

# Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

VOL. 8 NO. 4

22 FEBRUARY 2006

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute  
Silk Road Studies Program*



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# THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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# KYRGYZ GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO PRODUCE NEW NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

Erica Marat

*Following the ouster of Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev on March 24, 2005, the new government led by Kurmanbek Bakiyev abandoned most of the official ideological concepts created by the previous political regime. Almost a year later, while old concepts on state ideology are no longer supported, new ones are far from being created. Besides anti-corruption slogans that helped Bakiyev gain quick, but short-lived popularity, the government has not generated any new political concepts. Today the Kyrgyz state is not only undergoing a political crisis, but Kyrgyz society is suffering from an ideological void. In this environment, out-migration of Russian has increased, several inter-ethnic clashes unraveled in Kyrgyz villages, and neo-nationalist feelings are on the rise.*

**BACKGROUND:** To stand the double pressure of increased nationalist feelings among the traditional public and alleviate the nervousness of the Russian population in the early 1990s, Akayev designed three broad national concepts based both on ethnic and civic ideals. The ideology based on the Kyrgyz epic “Manas” targeted the revival of Kyrgyz traditions. The epic’s seven maxims promoted the core values of peaceful coexistence, respect for the elder, and help to the poor. But despite the state’s wide promotion of Manas ideals, the ideology was rejected by ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking population. Only a minor part of the urban population is familiar with the heroic character of Manas, let alone the epic’s plot.

The parallel ideological concept “Kyrgyzstan is Our Common Home” was created by Akayev to foster civic values. The ideology primarily targeted the Russian, Uzbek, German, and Ukrainian ethnic groups that were most likely to emigrate from Kyrgyzstan. The “common home” ideology achieved better results than Manas. While encouraging the strengthening of various diasporas in Kyrgyzstan, it also created a medium for dialogue between them. This political concept was vital for Akayev to retain the support of ethnic minorities. Akayev’s last project was the celebration of 2,200 years of Kyrgyz statehood in 2003. The idea that the origin of the Kyrgyz ethnos dates back for millennia and has a great history of civilizational development seemed inadequate against

the background of devastating poverty and corrupt government. The ideology apprised glorious moments of Kyrgyz statehood that embraced the territory from present-day Kyrgyzstan to northern regions of Siberia.

Following the presidential elections of July 2005, a special working group dealing with ideological issues was framed. The group is chaired by the state secretary, Dastan Sarygulov, who is an active promoter of values and traditions of Tengrism – the ancient Turkic religion dating back to the fourth century BC. Sarygulov claims that the working group has engaged thousands of participants from the Kyrgyz population to come up with their ideas about the national ideology. However, the debate among the political and cultural elites is rather passive and Sarygulov remains the only self-declared ideologist in Kyrgyzstan. The project on Tengrism, although supporting tolerance towards other ethnicities and religions, incorporates strong features of ethno-centrism and favors pan-Kyrgyz and pan-Turkic views.

To date, Sarygulov’s ideas have not found a large support, but given his private economic and political capabilities, the state secretary has the necessary resources to propagate his views. In his recent interview to Obschestvenyi Reiting, Sarygulov noted that “We must become the genuine, proud, honest, simple, loving freedom and labor – Kyrgyz”. Sarygulov interprets Tengrism as being an optimal way to

promote an anti-capitalist lifestyle and a natural response to globalization processes. Sarygulov has authored a book on Tengrism and established the civic group “Tengir Ordo”. However, despite available material resources, it will be difficult to promote ideas based on spirituality. Tengrism will need to compete with the mainstream Islamic and Christian identities in the Kyrgyz society. At the same time it is unlikely that the urban population will be impacted by Tengrism.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Post-March 24 Kyrgyzstan is the only Central Asian country where the government does not advocate any national concept. Kazakhstan’s ideology contains identifiable elements of nationalism and patriotism, Uzbekistan has been actively propagating the cult of Amir Timur, Tajikistan promotes the periods Great Somoni and Aryan history, and the Turkmen state is based on the ideals depicted in Rukhnama. These national concepts seek to maintain social cohesion in the Central Asian societies that are divided along multiple ethnic and clan identities. Like in other post-Soviet states, the Kyrgyz public is accustomed to receiving state directives on ideological issues. According to a governmental survey conducted last year, 99 percent of the Kyrgyz population thinks that Kyrgyzstan needs a viable ideology. This implies that almost the entire population expects the state to generate new political concepts which will replace the old ones promulgated by the Akayev regime.

On the governmental level, lack of a coherent state idea complicates the advancement of constitutional reform. Whether the new constitution should elevate the status of the Kyrgyz language is at the center of the debate. The necessity of a national ideology arises when the status of the Kyrgyz and Russian languages are discussed. The fact that the popularity of the Kyrgyz language is often overshadowed by the Russian language worries many Kyrgyz parliamentarians and NGOs. In the last decade, a special state committee was unsuccessful in enriching the Kyrgyz language’s vocabulary. The new constitution needs to meet the worries of ethnic Kyrgyzs and encourage the use of Kyrgyz language, yet continue to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. If the reinforcement of the Kyrgyz

language is accentuated in the new constitution, this will give impetus to the revival of the Kyrgyz culture and traditions. For instance, Kyrgyz national holidays will be prioritized over Russian or post-Soviet celebrations of the Orthodox Christmas, international women’s day, Labor Day, and the WWII Victory Day.

Meanwhile, the Kyrgyz government’s passive stance towards civic ideals fostered a new wave of out-migration of ethnic Russians. The Russian Embassy in Bishkek reports that since April 2005, tens of thousands of ethnic Russians have applied to immigrate to Russia. Furthermore, the concept of “Kyrgyzstan is Our Common Home” was challenged by recent tensions between ethnic Kyrgyz and Dungans, as well as Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Economic deprivation in rural areas threatens to stir small everyday conflicts into violent inter-ethnic clashes. Preventing these tensions will require maintaining a strong emphasis on civic rights and ideals.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Ideologies play an important role in the functioning of the Central Asian states. They can enforce cohesion in society and provide legitimacy for the ruling regimes. Akayev’s official ideologies that maintained peaceful coexistence in Kyrgyzstan’s multi-ethnic society were undermined after his removal in March 2005. The Bakiyev government would be mistaken to take the existing social cohesion between various ethnic groups for granted. A small-scale inter-ethnic clash between Dungans and Kyrgyz has a potential of mutating into stronger tensions between other ethnicities residing in Kyrgyzstan. Like in the early 1990s, poverty and unequal distribution of capital between various ethnic groups in rural areas can spark further tensions among Kyrgyzs and ethnic minorities. Thus, the Kyrgyz government is facing a triple challenge: preventing the out-migration of ethnic Russians, alleviating existing inter-ethnic tensions, and maintaining the popularity of the Kyrgyz language. These tasks can be achieved only through a deliberate combination of civic-based and ethnic-based principles.

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# THE ENERGY WARS: TURKMENISTAN STRIKES BACK

Stephen Blank

*In the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian gas crisis, Turkmenistan's importance as a provider of gas has finally begun to be noticed. Indeed, during 2005 both Ukraine and Russia were eagerly courting Turkmenistan to gain access – or in Russia's case, control of its gas supplies at a price well below the going market price. Closer examination of this angle of the larger crisis suggests that some critical Russian objectives with significance for both the CIS and the global gas market have earlier been overlooked.*

**BACKGROUND:** We should remember that the creation of a Russian-dominated gas cartel spanning all of Central Asia, and especially Turkmenistan, has been a major priority of the Putin regime since 2002. Russia aims to keep Central Asian energy in general and especially gas off the world market and confined to those pipelines which Russia controls so that Russia can divert that energy into cheaper Russian markets while reserving contracts at world prices for its customers. By doing so Gazprom preserves its monopoly, avoids high taxes based on low domestic profit margins, and dominates gas exports to Europe free from Central Asian competition while Russian consumers can keep relying on cheap subsidized energy and Central Asian gas regimes remain dependent on Russia. At the same time Central Asian suppliers are essentially cheated and kept in a state of perpetual neo-colonial dependence upon Moscow.

However, thanks to the crisis with Ukraine, Turkmenistan has decided that it is not going to settle for selling to Moscow below market prices of gas and thus subsidize Russian monopoly and consumers. Instead, President Sapirmurad Niyazov has announced that he intends to raise the price for gas from \$65/1000bcm to \$100/1000bcm. This move will obviously undermine the existing deal between Russia and Ukraine, which in any case was under enormous political pressure in Kyiv, and again introduce instability into CIS gas relations. But its consequences go beyond these factors.

In 2003 Russia negotiated an incredibly one-sided deal with Ashgabat. At the time, it stated that it would buy up to 6bcm of Turkmen gas by 2004,

10bcm by 2006 and by 2009, 80bcm. Russia received a quite unbelievable price for its purchases, namely \$44 per 1000bcm of gas of which \$22 would be paid in supplies of Russian goods and technology. This deal rendered Turkmenistan wholly dependent on Russian gas pipelines and purchases at ridiculously low prices far below world market standards. Thus this deal greatly facilitated Russia's pursuit of its larger objective of a gas cartel under its leadership embracing all of Central Asia. By 2004 this deal also revealed that the Gazprom offshoot RosUkrEnergoprom, a joint venture among Gazprom, Austria's Raffeisen Bank, and unnamed Ukrainian and Russian stockholders would replace the criminally led firm Trans-Ural that was originally supposed to buy Turkmen gas and transport it to Ukraine, further reinforcing Russia's monopoly on Turkmen gas.

However, this fact did not introduce greater legality or transparency into the equation. RosUkrEnergoProm has been called a criminal enterprise by then Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko of Ukraine in 2005 and is under investigation by the FBI, so its bona fides are open to considerable question.

Meanwhile, Moscow had also made deals in 2005 with all the other Central Asian gas producers to complete its cartel. As the American forecasting firm, [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com) observed, the upshot of this was that Gazprom – and by extension the Kremlin – now owns all of that gas. Any state wishing to use Central Asian gas in order to get energy independence from Russia is now out of luck. This is particularly worrisome for states such as Ukraine

and the Baltic states who now have no reasonable alternative to Russian based natural gas.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Russia has been bandying the threat of sharply higher energy prices around for years. Now it has finally taken the concrete step necessary to make that an arbitrary reality.

However on November 30, 2005, Niyazov announced his intention to renegotiate the contract with Moscow, calling it 'a mere political document' that specifies neither prices nor volumes. Therefore 'the Russians will come here to negotiate with us'. This followed an earlier announcement that Turkmenistan would raise all export prices for every customer to \$60 per 1000cm, greatly increasing Russia's payments and threatening its control over both Turkmenistan and Ukraine. In December Niyazov and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko announced that Ukraine would buy 40bcm at \$50 per 1000cm beginning in January, 2006, a deal that undercut Russia's monopoly on Turkmen and Ukrainian gas and raised the price well above the \$44 per 1000cm that Russia was paying Ashgabat. While Moscow had been stalling throughout 2005 in the negotiations with Kyiv to force it to surrender to Moscow both its political independence and gas transit system, Niyazov's announcement may have prompted Russia to act decisively and quickly to head off Ukraine's and Turkmenistan's resistance and visible collusion to avoid exclusive dependence upon Moscow. This may be one reason for the advent of the crisis when Moscow shut off pipelines to Ukraine on January 1, 2006. It may also be a reason for other actions of Gazprom connected with the Ukrainian crisis. Just before that crisis broke, Gazprom bought 30bcm in 2006 at \$65 per 1000cm, clearly a move to forestall Ukraine's ability to obtain Turkmen gas and to retain Russia's monopoly over virtually all of Turkmenistan's gas production in 2006 at still low prices. All these moves do show, however, a growing awareness in Turkmenistan of its ability to charge and receive higher prices for its energy now that both Kyiv and Moscow were knocking at its door.

Once the crisis began, all attention was riveted on Moscow and Kyiv and when a settlement was reached on January 4 the role of

RosUkrEnergoProm and the importance of Turkmenistan faded from view. This firm will be the middleman for Ukrainian purchases of gas from Russia and Central Asia. While Gazprom will sell it gas at \$230 per 1000cm, Ukraine will buy it from RosUkrEnergoProm at \$95 per 1000cm. On the face of it, it looks like Gazprom loses quite a bit here, but when one considers that Gazprom and shadowy Russian and Ukrainian elements control this company, that original conclusion becomes shaky.

Moreover, it appeared that Russia and Ukraine had made a deal at Turkmenistan's expense. Turkmenistan loses out. Graham Weale of the London based Global Insight think tank observed that in the long run, on the basis of a preliminary assessment of the deal, it appears that Ukraine will only be paying Turkmenistan \$30 per 1000bcm, a price that is obviously unsustainable and which would bring Turkmenistan back into Moscow's clutches. Moreover, by transferring control over all exports to Ukraine from Central Asia, i.e. from Turkmen, Kazakh and other gas firms, to a single firm dominated by Gazprom and its cronies, Moscow retained its prized control over Turkmen and Central Asian gas at below market prices which it can still use to accomplish the same goals listed above. Thus at the end of the day, Turkmenistan's gas exports still depended on shadowy connections between organized crime, corrupt Ukrainian, and Russian energy and political figures, Gazprom and the Russian government.

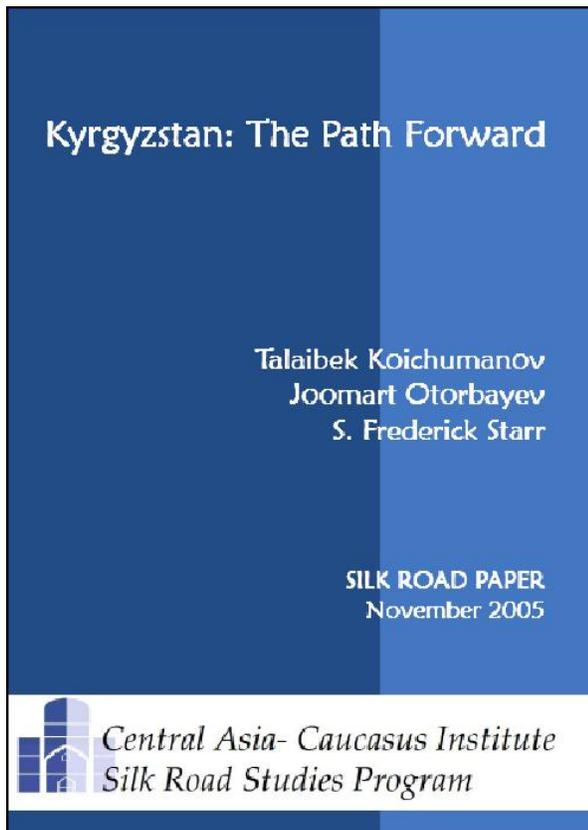
Even if Ukraine's claims of receiving 34bcm at \$95 per 1000cm from Turkmenistan in 2006 are true and Turkmenistan receives its \$60 per 1000bcm from RosUkrEnergoProm, it still is utterly dependent upon an enterprise of the Russian government with alleged ties to organized crime and has no independent means of selling its gas to Ukraine or elsewhere for that matter. So it is not surprising that Turkmenistan has now begun negotiating with China to sell its natural gas, thus creating the possibility of another customer who wants its product and who can serve as a kind of bidding rival to Moscow. While Russia still tries to preserve its gas monopoly over Central Asia so that neither Turkmenistan nor any other exporter can deal directly with Ukraine but must go through

Gazprom or its subsidiary RosUkrEnergoProm; Turkmenistan is now trying to demand a more reasonable price and seek alternative customers. If Russia were to succeed, of course, all the gas that goes through Russia and Ukraine to Europe also will be controlled by that firm and its masters in Moscow. So if one motive for precipitating this crisis with Ukraine was to forestall Central Asian gas independence and direct ties to Ukraine, that objective has been called into question even as the deal with Ukraine and Russo-Ukrainian relations are unraveling.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Central Asian gas producers' struggles for more independence and visibility on world markets has direct consequences for members of the CIS and beyond. As long as Russia can maintain its gas cartel, Ukraine remains at risk for gas supplies along with European consumers who depend on the pipeline through Ukraine. But Central Asian producers also suffer

greatly from their ensuing inability to sell abroad on the open market. This crisis is still continuing as tensions between Russia and Ukraine grow. But Turkmenistan's move to raise prices will further affect those strained ties and may strain its ties to Moscow and Kyiv. Inasmuch as Niyazov is a notoriously autocratic and unstable negotiator, his unilateral moves might have repercussions beyond Central Asia. But what his autocratic decisions also shows is that Russia remains a highly unstable and unpredictable gas supplier in its own right. This fact undoubtedly will have implications abroad that go beyond whatever Turkmenistan decides and can implement on its own.

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

## **Kyrgyzstan: The Path Forward**

by Talaibek Koichumanov,  
Joomart Otorbayev,  
and S. Frederick Starr

Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution" remains an enigma. It has indeed brought change, but by no means are all of the transformations positive. For all the rhetoric of revolution, the continuities from the former order are scarcely less striking.

In this paper, two former high-level officials of Kyrgyzstan and a well-known western expert analyze the way forward for the country. The paper strongly argues for a refocusing of attention to reforming public administration as the key to building Kyrgyzstan's future.

## RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH RAMZAN KADYROV: A 'CHINGIZID PARADOX'

Kevin Daniel Leahy

*The Kremlin's unwavering support for the pro-Moscow regime in Chechnya is symptomatic of a broader, centuries-old trend in Russia's policy toward its 'near abroad'. In the past, Russian leaders frequently employed local, clan-based groups as agents for their expansionist designs. More recently, Moscow sponsored such elements in its attempts to bring stability to especially unstable areas, like Chechnya. In a number of cases, however, clients initially deemed by Moscow to be worthy of its patronage have proved in practice to be not nearly as manageable as their sponsors once envisaged. Could Ramzan Kadyrov be the next client to slip his leash?*

**BACKGROUND:** The parliamentary elections held in Chechnya late last year were dismissed in advance by numerous human rights organizations as little more than a specious exercise in quasi-democracy. Conversely, the Kremlin and its minions in Chechnya have been eager to portray the elections as a seminal part of 'normalization' - a process which both claim is well underway within the republic. However, it is widely believed that the chief purpose of the November 27 elections was to consolidate the political authority of the administration's undoubted power broker, first deputy prime minister Ramzan Kadyrov. Kadyrov's influence arises from the sizable paramilitary support he enjoys. Known colloquially as the *Kadyrovsty*, his forces are routinely accused of serious human rights violations. Nevertheless, the Kremlin has quite clearly identified him as an individual worthy of its patronage.

Late last year President Putin honored Kadyrov with the 'hero of Russia' award. Soon afterwards, he was awarded a degree in higher education from a university in neighboring Dagestan. This bestowal of power and privilege is arguably a contemporary variant of the so-called 'Chingizid syndrome', which has traditionally characterised Moscow's policies toward the Muslim south. The 'Chingizid syndrome' (a designation first used by Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay) refers to a system of vassalage established by the prince of Moscow, grand prince Vasili II, during the fifteenth century. This system

subordinated a number of Muslim Tatar leaders to the prince and therein guaranteed their loyalty. The tendency to sponsor favored clients - be they families, clans, local 'strong men', or a combination of all three - persisted throughout the Tsarist era, the Soviet interregnum, and reached a crescendo amidst the institutional disharmony that pervaded Russian foreign and regional policy under Boris Yeltsin. While it would be churlish to categorize Kadyrov as a mere pawn in the Kremlin's strategic machinations, he certainly owes his current political and economic status - at least in part - to the continued prevalence of this particular syndrome in Russia's policies toward the North Caucasus and the 'near abroad' generally.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Is Kadyrov capable of biting the proverbial hand that feeds him? Several of his political opponents believe so, speculating that the Kadyrov clan might now adopt a less obsequious attitude toward its political patron in the wake of its recent electoral success. Some even believe that a Kadyrov-inspired declaration of independence is feasible should Moscow at some point withhold federal financial contributions to the republic, or effect a less benign attitude toward the arbitrary behavior of the *Kadyrovsty*. Far from contributing to the reconstruction of war-ravaged Chechnya, federal subsidies - when looked at within the context of the 'Chingizid syndrome' - amount to little more than a retaining fee for Kadyrov and his clan, who consistently disburse only a small fraction

of the allotted monies. Although he recently acknowledged the possibility that “law enforcement officers” in Chechnya might be “abusing their powers”, president Putin seems to draw no direct correlation between the free rein his administration affords the *Kadyrovsty* and the venality of the pro-Moscow government in Chechnya. Thus, the stated conditions that some think might lead to a rash declaration of independence are unlikely to manifest themselves any time soon. Nevertheless, Kadyrov is certainly keen to see further powers devolved from the federal centre. In late September, for example, he called for responsibility pertaining to special military operations to be devolved to the republic’s own interior ministry. Also, Kadyrov’s personal prestige is set to grow in that it is generally accepted that only his own mortality will prevent him from succeeding Alu Alkhanov to the presidency.

Even though Russia’s sponsorship of Kadyrov as a regional ‘strong man’ is seemingly part of a historically ordained pattern, it may in fact be setting in place a circumstantial paradox which could well become apparent over time. History tells us that all wars inevitably reach their natural conclusion. With regards to the present Russo-Chechen conflict this would presumably entail peace negotiations between a hypothetical Russian administration and an equally hypothetical separatist leadership. Such an eventuality is unlikely to sit well with the Kadyrov clan which owes much of its prosperity and prestige to the political and military *status quo*. In such a situation the

*Kadyrovsty* could emerge as an unexpected and extremely disruptive fifth column in any negotiating process.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The speculation indulged in by Kadyrov’s opponents is quite bereft of prescience unless placed in a proper historical context. Kadyrov is unlikely to push for full independence from Russia unless sorely provoked. For now, he will be happy to uphold his regime’s *de facto* independence from the federal centre while simultaneously enjoying Russia’s warm constitutional embrace. However, the situation in the North Caucasus is increasingly fluid. The insurgency is undoubtedly growing, both in terms of scope and intensity. With presidential elections scheduled for 2008, the new Russian leader may find him or herself - whether by choice or otherwise - inclined to pursue negotiations with the separatists. Should such a situation arise, it may well precipitate another mutation, in the word of Georgi Derluguian, within the near two-decades-long secessionist struggle, with the *Kadyrovsty* taking up arms against a peace process which by its very inception would not be in their interests. Thus, the actualization of the ‘*Chingizid* paradox’ could see Moscow forced to deal militarily with a Chechen president and his government previously elected under its own auspices.

**AUTHOR’S BIO:** Kevin Daniel Leahy holds a postgraduate degree in International Relations from University College Cork, Ireland.



# PROSPECTS FOR TAJIKISTAN'S UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

*Bakhtiyor Naimov*

*Tajikistan held a constitutional referendum on June 22, 2003, which set new limits for the terms of service of the head of state: two periods of seven years. This new amendment is to be applied from the fall 2006 elections, implying Emomali Rakhmonov could be the leader of Tajikistan for the next fourteen years, if re-elected. The arrests of influential former warlords, namely Saidsho Shamolov and Qurbon Cholov in 2002, Sulaimon Cholov in 2003, and most importantly General Ghafor Mirzoev and important commanders in the summer of 2004, testify that power is being successfully consolidated by Rakhmonov and the race for the upcoming elections is won ahead.*

**BACKGROUND:** Consolidation of power has become popular in Central Asia in the beginning of the new century, as all incumbents presidents after the collapse of the USSR finished their terms. President Rakhmonov is not the inventor but rather a follower of the rule of extension of terms. Tajikistan's head of state, however, has one considerable advantage over his fellow Central Asian Presidents – the support of the general population as an advocate of peace in the country. Though the western media and supporters of democratic governance widely claimed or perhaps hoped that the arrests of the purportedly “popular” former warlords and field commanders would cause uprisings among their supporters, in reality nothing of the sort happened. In fact, ordinary people generally have a rather negative attitude towards former field commanders. These very commanders were not initially chosen; but declared themselves leaders, because of connections either with martial arts or with previous links to the military or police. Furthermore, after the end of the war, the commanders, both opposition and pro-government, tried to grab what they could for their personal gain, building fancy houses, driving foreign cars, and owning restaurants, casinos, and discos. The civilians and combatants that supported and fought for the interests of these commanders are left basically with nothing. Actually, the warlords were a larger threat than the government to the security and self-esteem of the general population. A member of Tavildara jamoat

noted in an interview: “The commanders were really very despotic and cruel. They could come at any time to any house and demand anything that household had, be it chicken, sheep, cows or flour. The hard thing was that the people could not complain to anyone and therefore had to obey the commanders” Thus, by removing his potential opponents for the next elections, Rakhmonov was actually once again credited for building a safer country and enforcing the rule of law – a claim that actually did have some elements of truth to it.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The consequence of Rakhmonov's politics of strangling the opposition is reminiscent of the course of events in Kazakhstan. When no well-known alternative is available, people logically support the status quo. This is especially true in Tajikistan, where the generation that went through the worst experiences of the civil war is still the most decisive constituency in the country. One of the very few persons from the opposition that could have competed with Rakhmonov in the elections was Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, a moderate field commander who was in exile in Russia for a few years, and then arrested in Moscow and sentenced in Dushanbe to 23 years in jail for terrorism and embezzlement in 2005. Today, only one person is probably left who could realistically contest Rakhmonov's claim to power: the mayor of Dushanbe, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev.

He is very powerful, with strong interests in business as well as in what is called "street life". Rakhmonov periodically makes attempts to discredit Ubaidulloev, and one such effort was when in the annual concluding meeting, the president on live television asked Ubaidulloev to stand up and report on the leakage of money that was allocated for solving the notorious drinking water problem in Dushanbe. However, since Ubaidulloev is the speaker of Tajikistan's Parliament, it is unlikely that he will run for the presidency later this year.

Politics from the elections onward has the potential to move in various directions; there is the risk of harder authoritarian on the one hand, but also of a more enlightened and moderate government. This depends on which example of the other Central Asian countries, if any, the president will choose – a softer regime like that in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan or a more authoritarian one like in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan? Political analysts have so far had a hard time grouping Tajikistan with the Central Asian states because undeniably, the honeymoon period after the end of the civil war is still continuing. Many Tajiks indeed hope for the next decade to be a period of economic development in the country, and if the head of state together with those in the power structures want to move the country forward, the present situation is the most promising that it has ever been. The most powerful field commanders that carried out alternative politics have been pacified, the regionalism that caused hatred and ignorance at the very start of independence is becoming less of a problem as a shuffle in the law enforcement agencies has been undertaken and as roads linking the country's

various regions are being built. Finally, with the building of a National Army, the country is becoming truly sovereign. Courageous leaders are the ones to make the most of these positive trends.

**CONCLUSIONS:** It is clear that Rakhmonov's reign is likely to continue, given that most of the potential or realistic political opponents have been eliminated or pacified. The tactic of suppressing former field commanders and warlords both from the former opposition block and from the pro-government forces was a strategy that maintained the balance of forces in the country, while actually finding wide support among ordinary citizens. For these reasons, the current president of Tajikistan is not perceived as the enemy number one among the population, as was the case for Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan and seems to be the case among large tract of the Uzbek population for Islam Karimov. Rakhmonov is still perceived as a leader who strives for the security of the population and deserves credit for the current peace that has lasted in the country since 1997. Coming to the elections, Rakhmonov has two key advantages. The first is certainly the absence of popular opponents, while the second is analogous to the advantage that George W. Bush had when running for the second term: the fear of the population, which in the case of the United States was terrorism and in the case of Tajikistan is war caused by a renewed armed struggle for power. Therefore, any assumptions about a possible 'velvet' revolution in Tajikistan do not deserve to be taken seriously.

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## FIELD REPORTS

### SUSPECTED IMU MEMBER ESCAPES FROM TAJIK PRISON

*Zoya Pylenko*

On 25 January, a group of armed assailants managed to free an inmate, who was accused of having links with the outlawed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), from a prison in northern Tajikistan. The prison director was killed as a result. The fugitives are still on the run, notwithstanding joint Tajik-Kyrgyz efforts to round them up.

According to Tajik authorities the (armed) IMU has become increasingly active since the uprising in the Uzbek city of Andijon in May last year, which was subsequently violently repressed. It is difficult to verify such claims. But according to the prosecutor's office for northern Tajikistan, the IMU has by now again become more dangerous than the other banned (but purportedly peaceful) Islamic movement, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which wants to establish a world-wide Islamic caliphate.

The prison incident took place in the Ghayroghum district of Soghd Province in northern Tajikistan – in fact not far from Andijon. The freed inmate was reportedly arrested on charges of illegal weapons possession, and was later on accused of having ties with the IMU as well. The Russian news agency Interfax reported a Kyrgyz source as saying that one of the persons who freed the inmate was involved in the killing of eight Tajik policemen in 1997, and is wanted by both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for committing terrorist acts.

After the attackers, who were probably three to four men, freed the IMU suspect – and killed prison director Bobojan Gadibayev in the process – they disappeared in the direction of the nearby Tajik-Kyrgyz border by car. Following the attack,

Kyrgyzstan tightened controls at its border checkpoints with Tajikistan. The security services of the two countries are working together to detain the group. Representatives of the interior ministries of both countries met in the beginning of February in the Tajik city of Isfara, which borders Kyrgyzstan, to coordinate their actions to detain the suspects. But officials from both countries didn't exclude the possibility that the criminals have already entered Kyrgyzstan's Batken Province that borders Tajikistan and lies on the fringes of the Fergana Valley.

Notwithstanding the joint efforts to detain the group, the criminals have not been found yet. Some observers believe IMU cells are still active in the region. If true, these might well have helped the escapees. Others however believe that the IMU, which is designated as a terrorist organization not only in Central Asia but also by Western countries, is more or less a spent force.

The IMU, which was set up by Juma Namangani and Tohir Yuldashev in the mid-1990s with some help from the Taliban, had as its initial aim to force Uzbek president Islam Karimov from power, and to create an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. To this aim, the IMU undertook armed incursions in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000. It has also been accused of involvement in several terrorist acts in the region, such as the string of bombings in Uzbek towns in the spring of 2004.

However, the main base of the movement in 2001 was Afghanistan. Therefore, it is believed that most of the organization was destroyed in the US-led

campaign against the Taliban that year. Namangani was reported killed in November 2001. But Yuldashev escaped with at least some followers to the Pakistani tribal belt, bordering Afghanistan. According to some reports, IMU remnants may have served there as Osama bin Laden's bodyguard.

This, however, did not prevent Central Asian governments from continuing to accuse the movement of several terrorist acts. For example, in January, the Tajik authorities accused the IMU of involvement in two explosions near the Ministry of Emergency Situations in Dushanbe, in January and June 2005 – although the IMU has never claimed responsibility for them.

However, there is a second theory regarding the prison break, which to some extent exonerates the IMU. According to sources in northern Tajikistan,

both the attackers and the freed inmate would be members not of the IMU but of another, less known organization: "Bayat".

This group became known to the public only in January 2004, after the murder of a Baptist missionary and pastor who was active in the north of Tajikistan. Later, the group was also accused of targeting the homes and shops of sellers of alcohol with arson – as well as local mosques. After these events it turned out that a number of alleged Bayat members were once members of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (Tajikistan's only legal Islamic party). But while some officials said that Bayat is another militant Islamist movement (with possible links to the IMU), others argued the movement is a purely criminal group.

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## GEORGIA'S GAS CRISIS ENDS; IMPLICATIONS REMAIN

*Kakha Jibladze*

When two explosions in southern Russia crimped the gas pipeline that pumps natural gas to Georgia and Armenia, Georgia was quick to blame Moscow for the disruption. In televised comments January 22, the day the explosions took place in North Ossetia, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili immediately blamed Russia. However, later that day he downshifted from referring to Moscow as a 'blackmailer' to merely stating that Russia's claims of terrorism seemed 'dubious'.

Regardless of who was ultimately responsible for the damage – Russia maintains it was terrorists while Georgia is unconvinced – millions of Georgians suffered through record cold temperatures without gas or electricity for over a week. In Tbilisi, where natural gas is normally supplied, citizens waited in line for hours to fill plastic containers with fuel.

The Georgian government took several steps to provide for the population quickly. It immediately

imported 310 tons of kerosene fuel to ease the demand. According to Giorgi Arveladze, the Head of the presidential administration, 110 tons were sold at \$0.33, while the rest were priced normally at \$0.77. The government also sought out alternative sources of energy. On January 30, Georgia began receiving natural gas from Iran via Azerbaijan. According to statements from Nika Gelauri, the energy minister, the agreement with Tehran is flexible and depends on the amount of gas Georgia receives from Russia.

Other measures were also taken, some with reported Russian assistance. Despite repeated delays to repair the damaged pipeline, Russia allegedly did take some actions to help relieve the situation. According to Vladimir Chkhikvishvili, the Russian ambassador to Georgia, the natural gas Georgia received from Azerbaijan was organized by Russia. He also noted that Russian investments repaired and renovated the gas turbine electricity generator that was opened outside of Tbilisi on January 23.

However, reported problems with a compressor station on the Russian side of the Russian-Azerbaijani border on January 24 decreased the amount of gas Azerbaijan received from Russia, and therefore the amount that Georgia received from Azerbaijan.

Regardless of Russian assurances it was working hard to fix the problem, the crisis took its toll on Georgian-Russian relations. After Georgian officials publicly blamed Moscow for the gas disruption, political dialogue was reduced to name calling and threats. "There is no reason for panic. Our enemies want to trigger panic, but we should not allow this to happen... I am absolutely sure that these were not accidental [blasts]. It impossible for these to be accidental when there were simultaneous explosions of two gas pipelines and a power line. It is a deliberate provocation," Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze said according to Georgian media sources on January 22.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on January 23, calling Georgia's statements 'hysteria,' and noting "if Tbilisi has once and for all decided to worsen relations with Russia, [the Georgian authorities] probably also estimated all the possible consequences of this policy."

Later that week the gas and electricity supply was cut off to the Russian Embassy in Tbilisi and the Tbilisi offices of Russian Gazexport. The Georgian

Embassy in Moscow was soon without either gas or power due to 'technical problems' in Russia.

Georgian officials used the crisis as a stepping stone to bring the troubled relations between the two countries to international attention. According to reports in the Russian newspaper *Kommersant*, Saakashvili used a recent trip to Germany to highlight Georgia's problems with Russia, calling the country a 'malicious and experienced enemy.'

With the energy crisis as background, the increased calls from Tbilisi to end the Russian peacekeeping missions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have added more tension to the strained diplomatic relations. A car accident on February 1 between a Russian military truck and a Georgian car dissolved into scandal with even Irakli Okruashvili, the minister of defense, weighing in on the issue.

The continued deterioration of Georgian-Russian relations is nothing new. Neither Moscow nor Tbilisi has made a real effort since the diplomatic victory to remove Russian bases from Georgian soil last May. Regardless of the degree of finger pointing or the factual basis of accusations, it is in the best interest of both countries to find a common ground to improve relations and work together. If neither administration can take steps to mend the bruised relationship, the cycle of crisis and backlash will continue indefinitely and the region will remain unstable.

## TURKMENISTAN: CHEAP NEW LABOR FORCE TO BE DISPATCHED

*Muhammad Tahir*

The question of how the young are to be educated has come up again in Turkmenistan, this time in connection with the poor cotton harvest, and the distrust and lack of interest among farmers for work on state-owned farms. 'We have 3,000 students at agricultural universities and after graduating, none

of them go to work in farms. This is not what we need,' said Sapamurat Niyazov, President for Life of the autocratic regime of Turkmenistan. During his announcement at a the agriculture university of Turkmenistan on 26 January 2006, he ordered that school graduates must work on state farms under

the guidance of their teachers in order to be allowed admission to higher education institutions. According to Niyazov, this decision will improve students' ability to understand their university subjects. The decision applies not only to students of agriculture but also to students of technical universities, who are already working in state-owned factories, where they are paid only an amount equal to their stipend. This decree states that each student must have two years of work experience in their field to qualify for admission to university, where they will study only one year before graduating. Niyazov has ordered the decision, officially accepted in 2002, to be implemented from this agriculture session. According to experts, this move will close the doors to higher education for the majority of students, some of whom managed to pay a bribe of thousands of dollars for admission to universities that themselves costs, between four to six thousand US dollars, according to the Turkmen Initiative Foundation, depending on the subject and the university. Taking these facts into account, it is hard to see how many students could afford to pay this amount in a country where, according to the CIA's World Fact Book 2004, 58% of the population live below the poverty line and the average salary is only US\$30-40 per month.

Whatever the state's aims, this decision has been seen by many western experts as a way of controlling young people at any price, even if it means leading the nation into the dark and filling the country with people who will be unable to think at a professional standard or to meet the challenges of the day. Some independent experts also believe that by doing so, the government is trying to find a cheap and loyal labor force to work on state property under official control and guidelines, in a sector where farmers were no longer interested in working because of the difficulties in getting paid.

Top Turkmen officials hold a different view, claiming that 'this unique practice will help students to understand their profession more deeply.' But

whatever the official aims, there is no doubt that the impact of this decision will be seen for a long time as it lowers once again the standard of education. In the name of reforming the education sector, the Turkmen government had previously reduced the length of school education to only 9 years. During these 9 years of education, each year the majority of children spend their time preparing to perform in welcoming ceremonies for the president and holiday ceremonies, which take up around thirty days a year. Turkmenistan is a colorful country, where people celebrate the birthday of the President and his parents, the days of their death, the day of Rukhnama (a book allegedly written by the President) as official holidays with colorful pageants. The educational reform measure of forcing Rukhnama into the curriculum has been harshly criticized by the international community. The book has been officially promoted as a basis for all education, from elementary schools to universities, included in the curricula for politics, history, science, geography and medicine. Some sources even say English literature is being taught from the English translation of this book.

This has all led many international organizations to express deep concern over Turkmenistan's education policy, accusing Turkmen authorities of politicizing the education sector. There are also worries that this decision may increase corruption in the education sector. Despite hardships, if someone is still willing to send their children to university, they will, if possible, try to bribe related officials to not send their children to the farms.

As a result of decisions like this, after fourteen years of independence, this gas rich country – owning the world's fifth largest gas reserves – is forced to import even middle-level experts to work in its oil-fields due to a lack of experienced professionals in the country.

## KAZAKH OPPOSITION LEADER'S DEATH SPARKS WIDESPREAD PROTESTS

*Marat Yermukanov*

The most worrying aspect of recent political developments in Kazakhstan is that the public is getting used to frequent deaths of prominent political figures in mysterious circumstances. No sooner had the passions settled down caused by sudden death of opposition activist Zamanbek Nurkadilov three months ago, another politician, Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, was found dead on the outskirts of Almaty. Public indignation aroused by Sarsenbayuly's death, generally recognized as a premeditated murder, was so strong that this time even business elite distanced from political affairs demanded the rule of the law to be upheld.

The dead bodies of 43 year-old co-chairman of True Ak Zhol party and one of the leaders of For a Fair Kazakhstan opposition bloc Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, his bodyguard and his driver with tied arms were found on February 12 on the roadside near a farm located not far from Almaty. Altynbek Sarsenbayuly and his companions had five bullet wounds to the chest and to the head. A previous version circulated by the media was that the three were killed in a hunting accident. But the leaders of For a Fair Kazakhstan flatly denied that allegation, claiming that it was a political murder. Around five thousand people gathered for a funeral ceremony held in Almaty and which virtually turned into a mass protest rally condemning the persecution of political opponents and demanding the trial of the murderers of opposition activists Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, Zamanbek Nurkadilov and journalist Askhat Sharipzhanov killed in mysterious circumstances.

The Interior Ministry department of Almaty did not dare to prevent opposition leaders from holding the funeral rally, but in Astana the police denied them the permission to stage a similar action arguing that the local government did not authorize rallies. Nevertheless, the death of Altynbek Sarsenbayuly triggered the most powerful response

from political parties and public movements which unanimously condemned what is widely interpreted as a brazen onslaught on the democratic rights of citizens. The For a Fair Kazakhstan bloc announced its decision to set up an independent investigating commission on the case incorporating public figures and independent lawyers. A group of entrepreneurs issued a strongly-worded statement underlining that the death of Sarsenbayuly was an "act of intimidation" which "challenges us all". The political Council of the Asar party led by the president's daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva stated that "This tragic event should give the society cause for serious concern".

Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, a Moscow-educated journalist, made a brilliant political career in government offices as Chairman of the National Agency for the Mass Media in 1995, minister of information in 1997, secretary of the Security Council of Kazakhstan in 2001 and Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Russia in 2002-2003. For reasons which surprised many, he joined the opposition in 2004 and was known since that time as one of the most enigmatic politicians. He was blamed by his opponents for a dramatic split in the ranks of the Ak Zhol democratic party, but he was generally recognized, even by his enemies, as a gifted public speaker and the best ideological brain in the For a Fair Kazakhstan bloc. A red rag to authorities and an uncompromising rival to some opposition leaders, Sarsenbayuly had many enemies, and there is plenty of evidence to indicate that he was murdered.

Interior Minister Baurzhan Mukhamedzhanov, who was personally charged with heading the investigation into the case, alleged that Sarsenbayuly might have fallen victim to some business or family disputes or might have been murdered by "extremists who want to destabilize the situation in the country". It is clear that the

opposition tries to use this event to raise its popularity, waning after last year's election debacle, and to regain attention from western democratic institutions. Evidently, authorities are making face-saving efforts in order to forestall the westward opposition demarche. At a press-conference on February 16, Baurzhan Mukhamedzhanov told journalists that the ministry decided to call on FBI experts to jointly conduct the investigation into the case. The interior minister said the decision was taken to ensure the transparency of the investigation. Earlier, the invitation of foreign experts was demanded by a group of entrepreneurs. The U.S. Embassy also urged Kazakh authorities to conduct an immediate and thorough investigation.

The flexible behavior of the interior minister shows that authorities fear international resonance of the case, which stands to damage Kazakhstan's reputation of a developing democracy in Central

Asia. At the same time, the government and most of the hand-picked parliament members ignored the demand of the For a Fair Kazakhstan bloc to convene an urgent parliamentary session with the participation of the leaders of political parties, public movements, and the President of the country to debate the political situation in Kazakhstan.

The death of Altynbek Sarsenbayuly poisons the political climate at a time when the presidential power tries to reach some sort of truce or even partnership with political opponents in view of the uneasy relations with the OSCE and the Council of Europe. A few weeks before Sarsenbayuly's death, president Nazarbayev had talks with Alikhan Baymenov, the chairman of the Ak Zhol party, and discussed prospects of partnership with him. But Baymenov is among the very few political leaders who share some common views with the ruling elite.

For more information and other publications, consult the website of the Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst at <http://www.cacianalyst.org> and the website of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org>

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**NEW**  
The 12 January 2005 issue of the bi-weekly *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* is online.

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS**  
**ARTICLE** S. Frederick Starr, "Hamid Karzai and the Future of Central Asia", *Far East Economic Review*, January 2005.  
**ARTICLE** Maral Madi, "Drug Trade in Kyrgyzstan: Structures, Implications, and Countermeasures", *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 23 no. 3-4, December 2004.  
**WORKING PAPER** Svante Cornell, *Narcotics, Radicalism and Security in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, East European Studies Working Paper no. 84, December 2004.  
**ARTICLE** Niklas Swanström and Emma Björnehed, "Conflict Resolution of Terrorist Conflicts in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.16 no.2 (Summer 2004).  
**OP-ED** Svante Cornell and Anna Jonsson, "Putin skadar demokratin" [Putin damages democracy], *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 5 October 2004.  
**ANALYSIS** Niklas Swanström and Svante Cornell, "Is Afghanistan's Opium Boom Reversible", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, 14 July 2004.

**EVENTS**  
**26 JAN: Silk Road Forum, Stockholm:** "Azerbaijan and Europe: An Evolving Partnership" by Ali Kerimli, in cooperation with the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. (Time: 4PM-6PM)  
**26 JAN: W.P. Carey Forum, D.C.:** Kyrgyz Parliamentary Elections: Beginning of post-Akayev Politics, with Anisa Borubayeva, Clara Shainazarova, and Anara Tabyshalieva. (Time: 4PM-6PM)  
**12 JAN: W.P. Carey Forum, D.C.:** After Ukraine and Georgia: More Velvet Revolutions? With Thomas Carothers, Stephen Nix, Charles Fairbanks and Frederick Starr.

**15 DEC:** The research on "Afghanistan's Heroin Industry" was presented at CACI's W.P. Carey Forum. See *VOA News Report* on Event or *Sound file*.  
**10 NOV:** The Eurasia Fact Sheets Series on Organized Crime and Narcotics Updated. *Click for details*.

## NEWS DIGEST

### **TURKISH MINISTER CONFIRMS TALKS ON TRANS-CASPIAN PIPELINE**

**8 February**

Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler has confirmed that Turkey and Turkmenistan are holding talks on the construction of a trans-Caspian natural gas pipeline. Guler said, "We will go on [with] negotiations with Ashgabat on implementation of the trans-Caspian gas pipeline project. There is a contract between Turkey and Turkmenistan on gas supplies which for certain reasons had not been realized."

Guler's comments came on the eve of a visit to the United States. Turkey and Turkmenistan signed a contract in 1991 to build the pipeline, but it has never moved beyond the planning stage. (Trend news)

### **RIGHTS GROUP LOSES APPEAL TO CONTINUE WORK IN UZBEKISTAN**

**9 February**

A Tashkent court on 7 February rejected Freedom House's appeal of an 11 January ruling suspending the organization's activities in Uzbekistan for six months, Freedom House reported in a press release the next day. Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor commented, "It is clear from the Ministry of Justice's actions that the Uzbek government has no intention of tolerating international NGOs whose purpose is to circulate information about how genuine democratic societies operate." (RFE/RL)

### **U.S. CAUTIONS GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT AGAINST DEMANDING RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS' WITHDRAWAL**

**9 February**

Responding on 9 February to an address delivered earlier that day by Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili to the OSCE's Permanent Council in Vienna, U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE Julie Finley acknowledged that the Joint Peacekeeping Force deployed in the South Ossetian conflict zone could function more effectively, according to a press release on the website of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE (<http://www.osce.usmission.gov>). At the same time, Ambassador Finley noted that a request for the peacekeepers to leave before a substitute force is available to replace them could destabilize the situation. She called on Georgia to contribute its full complement of forces to maintain the proper balance

within the Joint Peacekeeping Force, which includes Georgian, Russian, and Ossetian contingents, "in coordination with existing mechanisms, in full transparency, and in accordance with previous agreements." (RFE/RL)

### **MUSAVAT PARTY QUILTS AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION BLOC**

**9 February**

Following the decision by its leading council on 5 February to participate in the work of the new parliament elected on 6 November and field candidates in the repeat voting on 13 May in 10 constituencies where the outcome of the 6 November vote was annulled, the opposition Musavat party announced on 9 February its withdrawal from the Azadliq election bloc. A statement issued by Musavat's press office attributed that move to the "campaign of slander and lies" unleashed against Musavat by the remaining members of Azadliq, the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party and the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, both of which announced in late November that they will boycott the new legislature and refrain from fielding candidates in the 13 May repeat vote. On 9 February, Musavat party chairman Isa Qambar said that he is prepared to continue cooperation with those two parties. Qambar also implied that Musavat will seek to reanimate and officially register the Our Azerbaijan bloc of which Musavat is the informal leader. Most of its other members, however, are not formally registered with the Justice Ministry. (day.az)

### **SOUTH OSSETIAN GROUP APPEALS TO RUSSIAN PRESIDENT**

**9 February**

The Union of Russian Citizens of South Ossetia has addressed an appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin, copying State Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov and OSCE Chairman in Office Karel de Gucht. The statement praised the Russian peacekeepers' role in response to the Georgian incursion of August 2004 and termed them the sole guarantee of peace and a nonresumption of hostilities. At the same time, it expressed concern over the anticipated decision by the Georgian parliament to insist on the Russian peacekeepers' withdrawal from the conflict zone which, it suggests, will be followed by a new Georgian aggression. Virtually the entire Ossetian population of

the unrecognized republic has acquired Russian citizenship over the past decade. (Regnum.ru)

### **KYRGYZ PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER BOWS OUT OF SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**9 February**

Parliamentary speaker Omurbek Tekebaev left the Security Council meeting after Usen Sydykov, head of the presidential administration, insisted that President Bakiev would not attend the session if Tekebaev were present. Tekebaev, who reportedly made disparaging comments about Bakiev on 7 February, recently announced that he is planning to resign. Asiya Sasykbaeva, director of the Interbilim civil society support center, told akipress.org on 9 February that Tekebaev said he will resign if the authorities guarantee his security for the next 1 1/2 years and do not harass his supporters. (akipress.org)

### **DATA ON LABOR EMIGRATION FROM ARMENIA UNVEILED**

**10 February**

A study co-funded by the OSCE's Yerevan Office and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office of out-migration from Armenia in search of employment estimated the number of people who have left Armenia over the past three years in search of employment at approximately 147,000, or 4.6 percent of the total population. Of that number, some 90 percent sought work in other CIS states and the remainder in the EU and the United States. Some 85 percent of those job-seekers are men aged between 21-50 with secondary or vocational education. Between 2002-2005 they sent almost \$300 million in remittances to their families at home. Over the same time period, some 95,000 Armenians who had left the country earlier in search of work returned, the study found. (Noyan Tapan)

### **KAZAKH MINISTER HOPES FOR WTO ACCESSION IN 2007**

**10 February**

Industry and Commerce Minister Vladimir Shkolnik told a press conference in Astana on 10 February that Kazakhstan could join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007, Interfax-Kazakhstan reported. He said, "If we finish the negotiating process this year and defend all our positions, then 2007 is a realistic date." Shkolnik noted that Kazakhstan is coordinating its WTO accession efforts with Russia. Shkolnik also stated that WTO accession will put an end to bans on fuel exports, a practice currently used to stabilize

domestic prices. He said that export bans could be replaced by direct state subsidies for agricultural producers, whose business is heavily dependent on fuel prices. (Interfax)

### **KYRGYZ PARLIAMENT REJECTS SPEAKER'S RESIGNATION**

**10 February**

Omurbek Tekebaev, the speaker of Kyrgyzstan's parliament, offered his resignation on 10 February, but legislators declined to include the issue on their agenda. Only 20 delegates voted in favor of putting Tekebaev's resignation to a vote. Just days before, Tekebaev harshly criticized President Kurmanbek Bakiev, who recently accused parliament of fomenting political instability in the country. Prosecutor-General Kamaraly Kongantiev later suggested that Tekebaev's comments about the president violated the law. A majority of legislators queried by akipress.org on 10 February said that while Tekebaev's 7 February remarks about Bakiev were overly emotional, Bakiev has not made sufficient efforts to conduct a dialogue with lawmakers. For his part, Tekebaev told akipress.org that he considers the disagreement not a political crisis, "but rather an annoying misunderstanding." He said that the situation would "resolve itself one way or another." (akipress.org)

### **TOP KAZAKH POLITICIAN FOUND DEAD**

**13 February**

A senior opposition politician in Kazakhstan has been found dead near the country's largest city, Almaty. Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly, his bodyguard and driver were all found dead on a road near the city. All three apparently died from gunshots, reports say. Mr Sarsenbaiuly was once a key ally of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev but broke ranks to join the opposition. He is the second opposition politician to die in mysterious circumstances in recent months. An investigation is continuing into the death of the other, Zamanbek Nurkadilov. He was found dead with gunshot wounds last November. Mr Sarsenbaiuly served as information minister in President Nazarbayev's government, the only opposition politician to do so, but resigned after elections last year, saying they were unfair. He also served as Kazakhstan's ambassador to Moscow, and was co-chairman of the opposition coalition, Ak Zhol. (BBC)

## **RESISTANCE LEADER SAYS CHECHNYA IS AN ISLAMIC STATE**

**13 November**

In a video statement made available to the news agency Daymohk, a transcript of which was posted on 11 February by chechenpress.org, Chechen President and resistance forces commander Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev addressed the issue of Chechnya's Islamic orientation, which has been the subject of a recent polemic between recently dismissed Deputy Prime Minister Akhmed Zakayev and Press and Information Minister Movladi Udugov. Sadulayev stressed that the work of bringing Chechnya's constitution into conformity with the norms of Islam began under then President Djokhar Dudayev in 1995 and continued under his successor Aslan Maskhadov, who in February 1999 declared the transition to rule exclusively by Islamic law. Sadulayev said the process of amending the constitution of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria was completed during the extended session of the War Council in the summer of 2002. (It was at that session that Sadulayev was chosen as Maskhadov's successor.) He said Article 1 of the constitution now reads: "The Chechen Republic Ichkeria (ChRI) is a sovereign, independent, Islamic state based on the rule of law and created as a result of the self-determination of the Chechen people. The source of all decisions made is the Koran and the Sunna." Sadulayev further said that "fulfilling their sacred duty before Allah, the Muslims of the Caucasus are uniting around the leadership of the ChRI and waging a national-liberation struggle to de-colonize the entire Caucasus." Finally, in what could be construed as a rebuke to Zakayev, who currently lives in London, Sadulayev stressed that the Koran differentiates between those who engage in jihad (holy struggle) and those who do not, ranking the former superior to the latter. The latter should bear in mind, Sadulayev continued, that they serve as assistants and advisers to the former, not as their bosses. (RFE/RL)

## **ARMENIAN, AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENTS FAIL TO ADOPT PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT ON KARABAKH**

**13 February**

Robert Kocharian and Ilham Aliyev met separately on 10 February in Paris with French President Jacques Chirac, and later the same day and on 11 February in Rambouillet, to discuss approaches to resolving the Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL reported. But they failed to finalize the anticipated statement on general principles that could serve as a framework for

resolving the conflict. The two presidents met for several hours on 10 February, first in the company of their respective foreign ministers and the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, and then one-on-one; a further one-on-one meeting lasting some two hours took place on 11 February, after which the two presidents left Rambouillet without making any statement for the press. (RFE/RL)

## **AZERBAIJANI FOREIGN MINISTER IDENTIFIES REMAINING DIFFERENCES**

**13 February**

U.S. Minsk Group co-Chairman Steven Mann told RFE/RL in Rambouillet on 12 February that the two presidents discussed "the full range of issues," and he characterized the "personal atmospherics" between them as "good." An official Minsk Group communique quoted on 12 February by ITAR-TASS described the talks as "intensive," but added that the positions of the two sides on "some acute aspects" remain as far apart as they were several months ago. Regnum.ru on 12 February quoted Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov as saying that the two presidents reached agreement on seven out of nine points, not including the return to their former homes of displaced persons and the question of preserving Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Mammadyarov did not mention the referendum that is rumored to be a key aspect of a future settlement. On 10 February, a senior Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry official said that any referendum in Azerbaijan must be nationwide, rather than confined to a specific locality. (RFE/RL)

## **KYRGYZ PARLIAMENT SPEAKER CRITICIZES PRESIDENT, PREMIER**

**14 February**

In an address to parliament on 13 February, Tekebaev praised the work of the legislature but harshly criticized both President Kurmanbek Bakiev and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov. Calling parliament the country's "most transparent branch of government," Tekebaev said that the legislature has "evoked the intense envy of certain individuals, who have accused parliament of trying to assume the role of head of state." The remark apparently referred to a 3 February address in which Bakiev criticized parliament for allegedly exceeding its mandate. Tekebaev reminded Bakiev and Kulov that they decided in May to work as a team, but that "the participants of the tandem have forgotten about their promises." Tekebaev said that he submitted his resignation because the form of his recent comments about Bakiev was "incorrect [and]

unworthy." He pointedly refused to apologize for the substance of his remarks, in which he called Bakiev a "disgrace," "for virtually everyone agrees with the content." In closing, Tekebaev stressed, "I feel bad that since the March [2005] revolution no changes have taken place in the mentality of officials." (RFE/RL)

### **GEORGIA PARLIAMENT VOTES TO STOP PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN SOSSETIA.**

**15 February**

Georgian lawmakers on Wednesday passed a resolution which calls for terminating the current peacekeeping operation in the zone of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, but stopped short of setting the dates for the peacekeepers' pullout. The parliament instructed the government to "step up the efforts to work out a new format of peacekeeping operation in the zone of the South Ossetian conflict." It has to be replaced with a more effective international peacekeeping operation, Georgian lawmakers said. The government was instructed to begin revision of the Dagomys agreement of June 24, 1992, which envisions the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone. (Itar-Tass)

### **KAZAKH PREMIER SAYS STATE TO ACQUIRE STAKE IN OIL COMPANY**

**15 February**

The Kazakh government is finalizing a deal to acquire a 33 percent stake in the Canadian-registered, Chinese-owned oil company PetroKazakhstan, Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov told parliament on 15 February. Akhmetov said that the state is "completing talks" with the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to buy the stake and to set up "a joint venture on the basis of the Shymkent oil refinery." CNPC acquired PetroKazakhstan for \$4.2 billion in 2005. Akhmetov also said in his address to a joint session of parliament that the government plans to bolster its presence in sectors of the economy deemed strategic. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

### **U.S. WON'T HIT IRAN FROM AZERBAIJAN TERRITORY - MINISTER**

**16 February**

The possibility of the U.S. striking Iran from Azerbaijan's territory has not been discussed, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov told a Thursday press briefing in Baku. "The issue has never been discussed with the United States. Iran is our close neighbor, and the issue is not on the agenda," he said. European Commissioner for External

Relations and Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner told the press briefing that the European Commission hopes for a peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue. (Interfax)

### **U.S. ASKED TO PAY \$200 MILLION FOR KYRGYZ BASE**

**16 February**

President Bakiev said in response to a question that Kyrgyzstan has asked the United States to pay \$207 million for the lease of the base, up from roughly \$2 million now. Kyrgyzstan's demands were based on "international norms," Bakiev said. "We are not such a rich country that we can make our facilities and buildings available for free," he continued. Washington has reacted "with understanding," but "I don't know what their reply will be," Bakiev said. The United States will maintain the base in Kyrgyzstan until Afghanistan is fully stabilized, Bakiev said. Bakiev said that Russia will not be required to pay for its military base in Kyrgyzstan because it exists under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan). (RFE/RL)

### **KYRGYZ PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION HEAD SUES NEWSPAPER FOR \$1 MILLION**

**16 February**

Usen Sydykov, the head of Kyrgyz President Bakiev's administration, has filed a libel suit against Mairam Akaev, the wife of former Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, and the newspapers "Bely parokhod" and "Dlya vas." According to "Bely parokhod," Sydykov charges that an article written by Akaeva and published in December 2005 by "Bely parokhod" and "Dlya vas" defamed him. Sydykov is asking for \$1 million in damages. In a comment published on the newspaper's website (<http://www.parokhod.kg>), "Bely parokhod" editors said, "The [Kyrgyz] authorities don't know what to do about the press, primarily the independent press. It's easier for the authorities to derail it." (RFE/RL)

### **KAZAKH MINISTER SAYS FBI TO HELP IN INVESTIGATION OF OPPOSITION LEADER'S KILLING**

**17 February**

Interior Minister Bauyrzhan Mukhamedzhanov told Khabar on 16 February that Kazakhstan is arranging for the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to take part in the investigation of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbaev's killing. Mukhamedzhanov said that FBI involvement is intended "to rule out all

manner of speculation about the motives for the murder and to make the investigation as transparent as possible." He also noted that the investigation has already determined that Sarsenbaev, his driver, and bodyguard were all killed by shots from a single gun. Five bullets and a number of other pieces of evidence were recovered from the crime scene. (RFE/RL)

## **IRAN BUILDS HYDROPOWER PLANT IN TAJIKISTAN**

**20 February**

Iran on Monday officially started the construction of a hydropower plant in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan. Tajikistani President Emomali Rakhmonov, speaking at a ceremony attended by the Iranian speaker of parliament, said the construction of the Sangtuda-2 hydropower plant continued centuries-old cooperation and historical ties between the two countries, mentioning that "Iran was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Tajikistan." The president also said, "This is not Iran's last contribution to the Tajik energy sector." The hydropower plant, which will be completed in about 3 1/2 years, is expected to generate a billion kilowatt/hours a year, RIA Novosti reported. Rakhmonov said it will supply electricity not only to Tajikistan but also to neighboring countries. Under the terms of the agreement, Iran will also receive electricity from the plant via a high-voltage transmission line that will pass through Afghanistan. Iran will keep the profits from the plant for 12 1/2 years, at which time it will become Tajikistan's property. (UPI)

## **RUSSIAN TANKER FREED IN GEORGIA**

**20 February**

The Russian tanker Rabiks-4 has been allowed to return to Russia after paying Georgia a fine of 50,000 lari, nearly \$24,000, for violating navigation regulations in Georgia's territorial waters, a source in the Georgian state border guard department told Interfax. Three Russian vessels have been detained in Georgia's territorial waters for violating navigation rules over the past three years. (Interfax)

## **MOSCOW-BAKU COOPERATION IMPORTANT FOR GEOPOLITICAL STABILITY - PUTIN**

**21 February**

President Vladimir Putin said that positive relations between Russia and Azerbaijan are a factor of geopolitical stability in the Caucasus. "We seek an

find new and effective patterns of cooperation, and use more, fully bilateral and integration processes in the post-Soviet space," Putin said at a ceremony to kick off the Year of Azerbaijan in Russia at the Heydar Aliyev Palace in Baku. "All of us are directly interested in preserving the common humanitarian space and in broadening cultural contacts, youth exchanges, and exchanges in science and education," Putin said. This is the target of the agreement on humanitarian cooperation between countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, signed in Kazan, the Russian president said. (Interfax)

## **AZERBAIJAN TO PUMP 3 MLN T OIL VIA RUSSIA IN 2006**

**21 February**

Azerbaijan will export around 3 million tonnes of crude oil (60,000 barrels per day) via Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk in 2006, Russian and Azeri oil ministers said in an agreement signed on Tuesday. That is less than last year's 4.3 million tonnes but more than the 2.6-2.7 million tonnes sent through the pipeline in 2004. Azerbaijan expects to make up the shortfall with the launch of a new pipeline to Ceyhan in Turkey this year. Azerbaijan relies on piping oil to foreign sea ports because its own coast is on the landlocked Caspian Sea, so it must turn to neighbouring Russia, Georgia and Turkey to market its oil. Azeri state oil firm SOCAR said it was prepared to supply 2.5 million tonnes a year through the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline in the long-term, with oil pumped from its older fields. Newer fields in the Caspian Sea would supply the new pipeline to Ceyhan and an existing one to Supsa in Georgia. A huge Azeri gas field, Shakh-Deniz, is also under development by British oil major BP Plc and Norway's Statoil. (Reuters)

## **RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN TBILISI STOPS ISSUING VISAS TO GEORGIANS**

**21 February**

The Russian embassy in Tbilisi has stopped issuing visas to Georgians on February 21 in response to Georgia's denial to issue visas to Russian soldiers. "The consular department of the Russian embassy in Georgia ceases issuing visas to Georgians, except for humanitarian cases, on February 21," a statement by the Russian embassy says. "This measure was prompted by the fact that, despite agreements reached in the withdrawal of Russian military bases and facilities from Georgia that also provide for the rotation of soldiers, in the last year, Georgia has been

dragging its feet in issuing visas to servicemen of the Group of Russian Troops in Transcaucasia and it has also not been prolonging visas to soldiers and officers that are in the country," the statement says. (Interfax)

### **BEREZOVSKY ACCUSED OF FINANCING CHECHEN SEPARATISTS**

**21 February**

Acting Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov has accused controversial businessman Boris Berezovsky of financing Chechen separatists in the 1990s.

"Berezovsky repeatedly met with warlords and offered a financing scheme to them. Berezovsky said to the militant leaders, 'I can't give you money directly, and therefore I suggest that you kidnap Russian civilians and servicemen in Chechnya, then I will pay you millions of dollars under in ransoms for them,'" Kadyrov said meeting with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour on Tuesday. "The militants received millions of dollars under this scheme, with which they bought weapons and ammunition," he said. Kadyrov also accused certain countries of "providing shelter to leaders of illegal armed groups, including Zakayev, Akhmadov, Udugov and others." "The terrorist attack at the Dynamo stadium in Grozny on May 9, [2004], which killed Akhmat Kadyrov and others, was financed by Akhmed Zakayev, who is currently resident in London," Ramzan Kadyrov said. (Interfax)

### **CONDITION OF CHECHEN CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM UNKNOWN DISEASE WORSENS**

**21 February**

The health of children from Chechnya's Shelkovskoi district diagnosed with a pseudo-asthmatic condition a few weeks ago has worsened after they returned home following treatment at hospitals in Stavropol and other North Caucasus towns, Chechen state television reported on Monday evening. The children have now started to experience nose bleeds, which did not happen before. "We were given medicines, after which we could not control ourselves for hours and felt intoxicated. We do not know what medicines we were given," a woman, who underwent treatment in Stavropol together with the children, told a local television station. The Chechen Health Ministry, together with the federal Education and Emergency Situations Ministries and the other agencies concerned, is investigating the cause of the outbreak. (Interfax)

### **KAZAKH OFFICERS LINKED TO MURDER**

**21 February**

Kazakhstan's KNB security service has said five of its officers have been arrested over the murder of opposition politician Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly. The KNB said the five were members of its elite Arystan combat division. Opposition groups have accused the government of involvement in the death of Mr Sarsenbaiuly, who was found shot dead by a roadside earlier this month. He was the second opposition politician to be found dead in mysterious circumstances in recent months. The KNB in a statement called the arrested men "werewolves in epaulettes", a term for corrupt security officials, according to the Reuters news agency. A sixth man, who was also arrested for organising the operation, was a former law enforcement officer, opposition leader Zharmakhan Tuyakbai told the Associated Press. The five men accused of committing the murder were paid \$25,000, according to Interior Minister Baurzhan Mukhamedzhanov. Mr Sarsenbaiuly, a former minister and ambassador, was President Nursultan Nazarbayev's close ally until 2003, when he defected to the opposition. His body was found outside the commercial capital, Almaty, with bullet wounds in his back and neck. His bodyguard and driver had also been killed. The killing was condemned by opposition groups, who accused the government of President Nazabayev of seeking to silence any critics. (BBC)

### **GEORGIA SHOULD SOLVE OWN PROBLEMS, NOT LOOK FOR ENEMIES – PUTIN**

**22 February**

Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that the Georgian leadership should first of all concentrate on solving problems existing in the country instead of looking for new enemies. The visiting Russian leader said Russia sympathizes with the Georgian people "as Georgia is facing difficult times and immense social problems". "If someone believes that problems of that kind could be solved by way of redirecting attention towards the search for new enemies, - this is a wrong path," President Putin emphasized. "Of course, attention can be diverted for some time," but the country's leadership will still have to deal with social problems, "and it is better to solve them in a dialogue with partners," the Russian leader believes. "Despite the existing difficulties, we are full of optimism," Putin added. "There are some forces in the Georgian leadership who want to develop relations with Russia," Putin said, adding that he believed President Mikhail Saakashvili was among them. "I expect that positive

tendencies will prevail," he added. Putin noted that Russia has inherited difficult but solvable problems from the Soviet past. "However, while criticizing the USSR for what was happening in the country, even doing it rightly, we cannot step on the same rake again," the Russian president emphasized. As for Georgia, the difficult situation in the republic "destabilizes the situation not only in the country, but in the whole region as well," he noted. (Itar-Tass)

#### **PUTIN: IRAN TALKS "NOT GOING EASILY"**

**22 February**

Talks with Iran on a Russian proposal aimed at resolving an international crisis over Tehran's suspected nuclear weapons program are not going easily, President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday. "The talks are not going easily but we are counting on reaching a positive result," Putin told journalists on a visit to Azerbaijan. The Russian leader said that the Kremlin's offer to enrich uranium for Tehran to avert suspicions that the Iranians could divert the nuclear fuel for atomic weapons should be "perfectly acceptable" to Iran and could be used as "a means to solve the problem." "We are not losing optimism," said Putin. "We are waiting for a final response from the Iranian negotiators and we hope for

a positive result." The two countries' negotiators on Tuesday completed two days of inconclusive talks in Moscow on the Russian initiative. Russian newspapers on Wednesday cited Iranian officials as saying that Iran was not ready to accept Russia's plan because Tehran insisted on the right to conduct its own enrichment activities. "There are no reasons at this stage to resume dialogue," the Vedomosti daily quoted an official close to the Iranian delegation as saying. Tehran's top negotiator, Ali Hosseinitash, labeled the Moscow meeting "positive and constructive," but some Russians voiced concern that Iran was using the proposed Kremlin compromise to stall for time and avert international sanctions. The Russian proposal, backed by the United States and the European Union, is seen as the final opportunity to ease international concerns over Iran's suspected nuclear weapons drive. Tehran has rejected calls to resume a freeze on domestic uranium enrichment. The U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, holds a March 6 meeting that could start a process leading to punishment by the U.N. Security Council, which has the authority to impose sanctions on Iran. (AP)



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