure of its assets and the enormous fine, *Assandi Times* has announced publicly and on its Web site that it will resume publication Aug. 13. Nursultan Nazarbaev's presidential administration filed the case after *Assandi Times* wrote an article in early June saying the editorial staff thought the presidential administration or someone close to it had produced a June 2 false issue of the newspaper. The false issue of the newspaper, which appeared in newsstands three days ahead of the normal publishing day, contained articles ostensibly signed by opposition leaders from the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) and Ak Zhol parties squabbling amongst themselves. The false issue, many experts say, was both an attempt to discredit the opposition and a trap for *Assandi Times*, which is financially linked to DCK.

A suit was also filed against the opposition Web site *Navigator* (www.navi.kz), which had reprinted the article. The suit against the site was dropped after *Navigator* published a July 1 retraction of the original *Assandi Times* article.

Assandi Times lawyer Sergey Utkin said there were numerous procedural and legal irregularities in the trial, including the Medeo Regional court's acceptance of the case from the first hearing, June 10, although the court usually takes a week to verify

whether the claims filed are relevant. In addition, the presidential administration filed the suit only two days after it had requested a retraction, although the law requires anyone claiming moral compensation to wait a month for a retraction. The court eventually delayed the first trial hearing until the month-long time limit had elapsed.

Utkin also said *Assandi Times'* editorial staff maintains its statement in response to the false issue was an opinion and not an accusation. The statement in question began, “The editorial staff thinks that the ‘falsification’ is the next step of the presidential administration or those close to it, attempting in this way to discredit the newspaper in the eyes of the readers.” During the trial, a Russian-language expert was invited to judge whether the statement was an opinion or a statement of fact, eventually concluding it was an opinion because it began with “The editorial staff thinks.” However, the prosecutor and judge disregarded the expert's opinion, Utkin said.

Through various mechanisms, *Assandi Times* was denied the opportunity to solve the issue through peaceful means, Utkin said. This proves the intent all along was to close the newspaper, *Assandi Times* claimed in public statements. Utkin said other attempts to fight the case were blocked. The entire case is moot, Utkin said, because the presidential administration does not exist as a registered legal entity and thus should not be able to sue for damages to its “business reputation,” the article under the law the suit was based on. Furthermore, the statement did not hurt the general reputation of the presidential administration, *Assandi Times* claims, and Utkin said he proposed to bring in journalists, political scientist and social scientists to prove this point. The judge declined, Utkin claims, saying social opinion is not explained in this way, but not other solution was allowed.

“In general, from our point of view, the administration simply doesn't have a business reputation, insofar as it doesn't participate in the civil spheres from a private name, it can't lose profits, it doesn't have partners, clients, and so on, as all companies do... The administration simply has a reputation (not business), but [this reputation's] protection by way of indemnity for moral harm for legal entities is not provided for in the law,” Utkin said.

Utkin said he and the newspaper were working on an appeal to a higher court, but he does not expect positive results. “Naturally, we are preparing an appeal to a higher court, but there is practically no hope for justice. We will continue to fight using all legal measures and will cover the result of [the judges'] deliberation in the media, hoping for the support of our readers and all healthily thinking citizens of Kazakhstan, and also of the international community.”

The Organization for and Security in Europe (OSCE) released a press release from its representative for the freedom of the media Miklos Haraszti, in which Haraszti expressed concern over the closure of one of Kazakhstan's only oppositional media outlets as elections approach, according to a Reuters report of July 23.

While most experts say Kazakhstan's opposition did not suffer much from the fake issue of *Assandi Times* itself, some media experts claim discrediting the opposition was not the ultimate goal, but rather closing the prominent opposition paper. They say the entire false issue may have been an attempt to force *Assandi Times* to publish a statement against the government, which would enable the government to sue it for libel. If that was the intent, so far the false issue has proven successful.

Olivia Allison

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF'S VISIT TO AZERBAIJAN: AN EFFORT TO BUILD PAKISTANI REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Asma Shakir Khawaja

On his way back from Europe, Pakistan's President stopped for a three-day state visit to Baku, Azerbaijan. In Baku, Musharraf voiced support for Azerbaijan's position on Nagorno-Karabakh, but also concluded important agreements on trade, scientific cooperation including in the oil sector, and on military cooperation. The volume of talks reflect the improving economic situation in both countries, but Musharraf's trip also served to enlist support for his concept of "Enlightened Moderation" in the relations between the Muslim world and the West. Azerbaijan, a secular and moderate Muslim country, would be a logical ally of Musharraf's in his attempts to make Pakistan a moderate leader in the Muslim world.

BACKGROUND: Since the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991, Pakistan and Azerbaijan have developed ever closer and cordial ties. Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan, and diplomatic relations were established on June 9, 1992.

Officials from both states think they have much in common. Pakistan is in conflict with India over Kashmir, while Azerbaijan is in dispute with Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. They also share a moderate leadership with a moderate agenda. Azerbaijan has in recent years emerged as a steadfast ally of Pakistan's. Relations between both countries were first forged by Musharraf's predecessor Nawaz Sharif who visited the Azerbaijani capital in 1995. Azerbaijan's late President Heidar Aliyev reciprocated that visit by visiting Islamabad the following year.

Recently Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf paid an official three-day visit to Azerbaijan, which followed visits to Sweden and Finland. Musharraf and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev showed keenness to further strengthen Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations to the mutual benefit of both countries. They signed a series of agreements covering tourism, trade, customs, and combating narcotics trafficking and international terrorism. Musharraf reciprocated Azerbaijan's backing for Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir conflict by stating that Pakistan backed Baku's efforts to regain control over Nagorno-Karabakh. Musharraf also expressed keen interest to tap into Azerbaijan's oil industry expertise to create joint ventures for the exploitation of Pakistan's own energy resources. Both sides explored ways and means to broaden their cooperation in the economic sphere, ending up by agreeing on boosting cooperation in IT, food, agriculture, and trade. They agreed to cooperate in the gas transmission and distribution sectors in all fields, including cross-border gas pipelines, by sharing expertise and transfers of technology. Both countries plan to exchange expertise and knowledge of regional geological and large scale mapping and topographic surveys of minerals resources including energy and mineral data and information.

During talks on bilateral issues, military cooperation was also prominent: the two states concluded a military treaty in 2003. As of now, Pakistan is providing military training to

Azerbaijani officers while looking forward toward a wide range of military cooperation in terms of men and material. It is keen to sell its military hardware to Azerbaijan and wants to benefit from Azerbaijan's sizeable oil and gas resources. Urdu, it was announced, will soon be taught at Baku State University. As part of Pakistan's confidence-building strategy, Musharraf also communicated in the Turkish language.

President Musharraf also addressed the Milli Majlis, Azerbaijan's Parliament, where he emphasised Pakistani-Azerbaijani cooperation to strengthen the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and termed it an important vehicle for expansion of trade and commercial relations.

IMPLICATIONS: The visit has a potentially long-lasting affect in terms of forging bilateral cooperation. The visit was an opportunity for the two partners to deepen their friendship and also help in materializing the joint efforts in the struggle against terrorism. It appears to be evidence of the changed foreign policy goals of Pakistan. During a visit to the U.S. in 2003, Musharraf outlined these goals as: establish a country at peace, strengthened by democracy, with economic development and strong friendship with the U.S. An analysis of Musharraf's statements in the past few months indicates that he is working hard to project his idea of "Enlightened Moderation" in persuasion of his foreign policy agenda. This strategy is based on economic transformation through raising growth rates and educational levels, and poverty reduction through a range of empowering strategies for women, minorities and vulnerable segments of society through direct foreign investment. 'Enlightened Moderation' aims at a working democracy and economically thriving civil society, the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. It seeks to root out terrorism and extremism to create a new political landscape and to prevent a clash of civilizations. It is based on two prongs: one is to be delivered by the Muslim world, consisting of shunning militancy and extremism and proceeding with socio-economic development. The second prong is to be completed by the west and the U.S., by helping in achieving these goals. During his visit to Azerbaijan, Musharraf again tried to achieve support for this idea, including a plan to restructure the Organization of the Islamic Conference to

meet the challenges of 21st century. If Musharraf's statements in Scandinavia and elsewhere launching his doctrine of enlightened moderation were intended to impress on the west his and Pakistan's ambition to take a lead in representing a force for moderation and pragmatism in the Muslim world, his visit to Azerbaijan was clearly part and parcel of the same strategy, in which Azerbaijan would be a leading candidate to share those values and aspirations.

India is strengthening its relations with states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. It established a military base in Farkhor, Tajikistan from where it can keep a close eye on China and Pakistan, and signed a treaty with Central Asian states to join hands in the anti-terrorism campaign. India is also making a serious efforts to increase trade and to exploit the region's extensive energy resources. The North-South Corridor agreement substantiates this viewpoint. Pakistani policy-makers feel threatened from increased Indian presence in Central Asia; this visit could partly be seen as an effort to counteract that wherever Pakistan finds a receptive audience.

CONCLUSIONS: By all this diplomatic manoeuvring, Pakistan wants to facilitate mutual trade and economic cooperation and to develop commercial and financial institutions, develop human resources and cooperation in

science, technology and road, rail and air links to support growing economic activity within ECO. Moreover, it wants to intensify cultural ties as well as counterbalance Indian influence. Due to their geo-strategic location, Azerbaijan and Pakistan can play a vital role as hubs for the flow of energy resources from landlocked Central Asian States to Europe and Asia respectively. President Aliyev expressed his desire for this visit to give a new impetus to bilateral relations and bring them to a new level. Historically, the two countries have had little to do with each other, but this visit is sealing a burgeoning relationship, at a time when both countries are emerging as healthy economic powers in their respective regions. Now apparently Pakistani decision makers have realized that improvement in economic relations is only possible if the Central Asian states are convinced that Pakistan is not harboring ambitions of creating a regional Islamic bloc and that it is not supporting radical elements. In this way, Musharraf's strategy of enlightened moderation is best answer to apprehensions of CAS.

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AZERBAIJAN LOOKS TO PAKISTAN FOR MILITARY AID

Parviz Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, together with a large governmental and business delegation, paid a two-day visit to Azerbaijan on July 7-10. During his visit, he met with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, foreign and defense Ministers, and spoke in front of the National Parliament - Milli Mejlis. The leaders of the countries signed several bilateral agreements and pledge to cooperate on energy, business and political issues.

President Musharraf thanked the Azerbaijani side for supporting Pakistan on Kashmir issue and pledged to continue supporting Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh issue. "Azerbaijan must restore its control over Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories. Pakistan will do its best to help Azerbaijan. On the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the Pakistani authorities and

every Pakistani will be together with Azerbaijan," Musharraf said in the Parliament. The Azerbaijani deputies welcomed the remarks with standing applause.

Indeed, the military cooperation between the two countries has been on the rise in the past several years. Lack of progress in the negotiations for the peaceful solution of the territorial conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh and the growing calls for military intervention pushes Azerbaijan to seek partners aside from traditional ally Turkey. Pakistan, a country that shares historical, religious and cultural ties with Azerbaijan, was the second country after Turkey to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. Now, it could serve as an excellent source of military partnership. Azerbaijani Defense Minister Safar Abiyev has

previously paid a visit to Islamabad and signed several bilateral agreements on cooperation in the fields of military equipment purchase, training of the personnel and anti-terrorism and anti-smuggling measures. While in Baku, the Pakistani delegation has also promised to assist Baku in strengthening of its borders.

Pakistan, the only Islamic country which possesses nuclear weapons, is a much needed ally to Azerbaijan in both political and military fields. Being a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Pakistan also supports Azerbaijan in the international arena and has been a key player in OIC's decision to recognize the territorial aggression of Armenia

towards Azerbaijan. Similarly, Pakistan can be a good ally to other Islamic countries in fighting terrorism. While in Baku, President Musharraf condemned international terrorism and urged the Islamic countries to liberalize themselves to get rid of this fundamentalism.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan, which is keen to develop its economy, is looking at Pakistan as another trading partner. Currently, the bilateral trade amounts only to \$1.1 million, out of which Azerbaijani exports were only at \$25-30 thousands (2003). Azerbaijan and Pakistan agreed to increase the participation of Pakistan in the Great Silk Road projects and involve Pakistani companies in the oil and gas sector of Azerbaijan. The Pakistani President specifically suggested establishing joint ventures in the oil field and asked Azerbaijan to help Pakistan in the training of energy sector personnel. The minister of fuels and natural resources of Pakistan Nauriz Shakur Khan also

asked for Azerbaijani experience in the offshore energy explorations.

Other areas of possible cooperation include agriculture, textiles, humanitarian and social issues, customs and finance. The National Banks of both countries pledge to cooperate and establish branch offices in respective countries.

Meanwhile, several local analysts considered Musharraf's visit as an attempt by the Azerbaijani government to balance the foreign policy between the Russian and pro-Western interests. Vafa Guluzadeh, a former foreign affairs advisor to former President Aliyev, stated in the local media that Russia had been increasing its attempts to gain control over Azerbaijan and Pakistan could serve as a counter-weight against that. "I am sure the Americans are well informed about Musharraf's visit," said Guluzadeh.

Indeed, in the last several weeks several high ranking Russian delegations, including Moscow mayor Luzhkov, head of the audit chamber Sergey Stepashin (who also served as a prime minister under former Russian President Yeltsin) and head of the CIS secretariat Vladimir Rushaylo visited Baku and met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. It appears that

the geopolitical rivalry over the Caucasus between the West and Russia is again on the rise and Russian "emissaries" are attempting to increase the economic tools of control over Azerbaijan. Whatever the case is, Turkish-educated Musharraf presents an excellent opportunity for Azerbaijan to strengthen its economy and army and Baku is not planning to miss this chance.

Fariz Ismailzade

UZBEKISTAN ENGAGES IN A MORE NUANCED WAR AGAINST ISLAMIST TERROR

Christopher Boucek

As Uzbekistan continues to fight violent Jihadi extremism, Tashkent has come under American sanction for human rights violations. Although noteworthy, Washington's actions will have little impact on the U.S.-Uzbek relationship. Uzbekistan's war against al-Qaeda affiliates has evolved to include not just military force, but also a concerted campaign to counter the teachings of militant Islamists. Uzbekistan's strategy to confront extremism is becoming gradually more sophisticated, implying that the country is an increasingly necessary ally for the United States in the region.

BACKGROUND: On July 15th it was announced that the United States would impose a punitive blockage of American financial assistance in response to Uzbekistan's poor human rights record. Approximately \$18 million are slated to be withheld from an annual aid package that by some estimates exceeds \$500 million per year. The \$18 million in military and economic assistance would exclude monies directed towards the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, as well as American funding for pro-democracy groups and health care programs.

America's moves were prompted by Uzbekistan's fight against militant religious terrorist organizations such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)—groups viewed as al-Qaeda subsidiaries. While the suspension of certain aid monies has been linked to the Tashkent government's human rights record, Uzbekistan has been very active in combating violent Islamist extremism. It is important to note that the Uzbek fight against terrorism is coupled with large-scale governmental efforts to foster moderate Islam.

Tashkent has recently engaged in extensive efforts to translate and make available non-violent and uncorrupted interpretations of Islam, the Holy Qur'an, and the Hadith. Islamic education is now available that stress the proper teachings of a faith that emphasizes coexistence and nonviolence. These underreported actions have been essential to educate a populace that has historically had little religious training. It has also been vital to combating the corruptions of Islam promulgated by the IMU and HT that have been used to justify violence. In this respect, Uzbekistan has taken considerable steps to counter the subversive teachings of the IMU and HT.

Uzbek authorities have gone to great lengths to acknowledge that Islam can peacefully coexist alongside a secular state. They stress that Uzbek nationals are not punished for their beliefs, but rather for attempts to destroy the constitutional nature of the state. Towards this end, it has been noted that over 1,300 prisoners have repented for their actions, and claimed that they chose the wrong path. Those that have not been linked to violent actions have been subjected to lesser punishments, and as indicated above, many have been released.

IMPLICATIONS: In essence, the suspension of US assistance carries little impact for Tashkent, or the U.S.-Uzbek relationship. America's ties with Uzbekistan remain strong, and the financial

suspension represents what one regional observer termed a 'diplomatic slap on the wrist.' One senior Uzbek official confided directly that Tashkent can do without Washington's money because Uzbekistan is a strong nation locked in a mortal struggle with terrorist organizations bent upon destroying the Uzbek state. When considered in these terms, for Uzbek national security officials, to forgo a minor foreign aid package is well worth the cost when the alternative is interpreted as enabling the disintegration of the state.

Officials involved in Uzbekistan's fight against the IMU and HT have linked Tashkent's battles to Washington's global war. Uzbek security officials have noted that HT has moved into Kyrgyz territory in the Fergana valley, and that the organization continues to proselytize and incite its adherents to violence. HT sanctuaries have been identified in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Meanwhile it is now understood that the IMU continues to operate a clandestine network within Uzbekistan, despite efforts to eradicate the movement. Although both groups operate independently of each other, general trends have been identified linking the leaderships of the IMU and HT; however those ties do not extend to the operational level. At this level, Uzbek security forces have indicated that proscribed leaflets, ammunition, and weapons have been found in the homes of HT suspects, and that intelligence developed at the scene of last spring's terror offensive has implicated HT.

In battling the finances of HT, it has been noted that individual persons contribute to individual cells, thereby making each cell financially and operationally independent of the leadership. These funds pay for leaflet printing, safe houses, and other expenses. As result, the battle to shut down terrorist financing is much more difficult. That said, Uzbek and American counterterrorism officials have expressed confidence that advancements have been made to dry-up terrorist financing.

CONCLUSIONS: Tashkent will remain a vital ally of Washington in its global war on terrorism. The United States publicly maintains at least four significant military bases in Uzbekistan located at Khanabad, Tuzel, Kokaida, and Chirchik. Over 300 thousand tons of humanitarian assistance have flowed through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom. This aid has been complemented by Uzbek supplies of electricity and liquefied natural gas to its southern neighbor. In fact, since 2000 the U.S. Central Command and Central Intelligence Agency have covertly operated Predator

UAV drones over Afghanistan targeting Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network. Intelligence collected from UAV platforms was essential in developing a picture of al-Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan.

The victory over the Taliban in war in Afghanistan would not have been possible without Uzbek support and cooperation. American basing rights, over flight permission, and search-and-rescue cooperation have proved vital to U.S. forces deployed in the theater. Moreover, as the Pentagon continues to reconfigure its defense posture to counter future threats, basing rights in countries such as Uzbekistan will not only prove essential, but will increase in pace, size, and duration. In order to project American military force into what the American defense establishment has termed the new 'arc of instability', Washington will accelerate its reliance upon key regional allies such as Tashkent.

The current diplomatic episode over human rights was a long time coming, yet will pass quickly. Washington is keen to maintain its relationship with Tashkent, and will undoubtedly find additional ways in which to influence the behaviors of its ally. While it may give little comfort to human rights organizations that are eager for a more forceful global and universal American policy, it is simply a fact of circumstance that in this case, Uzbekistan is an ally with which Washington will seek to work behind the scenes.

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FATE OF CONFLICT ZONE RESIDENTS HANGS ON A THREAD IN SOUTH OSSETIA

When Georgia began its humanitarian and cultural initiatives in Georgian and Ossetian conflict zone villages, officials enthusiastically pronounced, "In one month we will be in Tskhinvali!" Given the complexity of issues that have since emerged, Georgian authorities and residents alike now doubt that there will be a third Rose Revolution. Rather, with Ossetians digging trenches and shooting nightly at Georgian conflict zone territories, Georgians fear that Ossetians are preparing for a military take-over of Georgian villages. Looking back, observers of the South Ossetia situation now wonder, "What went wrong?"

After reports that Russians (seen as controlling South Ossetian authorities) were bringing arms and military equipment into Tskhinvali region, events escalated into a pre-conflict situation. As evidence that Russia was assisting Ossetians, Georgian police and peacekeepers detained Russian vehicles carrying unguided helicopter missiles into Tskhinvali. The response was rapid. Ossetian security forces detained 50 Georgian police protecting Vanati village, took them to Tskhinvali, and paraded them in front of cameras. Conflict zone residents began to evacuate children, while most men and women stayed to protect villages. That evening Ossetians entered Georgian territory and began shooting. A military stand-off ensued and Ossetian forces began digging trenches in strategically-located territories surrounding Georgian villages in Patara Liakhvi (Prisi, Eredvi, and Vanati), Didi Liakhvi (Tamarasheni), and Proni Gorge (Avnevi) as well as Nikozi (just outside the conflict zone). To see the situation "with [my] own eyes", Georgian peacekeepers brought me to Prisi and Nikozi to observe the digging.

The center of the stand-off is above Eredvi, where two diversion roads were recently created to link Eredvi with Didi Liakhvi, bypassing Tskhinvali. Ossetians destroyed the first road when they entered Georgian territory. It is now guarded by Russian peacekeepers. If the second route is won by Ossetians, or controlled by Russians, Didi Liakhvi will be dependent on Russians and Ossetians. If Eredvi is taken, Georgians in both Didi and Patara Liakhvi will become entirely isolated. Thus, Georgians are defending the diversion route and Eredvi to prevent Ossetians from capturing Georgian conflict

zone villages. Meanwhile, conflict zone residents endure Ossetians nightly shooting into Georgian territory, with Georgians responding in defense. A total of nine Georgian civilians and troops have been wounded, and one killed, to date. Georgian officials report that Ossetian authorities will not confirm the number of casualties on their side.

Observers who predicted a third Georgian Rose Revolution now ask, "What went wrong?" First, Georgian authorities pushed Eduard Kokoev, president of the self-declared South Ossetian republic, into a corner. Recognizing that Georgia's aim was to regain Ossetian territory and to oust him, his best option was to turn Georgia's peaceful initiatives into a conflict situation. Moreover, rather than winning Ossetian support, Georgia's efforts scared Ossetians—as did Ossetian authorities who reportedly threatened Ossetians if they accepted any Georgian assistance or attended events. Second, when Georgian authorities confiscated Russian vehicles, they directly provoked Russia. The next day, Ossetians began firing on Georgian troops. Now, Georgians explain they are in the midst of a conflict with Russia—not with Ossetians.

Ossetians note that Sandra Roelofs' visit, preceded by a build-up of interior ministry troops, reminded them of how the first Georgian-Ossetian conflict got started. They fear that Georgian troops, carrying banners of peace, will once again march into Tskhinvali. The prevalence of Georgian security forces in the area is seen as a confirmation of this fear. Moreover, Ergneti market—the main source of income for Tskhinvali authorities as well as conflict zone residents, was destroyed. With nightly shootings and no market, both Georgians and Ossetians complain that their families will have difficulty surviving until there is a political solution to "the second conflict." Although Ossetians admire Saakashvili, they do not view Georgia's efforts to support Ossetians as sincere. They stress, "South Ossetia is not Ajara. The same efforts will not work."

The most important barrier to Georgia's success, however, is both economic and political. Russia finances Ossetian pensions (ranging from \$100 to \$150 per month compared to Georgia's \$9), security forces, and government wages. Russian passports and residency

documents provide Ossetians with free movement in and out of Russia and allow them to buy Russian products for Ergneti market. Because Russia provides Ossetians with a higher living standard than Georgia can offer, Ossetians are concerned that Georgian reunification will mean impoverishment. One woman exclaimed, "If Georgia provided for its own citizens first—and not just in the conflict zone—then Ossetians would trust the new government... Saakashvili should have started with serious economic development programs for Georgians, and not just with offers of flour and fertilizer and small pensions to Ossetians." Moreover, many Ossetians are proud of close relations with Russia and would only welcome Georgia if Russia stopped supporting Ossetians.

Meanwhile, Georgians point out that as long as Russia controls Ossetian authorities and have peacekeepers regulating the conflict zone there will be no peaceful settlement. One Georgian peacekeeper explained: "It is clear that the Ossetians are creating defensive positions and preparing for war. I called the senior Russian observer about the digging of trenches, and they are taking no measures to stop this action. Russians claim they are in charge of the situation, but they are doing nothing." Moreover, many question Russia's objectivity as long as Russian flags and posters of Putin are prevalent in Tskhinvali and Ossetians actively strive to unite with Russia.

Rather than a third Rose Revolution, Georgia now confronts the potential of a full-scale conflict. Security forces and officials are defending Georgian conflict zone villages from a potential Ossetian bombardment. Georgian-Ossetian relations have been damaged in the process. While it has finally become clear to authorities that a revolution is not underway, it is unclear if the Georgian authorities have the experience and knowledge to negotiate a political settlement to the present crisis. Hopes hinge on negotiations at a diplomatic level and particularly on the support of the international community. Meanwhile, the fate of conflict zone residents hangs on a thread.

Theresa Freese

REGIONAL INTEGRATION, WTO ACCESSION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE FACILITATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Daniel Linotte

Central Asian States belong to various regional economic integration schemes. De facto, these agreements are difficult to implement. They may also render the WTO accession process more complex and lengthy. For that reason, it is time for Central Asian states to prioritize so-called "trade facilitation measures", namely the adoption of common internationally recognized standards and procedures that help streamline the processing of formalities for trade in goods and enhance the quality of governance in administration.

BACKGROUND: All five Central Asian States belong to various regional cooperation and integration schemes such as the CIS, Eurasian Economic Community, Central Asian Cooperation Organization, Common Economic Space, Economic Cooperation Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc. In most cases, these schemes include ambitious trade liberalization components such as the creation of free trade areas with the elimination of tariff barriers among members or customs unions with the adoption of common external tariffs. At the same time, Central Asian states are making their new international borders more effective with the strengthening of customs controls, and raising numerous technical and administrative obstacles to trade in goods and services, the movement of people and transit. Besides, as indicated by Transparency International, those who are engaged in international trade operations with these countries often report the poor quality of governance and very high corruption in customs bodies and central administration. Such a context implies tremendous legal and informal costs for border crossing, and the higher these costs, the less trade, business and economic growth. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), border related trade transaction costs (corresponding to finance, customs, business information, transport & telecom) may reach 710% of the value of traded goods, a high ratio indeed. The national economies of Central Asia do not also seem very complementary, which limits the scope for a regional division of labour, specialization and economic integration. In fact, taking into account actual resource endowments (mainly raw materials, primary products, oil and gas) and so-called "revealed comparative advantages", it is essential to export to the rich markets of the West and, for that purpose, joining WTO is quite important.

The Kyrgyz Republic is the only Central Asian country that is a member of WTO, since 20 December 1998. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are engaged in complex and sometimes difficult negotiations for becoming members. There are signs that Turkmenistan might be interested in applying for WTO membership. For these reasons, it is important to take into account WTO rules on regional integration arrangements. For WTO members, regional trade agreements are permitted under specific conditions spelled in at least two sets of rules. The first one corresponds to paragraphs 4 to 10 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Article XXIV, as clarified in the "Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the

GATT 1994", and addresses the formation of free trade areas and customs unions for trade in goods. The second one is specified in Article V of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Overall, WTO rules underscore that regional trade agreements should not result in higher trade protection against the rest of the world, i.e. non-member countries.

IMPLICATIONS: Joining WTO is imperative for fruitful integration in the global economy, attracting foreign direct investments, diversifying the economic base, boosting exports, fostering economic growth and development, and enhancing the welfare of populations characterized by very low incomes and widespread poverty. The rather large number of regional integration schemes, in this context, may raise legitimate doubts about their credibility and mutual compatibility; they could eventually delay WTO accession and make membership more complicated.

Nevertheless, regional trade and further integration in the world economy can be fostered with the adoption of so-called "trade facilitation measures". Such measures can be imposed unilaterally or on a bilateral basis. Trade Facilitation is often defined as "the simplification and harmonization of international trade procedures" with trade procedures being the "activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade". This definition encompasses import and export procedures (e.g. customs or licensing procedures), transport formalities, payments, insurance and other financial requirements. Work in the area has been carried out by international organisations. *De facto*, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) plays a major role as the organisation that has developed standards for trade facilitation for more than 40 years with: the UN Layout Key for trade documents, guidelines for national trade facilitation bodies, codes for locations (LOCODE), trade data elements (UN/TDED), the only global standard for electronic data interchange (UN/EDIFACT) as well as key-expertise on trade facilitation. The World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are also involved in trade facilitation activities. The adoption and the implementation of standard trade facilitation measures must be integrated in a strategy that includes other elements such as investing in equipment and infrastructure to accelerate the processing of formalities, training staff, recruiting

qualified personnel and enhancing ethical standards within the framework of anti-corruption strategies. Such a strategy shall make the trade system much more transparent, contribute to higher levels of customs duties collection and enhance national and global security.

CONCLUSIONS: There is a need for leaders and policy-makers in Central Asia to reassess their participation in an excessive number of regional economic integration schemes, taking into account the possibility of mutual incompatibility, low effectiveness and seemingly poor outcomes and prospects. In the calculus of leaders, the limited benefits of these regional integration schemes versus the long-term implications of WTO membership on trade, investments, growth and welfare is bound to eventually become obvious.

From a very practical perspective, the way ahead is to grant priority to the adoption and effective implementation of trade

facilitation strategies and measures and, for that purpose, it is critical to secure adequate technical assistance that is provided by international organizations. It should also be made clear that trade facilitation measures may conflict with very powerful vested interests that benefit from the lack of transparency of the trade system.

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A FIRST CASE OF SUSPICION OF STATE TREASON IN KYRGYZSTAN

For the last month, Kyrgyz media outlets have been giving out a row of often unchecked information regarding the latest "espionage" case that shattered Kyrgyzstan. The lack of information about the real situation gave a way to a myriad of rumors and scenarios usually interpreted as it was comfortable to the presenting source. However, for the last two weeks "all quiet on the eastern front" meaning that there is no more coverage on the situation.

On 25 June the law enforcement agents from National Security Service (SNB) arrested five persons on charges of state treason and sale of state secrets to a foreign state. The arrested are two ex-officers of Ministry of Interior, an employee at the *Feldjäger* post service (military/state courier) under the Ministry of Transportation and Communication, a lecturer from the university in Bishkek, and a big entrepreneur. Later on July 1, SNB arrested a Colonel from the border guards services, and an ex-employee of SNB. SNB thus confiscated more than 700 documents sealed "for official use", "secret", and "top secret". The documents allegedly contained details about mobilization and military capabilities, secret correspondence between military agencies, mined areas, and other foreign threat concepts that could present an interest to foreign powers.

Kalyk Imankulov, chairman of SNB, announced that the investigation will last for two to three months, and said more arrests could take place. Meanwhile, the SNB raided all the main state agencies in order to check the security level of secret documentation. According to Imankulov, documents were allegedly leaked from the SNB, Chief Military Intelligence (GUUR), Security Council, President's administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Prime-Minister's office, Ministry of Defense, and others.

There were several main hypotheses on the possible reasons behind the arrests, and rumors mushroomed against the background of a lack of prompt explanations from SNB sources. Initially the arrested were said to be charged with spying for a religious extremist organization, supposedly Hizb-ut-Tahrir. This was probably inferred when on June 28, SNB Deputy Chairman Tokon Mamytov at a government meeting

raised the issue of the threat posed by extremist organizations and their techniques to infiltrate to high echelons of power. The Ar-Namys opposition party claimed state officials were trying to limit political activities and freedom of the press before the upcoming elections. The NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society questioned the legality and seriousness of espionage charges; it should be noted that this coalition suffered from increased attention of secret services during the recent bugging scandal in the Parliament. Others went further in seeing it as a play of muscles or simple eye-for-eye game between SNB and the Ministry of Interior, considering that SNB arrested a person a MOI official, on top of that a close relative of a high level official, and that back in June, the Interior Ministry arrested four acting officers from SNB on charges of armed robbery. Details of this event surfaced in the media outlets on July 2, during the peak of the ongoing espionage case.

This espionage scandal is the first occasion in Kyrgyzstan where officials of several government agencies have been arrested and charged with gathering documents to sell to another state. Whatever the direction of rumors, the fact remains that there has been a leak of documents carrying state secrets. The preliminary results of the raids carried out by the SNB on the premises of other state agencies show that the methods of keeping and handling official, not to mention secret, correspondence is unsatisfactory. The conclusion was clearly that an insider wanting to leak secret documents at different state agencies would be able to do so relatively easily. Surprisingly, there are practically no mechanisms for securing government correspondence in Kyrgyzstan. It is telling that such a major government shortcoming became known to the wider public only as a result of internal clashes between state agencies.

This case was widely used by different groups in order to voice their own fears, and opinions. Some statements were based on previous experiences from secret services. Even at present, if the SNB were right, and it was a regular operation within its terms of references and power, its past scandals and failures left an unpleasant

imprint in the memories of people, which seriously hinders public trust.

The first group of five arrested persons were accused of conspiring and merely copying and passing on secret documents to a third party, namely a "foreign interested state". Their profiles can not really serve as a ground for breeding conspiracy theories. But the arrest of a Colonel from the Border Guards Service, and most importantly an-ex SNB employee is another story. At the press conference, the SNB showed a video tape featuring Colonel Kelsenbek Akimaliev confessing that he passed classified documents to a deputy of the *Zhogorku Kenesh* (Parliament), namely Alisher Abdimomunov. Later, those secret documents were used in initiating a scandal of planting "bugs" in the offices of the Zhogorku Kenesh by SNB agents. The "sincere" confessions of Akimaliev could have further negative repercussions for the political elite in Kyrgyzstan. Abdimomunov in his turn stated that Akimaliev's confessions were given under pressure, which is not implausible, and went on to charge that the SNB is trying to influence the work of a commission organized by deputies to investigate the violation of the constitutional rights of parliamentarians. Abdimomunov said that he and other members of the commission never met Akimaliev and thus never received any documents from him.

Obviously some will see SNB's hand in many political affairs. However, shaking off the popular conspiracy theories one can conclude that it is vital for each state agency to ensure the safety and security of secret documents, something hardly practiced in Kyrgyzstan. Further, by failing to give prompt responses, the press offices of corresponding agencies help give birth to rumors. Moreover, it seems that intra-governmental rivalries cloud and distract those agencies from focusing on real issues related to ensuring national security.

The lack of recent information on the situation could be explained in two ways, one is that SNB still looking for some evidences; second it is summer and all the interested parts are on vacations; and probably it is became rather obvious to many people that it is purely a criminal case without any political connotation.

Maral Madi

NEWS BITES

KAZAKH COURT FINES OPPOSITION PAPER FOR LIBELING PRESIDENT

16 July

A district court in Almaty on Thursday fined the opposition Assandi-Times newspaper 50 million tenge (135.4 tenge/\$1) for libeling the president in a statement accusing him and his retinue of complicity in publishing a forged issue of the paper. The court seized the paper's assets and froze its bank account to make sure that Assandi-Times pays the fine. The newspaper was also told to retract its statement and apologize to the president, its defense attorney Sergei Utkin told Interfax on Friday. Utkin said the paper will appeal the court ruling. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

AZERBAIJAN INVESTIGATES OFFICER'S DISAPPEARANCE FROM NATO TRAINING COURSE

16 July

Azerbaijani Defense Ministry officials said on 16 July that the ministry is conducting an investigation into reports that a senior army officer has applied for political asylum while participating in a NATO training course in Belgium. The officer, Lieutenant Colonel Firuz Gassymov, reportedly left the NATO training center without permission last month to visit an unnamed foreign embassy to apply for political asylum. Defense Ministry spokesman Ramiz Melikov confirmed that an official investigation has been launched. (AFP)

KAZAKH ANTICORRUPTION BODY TARGETS FOREIGN OIL FIRMS

19 July

Kazakhstan's financial police have charged BG Karachaganak, a subsidiary of U.K.-based British Gas, with smuggling \$2.73 billion worth of natural gas condensate to Russia, gazeta.ru reported on 19 July. Top finance police officer Sarybai Kalmurzaev told a 19 July news conference that damages to the state are estimated at \$5.4 million. According to Kalmurzaev, the investigation will take at least 7-8 months. Another criminal case levels price-fixing charges at Canada's PetroKazakhstan. Kazakhstan's antimonopoly agency charges that PetroKazakhstan and its affiliates colluded to circumvent antimonopoly legislation and generate illegal profits of \$96 million. Kalmurzaev stressed that the companies involved "have excellent specialists and consultants who find loopholes in our laws." He promised, however, that the cases will be brought before a court of law. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

REPORT SAYS CHILDREN HARVEST 40 PERCENT OF TAJIK COTTON

19 July

A new report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) says that children harvest 40 percent of Tajikistan's cotton. Frederic Chenais, acting head of the IOM mission in Tajikistan, presented the report at a 16 July press conference in Dushanbe. "Although Tajik legislation prohibits child labor, they harvest up to 40 percent of the cotton for paltry wages and to the detriment of their health and education," Chenais said. "Over the 4-5 months of the cotton harvest, they earn on average less than \$20. Approximately 70 percent of parents state that the cotton harvest negatively affects their children's health," he added. The report is based on independent research conducted in three cotton-growing regions of the country. (Asia Plus-Blitz)

KYRGYZ OMBUDSMAN SAYS OPPOSITION LEADER COULD GO FREE IN AUGUST

19 July

Ombudsman Tursunbai Bakir uulu told akipress.org on 19 July that he has made two appeals to prosecutors for the possible release of imprisoned opposition leader Feliks Kulov. The appeals came in response to a request from Kulov on 5 April. Bakir uulu said that a preliminary investigation concluded that Kulov should go free on 5 August, but he noted that the authorities have not yet made an official decision on the case. Seen as Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev's chief rival, Kulov is serving a 10-year sentence for embezzlement; his supporters say that he is a political prisoner. (akipress.org)

U.S. OFFICIAL NOTES UZBEK REFORM PLANS IN INTERVIEW

19 July

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones told Uzbek television in an 18 July interview that a plan for political and economic reform in Uzbekistan has been drawn up. The interview came on the heels of the U.S. State Department's 13 July decision to freeze \$18 million in aid to Uzbekistan, as well as Jones's 14 July meeting with Uzbek President Islam Karimov. Jones stated in the interview, "On the socioeconomic side, in terms of economic reform and political reform, we were able to have a good discussion in my official meetings with the president and with the foreign minister about progress in both of those areas, and we have set ourselves a work plan for how to address some of the political reform issues and some of the economic reform issues in ways that we think will be very positive for both countries and for the region." On the general subject of bilateral relations, Jones said, "The relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan is really very good." (RFE/RL)

ARMENIAN COURT UPHOLDS ESPIONAGE SENTENCES

19 July

Armenia's Appeal Court rejected on 19 July an appeal by four Armenian citizens against the sentences handed down to them in January on charges of state treason and spying for Azerbaijan. Nina Shilina and her husband Edgar Filkov appealed against their prison sentences of 15 and 13 years respectively, protesting that the lower court failed to prove their guilt. Filkov's brother Aleksandr Gasparian was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, and his appeal that that sentence be offset against a concurrent 4 1/2 year sentence for swindling was rejected. (Noyan Tapan)

AZERBAIJANI JOURNALIST ABDUCTED, THREATENED

19 July

Aydin Guliev, who is chief editor of the opposition daily "Baki khabar," told a press conference in Baku on 19 July that he was abducted late on 17 July near his home by four masked men who gagged him, put a sack over his head, and drove him around the city for several hours, warning him repeatedly to abandon his journalistic activities and criticizing him for not serving "his state and Islam." Eventually the four men drove Guliev to the city outskirts where he was beaten and then released. Guliev said on 19 July that he has never published any anti-Islamic materials. He said he believes the episode was orchestrated by the Azerbaijani leadership. Presidential administration official Nazim Isaev has condemned the abduction of Guliev and called for a thorough investigation. (Turan)

EXPERTS SAY GENERAL STAFF CHIEF'S DISMISSAL NOT RELATED TO NORTH CAUCASUS SETBACKS

20 July

Duma Security Committee member Gennadii Gudkov (Unified Russia) said that the dismissal of Army General Anatolii Kvashnin as chief of the General Staff is not connected with the dismissal on 19 July of many top military officials serving in the North Caucasus, NTV reported. Gudkov said that the policies the General Staff followed under Kvashnin's leadership since 1997 harmed Russia's national interests. Gudkov noted that during Kvashnin's term, "we left our bases in Cuba and in Vietnam, put forward no serious conditions regarding Russian bases in the Transcaucasus, and failed to negotiate any [favorable terms] in exchange for NATO's expansion toward our borders." Meanwhile, Federation Council Security Committee Chairman Viktor Ozerov told Interfax on 19 July that "a whole era ended with Kvashnin's departure, an era of military reforms that were not thought through, [and] unmotivated reforms of the types and branches of forces, management structures, and the reduction of troop numbers." Colonel General Leonid Ivashov on 19 July described Kvashnin's dismissal as a correction of the mistake made in choosing him

in the first place, saying that he was not qualified for the position and "brought nothing good to the army," NTV reported. (RFE/RL)

RUSSIA DENIES SENDING ADDITIONAL ARMOR TO SOUTH OSSETIA

21 July

Major General Givi Iukuridze, who is the Georgian Armed Forces chief of General Staff, told the independent television station Rustavi-2 on 20 July that Russia is deploying 20 armored personnel carriers from the Roki tunnel to South Ossetia's Djava Raion. Speaking after a meeting with Saakashvili, parliament speaker Nino Burdjanadze and Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili, Iukuridze denied Russian assertions that agreement was reached on providing the Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia with additional armor. Saakashvili alleged in Batumi earlier on 20 July that Moscow plans to give the additional vehicles to the South Ossetian authorities. But Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Sedov said that the dispatch of the armored personnel carriers to South Ossetia is part of a rotation of equipment in which damaged equipment is replaced. (RFE/RL)

THREE KAZAKH OPPOSITION PARTIES FORM ELECTION COALITION

21 July

Kazakhstan's three opposition parties - the Communist Party, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and Ak Zhol (the Bright Way) - have announced that they are forming a coalition. "We have agreed to consolidate our forces for the period of the election campaign, coordinate our activities and support each other," Ak Zhol co-chairman Alikhan Baimenov said at a news conference in Almaty on Wednesday. Parliamentary elections have been set for September 19 in Kazakhstan. The three parties signed a memorandum saying that they have the same approaches to some of the key problems of the country's development. The parties also agree that Kazakhstan must carry out political reform if it is to strengthen the powers of the parliament, to institute local elections and demonopolize the mass media market. Baimenov said that all other political forces are welcome to sign the memorandum. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

PATH CLEAR FOR PRO-KREMLIN MAN IN CHECHNYA AS RIVAL REMOVED FROM VOTE

22 July

A top presidential candidate in Chechnya was barred from running in next month's elections, thereby all but assuring victory for the Kremlin-backed man in Russia's war-torn republic. Chechnya's central election commission refused Thursday to register Malik Saidullayev as a candidate in the August 29 poll because his passport did not correctly list a place of birth -- the second time he has been barred from running. "We have refused to register him," commission chief Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov told AFP by telephone from Grozny. Arsakhanov said 39-year-old Saidullayev was

disqualified because his passport lists "Chechen republic" as a place of birth instead of "Chechen-Ingush republic," which existed in 1964 when he was born. Chechnya and Ingushetia became separate republics of the Russian Federation after the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991. Russia's central election commission declined to comment on the decision of its Chechen branch, but Saidullayev said that he expected to be dropped. "I expected that this was exactly the way it would turn out," he told AFP by telephone from France, where he is currently on a visit. "The election commission followed orders that they were given, that's all there is to it." He said he was removed from the race because he had a real chance of winning the election and would not have followed orders from Moscow. Saidullayev, who enjoys broad popular support in the republic partly as a result of his humanitarian work with Chechen refugees, was considered the top rival of Alu Alkhanov, Chechnya's interior minister who has been backed by the Kremlin. It is an open secret in Chechnya that a man cannot be elected to lead the republic without Moscow support. The last three elections held in the republic have all featured Soviet-era turnout figures and victory margins of at least 85 percent. The August 29 elections were called after the previous pro-Kremlin leader of the Muslim republic, Akhmad Kadyrov, was killed in an explosion during a military parade in Grozny on May 9. (AFP)

AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION LEADERS DECLINE INVITATION TO VISIT UNITED STATES

22 July

Musavat party leader Isa Qambar and Azerbaijan National Independence Party Chairman Etibar Mammedov both announced in Baku on 22 July that they will not attend an international forum in Boston on 25-29 July to which they were invited by the U.S. National Democratic Institute. Qambar said that he considers it inexpedient to leave the country in the current "difficult" political situation. He noted that hundreds of oppositionists were arrested and tortured in the wake of the 15 October presidential ballot (in which he was defeated by Ilham Aliyev), and seven of them are still on trial. Mammedov explained that while he accepts the need for the United States to toughen entry requirements as part of the war on international terrorism, he considers it an unnecessary humiliation that he personally should be required to have his fingerprints taken in order to apply for a U.S. visa. (Turan)

CONSTRUCTION OF IRAN-ARMENIA GAS PIPELINE BEGINS

22 July

Iran has begun building its 100-kilometer section of the planned 140-kilometer pipeline intended to export Iranian natural gas to Armenia, and construction should be completed by the spring of 2005, Armenian Ambassador to Tehran Geghan Gharibjanian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on 20 July. The project has been under discussion for years, but the formal agreement to proceed was signed only in

May. On 21 July, senior Gazprom official Aleksandr Ryazanov discussed with Armenian President Robert Kocharian the possibility of the Russian natural-gas monopoly's participation in the financing and building of the project. Gazprom has already undertaken a feasibility study of the Armenian section that estimated the cost of construction at \$120 million. (RFE/RL)

GEORGIA HALTS CONSTRUCTION ON OIL PIPELINE, CITING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

23 July

Environmental authorities have halted construction on a section of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline seen as a key to reducing Western dependence on Middle East oil, officials said Friday. Tamar Pirveli, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Environmental Protection, said construction was stopped because British Petroleum, which heads the consortium building the pipeline, had not submitted paperwork guaranteeing specific environmental protections for a pipeline section passing close to the Borzhomi Gorge. The gorge, 150 kilometres west of Tbilisi, is famed for its mineral springs and spas. Its bottled water is one of Georgia's most widely known exports. Pirveli said the ministry expected BP to submit the necessary documents within two weeks. Rusudan Medzmarisvili, a BP representative in Tbilisi, said the company was confident the issue would be settled soon. "This delay won't set us back," he said. The \$3.6-billion, 1,760-kilometre pipeline runs from Baku, Azerbaijan, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, where oil from Azerbaijan's Caspian Sea fields is to be loaded onto tankers for Western markets. It is set to begin operation next year. (AP)

GEORGIAN POLICE ARREST COSSACK OFFICER IN SOUTH OSSETIA

23 July

Georgian police detained Vyacheslav Kuznetsov in the South Ossetian conflict zone on 22 July and took him to Tbilisi where a district court subsequently sentenced him to three months' pretrial detention for entering Georgia without a valid visa. He is suspected of intending to join the South Ossetian armed forces as a mercenary. Kuznetsov, whom Georgian media identified as deputy ataman of the Kuban Cossacks, claimed he entered Georgia on a sightseeing tour. The South Ossetian government issued a statement on 23 July protesting Kuznetsov's arrest, Interfax reported, while a Kuban official said that the Kuban Cossack army has no record of an officer named Vyacheslav Kuznetsov. (Caucasus Press)

TWO GEORGIAN SPECIAL-TASK SERVICEMEN KILLED - ABKHAZ OFFICIAL

23 July

Two servicemen from a Georgian special-task unit have been killed in a shootout with Abkhaz policemen near the village of Gumrish in the republic's Tkvarcheli district, spokesman for the Abkhaz Interior Ministry Kristian Bzhanian told

Interfax in Friday. "In a routine mission, Abkhaz policemen spotted a group of seven gunmen dressed in camouflage hiding out in a forested area last night. They opened fire when the policemen tried to detain them. Two gunmen were killed on the spot and the others managed to escape," Bzhania said. The men killed are being identified, he said, adding that two assault rifles, a U.S.-made army knife, a folded parachute, flasks of alcohol, syringes, painkillers, and drug-containing anti-allergy medicines were confiscated from them. "What has been confiscated from the men killed allows us to conclude that they belonged to a Georgian special-task unit," he said.

Abkhazia, along with South Ossetia, is legally a province of Georgia, but a conflict in the 1990s led to its de facto independence. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili is seeking to restore control over these two breakaway republics. (Interfax)

KAZAKH OFFICIALS COMPLAIN UZBEKISTAN SLOW IN MARKING COMMON BORDER

23 July

Members of the official Kazakh Commission on Border Delimitation and Demarcation told a press conference in Shymkent on 23 July that Kazakhstan has already installed 270 markers on its common border with Uzbekistan, while the Uzbek side has installed only nine. The process of marking the border has been under way for several months; the course of the Kazakh-Uzbek border was determined through many years of negotiations. Kazakh border officials said that after they had complained to their Uzbek counterparts about the slow pace, Uzbek officials said they lacked both money and equipment to work faster, though they did not respond to a Kazakh offer of concrete posts. The Kazakh officials added that some people in villages on the border are still having trouble accepting the new border. Incidents in which Kazakh citizens who strayed across the border were shot by Uzbek border guards have caused tensions between the two countries in the last year. (Kazinform)

WATER-SUPPLY PROBLEMS CONTINUE IN DUSHANBE

25 July

Authorities in the Tajik capital Dushanbe had not resolved the city's problem of unclean drinking water by 25 July. The city's water supply was polluted with mud and sand as a result of landslides caused by heavy rains two weeks earlier. Dushanbe officials warned residents that they would have to get drinking water from water and fire trucks at least until 10 August. Representatives of the UN Development Program and other international organizations working in Dushanbe warned city officials that despite clean-up efforts undertaken since the mudslides, the city's water remains unfit to drink. Dushanbe's water-supply system is generally agreed to be in desperate need of an upgrade. No major work on the system has been done since 1990, before the country's independence. (Deutsche Welle)

ASAR CONFIDENT OF WINNING MAJORITY IN NEW KAZAKH PARLIAMENT

26 July

Darigha Nazarbaeva, the head of the pro-presidential Asar party and the daughter of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, told journalists in Astana on 26 July that her party plans to win up to 50 percent of the seats in parliament in 19 September elections. Nazarbaeva, who expressed a similar statement earlier in the year, said, "We do not want to lower this target and we will actively work to this end." The Central Electoral Commission registered Asar's 13-person party slate earlier on 26 July. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

OVER 70 TYPHOID CASES REGISTERED IN SOUTH KYRGYZSTAN

26 July

Seventy-four people have been diagnosed with typhoid fever in the Batken region in southern Kyrgyzstan, the Emergency Situations Ministry's press service told Interfax on Monday. A typhoid diagnosis has not yet been confirmed in another 154 people who are experiencing symptoms of the disease, the press service said. The outbreak of typhus, which was registered in several villages of the region in May, was caused by the consumption of water intended for irrigation purposes, said the Health Ministry. Most of the people living in the Batken region are currently drinking irrigation water due to a lack of water-supply systems in the region, which causes outbreaks of typhoid fever each year, the ministry said. (Interfax)

KYRGYZSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN UNABLE TO RESOLVE DISPUTES ABOUT COMMON BORDER

26 July

The latest joint sessions of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek working commissions on the delimitation and demarcation of borders, held from 19 to 23 July, failed to resolve any of the disagreements over disputed sections of the border. Most of the disputed sections are located in the Ferghana Valley, which is shared by the two countries and Tajikistan. Some 169 kilometers of the 375-kilometer border between Kyrgyzstan's Batken Oblast and Uzbekistan's Ferghana Oblast are in dispute. The sessions of the working groups were followed on 24 July by a meeting of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Intergovernmental Commission in Bishkek, which discussed expanding trade relations and cooperation on water, energy, and environmental issues but apparently not the border disputes, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported the same day. (RFE/RL)

UZBEK TERROR ATTACKS TRIAL OPENS

26 July

A group of 15 suspects, two of them women, have gone on trial in Uzbekistan in connection with a series of bombings and attacks that killed 47 people. They face charges including terrorism, religious extremism and attempting to overthrow

the government. The assaults took place in the capital, Tashkent, and in the south-western Bukhara region in March and April. Prosecutors said the attacks were planned in Pakistan, where the suspects were trained by al-Qaeda instructors. Opposition groups say the attacks - the worst the country had seen in five years - were provoked by domestic discontent. The trial opened at the Supreme Court building in Tashkent amid tight security, with heavily-armed police blocking off surrounding streets and more than a dozen officers standing guard in the courtroom itself. As is customary in Uzbekistan, there was no jury. The verdict will be decided by Supreme Court judge Baxtiyor Jamolov, who is presiding over the hearings. The trial is expected to last several weeks. (BBC)

TOP OFFICIAL CONFIRMS BASAYEV LED INGUSHETIA ATTACK

27 July

Russian Deputy Prosecutor General Sergei Fridinsky has confirmed that an armed raid by militants into Ingushetia on June 21-22 was led by Chechen rebel warlord Shamil Basayev. "It follows from evidence given by the detainees that Basayev led the bandit attack," Fridinsky told Interfax. Earlier, a videotape that appeared on the Internet showed Basayev in front of weapons depots in Ingushetia. Sixty-two law enforcement officers and 28 others were killed and 93 injured when militants attacked security service facilities in Ingushetia. (Interfax)

OFFICIAL: CHECHEN WARLORD VIDEO LOOKS REAL

27 July

A top security official Tuesday said a videotape showing prominent Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev looting an arsenal after last month's insurgent attacks in Ingushetia appeared authentic. A second expert said testimony from captured rebel suspects indicated that Basayev led the June 21 raid in which 90 people died. The video was posted to a pro-rebel Web site on Monday and showed Basayev and about a dozen other camouflage-clad men pulling weapons and ammunition boxes off shelves in a building that Basayev said on the tape was an Interior Ministry arsenal in Ingushetia. Hundreds of fighters mounted the series of coordinated attacks on police posts in Ingushetia on the night of June 21. The ease with which the attacks were carried out, underscored Russian forces' weaknesses in the region and raised fears that rebels from neighboring Chechnya, who have been fighting Russian forces for nearly five years, aimed to take the war to other regions. The poor-quality black-and-white video does not show direct evidence that the building is an Interior Ministry arsenal or that it was shot on the night of the attacks. Nonetheless, Sergei Koryakov, director of the Federal Security Service in Ingushetia, was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying proved details "of events that occurred." Later, Interfax quoted Sergei Fridinsky, the top prosecutor in southwestern Russia, as saying that "it follows from testimony of detainees that Basayev led the bandit

attack." However, the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted Ingushetia's Acting Interior Minister Beslan Khamkhoyev as saying the videotape could have been doctored. In the tape, Basayev claims that 570 Chechen and Ingush fighters took part in the operation and seized some 700 automatic weapons, 800 pistols and 1 million rounds of ammunition. "I express thanks to the authorities for keeping this ordnance in such good condition," Basayev said on the tape. It showed armed, masked men milling around Basayev and holding up a black banner with Arabic lettering. Russian authorities say that Chechen fighters, many of them adherents of the Wahhabi branch of Islam, receive support from foreign terrorist cells. (AP)

DISQUALIFIED CHECHEN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DETAILS THREATS, PRESSURE

27 July

In an interview published in "Novaya gazeta" No. 53, Moscow-based Chechen businessman Malik Saidullaev said that when he went to the Chechen Central Election Commission in Grozny to register as a candidate for the 29 August ballot to elect a successor to slain pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, he was surrounded in the government building by some 100 armed men and then threatened by Chechen State Council Chairman Taus Dzhabrailov that unless he withdrew "voluntarily" from the ballot, all possible measures would be undertaken to prevent him from participating. Saidullaev said that three days before he was informed last week of his disqualification, he received a telephone call from the election commission again asking him to withdraw, but he refused to do so. Saidullaev claimed that 200,000 fake ballots are being printed in Dagestan that will be cast in favor of Chechen Interior Minister Major General Alu Alkhanov, who is widely regarded as the Kremlin's chosen candidate to succeed Kadyrov. LF

AFGHAN CANDIDATE LIST PUBLISHED

27 July

Election organisers in Afghanistan have published a preliminary list of presidential candidates two days early. Zakim Shah, the chairman of the joint electoral management body, said 23 people had met the Monday deadline to register for the October poll. There were no surprises as he read out the names one by one - most on the list had already announced they were standing, the majority as independents. Interim President Hamid Karzai has confirmed he will be running. Only two other candidates are considered big names nationwide - the Uzbek general, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Yunus Qanuni, the former education minister. Mr Qanuni, who announced he was running on Monday, is currently seen as the most serious challenger to Mr Karzai. It is still not clear why the election body decided to announce the list two days earlier than planned. An official said they wanted to allow as much time as possible for any objections to be raised to the list of candidates. But people have just three days to make such objections with written proof. (BBC)

**KAZAKHS DENY UZBEK ALLEGATIONS OF
TERRORISTS TRAINING IN KAZAKHSTAN****27 July**

The Kazakh National Security Committee has denied Uzbek allegations that the organizers of terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in the spring were trained in Kazakhstan. A court

heard on Monday that alleged terrorists on trial for attacks in Tashkent and Bukhara region on March 28 - April 1 used Kazakhstan's areas bordering Uzbekistan to set up terrorist training camps. Fifteen men and two women are being tried for those attacks. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

