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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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Analytical Articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue 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. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,100 and 1,500 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

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

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

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

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

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

Svante E. Cornell

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EURASIAN IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE STRATEGY

Richard Weitz

On September 17, President Barack Obama announced that the United States would defer plans to deploy ten long-range missile interceptors in Poland and an advanced battle management radar in the Czech Republic. Instead, the administration would seek to deploy shorter-range interceptors and radars closer to Iran. One reason for the decision is to strengthen U.S. security ties with certain Eurasian governments. While officials in Turkey, Georgia, and Russia have generally welcomed the U.S. announcement, the new deployment strategy raises some new Eurasian security questions.

BACKGROUND: During the past few years, NATO countries have engaged in three separate but related multilateral European ballistic missile defense (BMD) initiatives. First, in March 2005, NATO decided to develop a system to protect NATO military forces and installations deployed on military operations from short- and medium-range ballistic missile attacks. Second, the NATO governments are assessing what kind of BMD architecture might best protect the national territories and population centers of NATO's European members from ballistic missiles. Third, the United States has been pursuing bilateral initiatives with certain NATO members – until recently Poland and the Czech Republic – to deploy forward elements of its national missile defense system in Europe to counter an emerging missile threat from Iran. American officials have sought to demonstrate how these deployments could also contribute to defending other NATO countries from such attacks, but the other NATO governments have not actively participated in these bilateral negotiations.

A problem arose in that, due to the anticipated capabilities of the planned systems as well as time and distance factors, the BMD assets envisaged for Poland and the Czech Republic might not have been able to identify, track, and intercept sufficiently rapidly a ballistic missile launched by Iran directed at neighboring NATO allies and partners. Representatives of several of these governments have called on NATO members to help protect them from missile threats. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer also stressed the need for the allies to develop closer linkages among various NATO BMD initiatives to create a comprehensive BMD architecture that would avoid potential security inequities among members. On March 19, 2008, he reassured a group of reporters from Turkey that, “We have no A league or B league in NATO. Every NATO ally is entitled to the same kind of protection.”

In line with De Hoop Scheffer's concerns, the June 2007 NATO Defense Ministers' meeting in Brussels authorized a comprehensive study designed to assess how to integrate the U.S. and

NATO BMD initiatives. The study explicitly aimed to develop options for possible short-range BMD systems to protect alliance members located in southeastern Europe. De Hoop Scheffer referred to this as a possible “bolt-on” to the U.S. deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic. NATO governments and defense experts raised a number of political as well as technical questions regarding the proposed “bolt-on” system, requiring further research before the allies commit to its procurement. Money was a major problem. Sharing the financial costs of NATO programs that appear to provide most unequal benefits to member governments has always proved difficult within the alliance. In the case of the bolt-on system, several European officials located far from Iran have resisted paying to develop, deploy, and operate an expensive BMD system that would protect only NATO’s members and partners near Iran. In addition, some NATO governments lobbied to defer a commitment to deploy an alliance-sponsored collective BMD system until the next U.S. administration’s BMD plans became clear.

IMPLICATIONS: The Obama administration’s decision to deploy U.S. missile defenses initially closer to Iran will help resolve the “bolt-on” problem by bringing U.S. allies in the region more directly under the U.S. missile shield. Yet, one issue requiring further action will be integrating the U.S. BMD systems that will now be deployed near Iran with the plans of the Turkish government to enhance Turkey’s own missile defenses. On September 18, the Turkish government announced it would spend approximately \$1 billion to establish a national missile defense system. The Obama administration had previously notified Congress of a possible multi-billion dollar sale of U.S. Patriot missile systems to Turkey.

Although Turkish officials publicly deny that concerns about a threat from Iran motivated their interest in missile defenses, Tehran’s expanding missile capabilities have evoked unease among many Turkish strategists. Continuing distrust of U.S. and NATO security guarantees to Turkey will likely still lead Ankara to develop its own missile notwithstanding the U.S. decision to deploy American BMD systems in Turkey’s vicinity. Yet, some degree of operational integration between the U.S. and Turkish systems will be necessary to prevent their disruptive simultaneous employment against the same targets.

Furthermore, as discussed in previous issues of the *CACI Analyst*, the BMD deployments intended for Poland and the Czech Republic have aroused sharp opposition from Moscow despite their minimal threat to Russian security. Although Obama and other U.S. officials have insisted that concerns about Russia did not affect their decision, the administration clearly hopes that suspending the Polish and Czech deployments indefinitely will improve Russian-American relations. In particular, they hope that Moscow will provide greater support for international efforts to constrain Iran’s nuclear and missile development programs.

In addition, by suspending the Polish and Czech deployments, the Obama administration can now more effectively negotiate with Moscow about pursuing past Russian offers to collaborate in constructing a pan-European missile defense architecture. In recent months, Russian officials reaffirmed proposals made by then President Vladimir Putin two years ago to share data with Washington from the Russian-operated early warning radars located at Gabala in Azerbaijan and Krasnodar Territory in

southern Russia. Putin conditioned such collaboration on Washington's freezing its planned Czech and Polish deployments. U.S. officials are assessing how the Gabala facility might support the new U.S. BMD strategy for Eurasia. In addition, some U.S. and Azerbaijani strategists see the Gabala option as a means of deepening security ties between their two countries. Yet, policy makers in Baku do not wish to antagonize Tehran by joining an overtly anti-Iranian defense program. Some analysts also fear that Moscow is trying to exacerbate tensions between Azerbaijan and

Iran in order to strengthen Russia's leverage with both states, especially with regard to the Caspian Sea, whose delineation remains contested.

Although Russian officials have welcomed the U.S. BMD announcement, thus far they have not offered any major reciprocal concessions. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said that Russian officials would now "be more attentive to" U.S. security concerns, but he insisted that Moscow would not engage in "primitive compromises or exchanges." Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, warned Russians against becoming "overwhelmed with some kind of childish euphoria" following Obama's announcement. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said that he wanted to see if "this very right and brave decision will be followed by others," implying that, when it comes to pressing the fabled "reset button," Russian leaders expect most of the resetting to occur in Washington.

In addition to not wishing to alienate Iran, one reason for Russia's cautious approach has been the concern that the United States will place some of its BMD assets in Georgia. In a September 17 briefing, General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the United States would want to deploy an early-warning radar in the Caucasus to allow for rapid detection of any Iranian missile launch. Although the Gabala radar in Azerbaijan could serve this purpose, U.S. policy makers have always worried that Moscow would seek to constrain American access to any joint BMD facility, a problem that would not arise in the case of an exclusively U.S.-controlled radar. Since Armenia's



(AP)

military ties with Moscow probably exclude its hosting an American military facility, Georgia becomes a logical site for such a base. Georgian commentators have welcomed the idea as a means of helping restore U.S.-Georgian security ties damaged by last year's war with Russia, while Russian analysts have warned that any U.S. radar in Georgia could allow Georgia to enhance its defenses against Russian missile attacks.

CONCLUSIONS: The administration's new BMD deployment plan generates new strategic options, but it is not without risks. Whereas West European governments generally welcomed the decision for removing a source of tension with Russia, Central and East European leaders have expressed alarm that the Obama

administration was sending the message to Russia that Washington accepts Moscow's special primacy in neighboring countries. The situation in the Caucasus is even more complex. The new approach could strengthen U.S. security ties with Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, but Russian policy makers could raise new objections to Washington's BMD plans in Eurasia precisely in order to avert such a development.

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New Book:

The Guns of August 2008

Edited By Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr

M.E. Sharpe, New York, June 2009,
290pp

This book is designed to present the facts about the events of August 2008 along with comprehensive coverage of the background to those events. It brings together a wealth of expertise on the South Caucasus and Russian foreign policy, with contributions by Russian, Georgian, European, and American experts on the region.

MILITARY AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS GAIN MORE MILITARY POWER UNDER BAKIEV REGIME

Erica Marat

Numerous assassinations and violent attacks against regime opponents have reportedly been plotted by security officials and criminal groups in Kyrgyzstan. Such invasive participation of security institutions in civilian life demonstrates their growing political role in Kyrgyzstan under President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's regime. Loyalty towards the ruling regime among military officials is becoming more important than their professionalism. Presently, Bakiyev has surrounded himself with loyal military and security officials who support his growing authoritarianism. It remains unclear how these officials will continue to influence the political domain in the country and whether their role will continue to rise.

BACKGROUND: Like other former Soviet states, Kyrgyzstan inherited a military submissive to civilian control. During the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan remained passive in developing a legislative base for the military and security sector. It seemed as if Kyrgyz political elites were still expecting the CIS and Collective Security Treaty to exercise some sort of supra-national control over the armed forces on their territories. Only in the mid-1990s did then President Askar Akayev begin to actively endorse military legislature that would secure his control over the armed forces. He nationalized military assets and institutions left after the collapse of the Soviet regime. Kyrgyzstan's political liberalism in the 1990s was not challenged by any significant tensions that would require an armed response. In 1997 Akayev unveiled a proposal to substantially decrease the number of army personnel because the country, according to his viewpoint, was not facing significant security threats requiring a military response. The proposal suggested retaining only the National Guard for symbolic purposes. However, the clash between Kyrgyz troops and guerrillas from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Batken in 1999 and 2000 completely changed the perception of the army's role in national security. After the conflict, the

Kyrgyz government embarked on a number of significant military reforms.

The unexpected armed clash in Batken propelled the Kyrgyz Security Council to revise its military and security planning and policymaking. Local mass media featured debates between conservative and liberal-oriented military officials in Kyrgyzstan over the course of the country's security politics. As a reaction to public pressure, in 2002 the Security Council endorsed a fairly ambitious military doctrine aimed to fundamentally reform the army. The principal change was restructuring of the army into small and mobile forces forming a capital-intensive, professionally trained, and well-equipped army. Another change was converting the army into contract-based conscription to be accomplished by 2010. External financial support was sought from bilateral and multilateral partners. Although the doctrine turned out to be another paper document that only partially defined the rationale for the existence of the armed forces, military planning and procurement, it showed that Kyrgyzstan was ready for more substantial security sector reform.

Since incumbent president Kurmanbek Bakiyev gained power in 2005, he continuously granted military and security institutions greater political

control over civilian institutions and civil life in general. Under Bakiyev, the military brass quickly changed from occupying a marginal role in state politics to turning into the primary coercive instrument for his regime. Today, all military officials are interested in sustaining the regime as they now take a direct part in the



political life.

IMPLICATIONS: On March 24, 2005, when Akayev was ousted by opposition forces, the Kyrgyz military remained neutral. Akayev did not resort to military protection of his regime, while the military switched its loyalty to the new president within 24-48 hours. Whether the military will remain equally neutral should opposition forces mobilize to a similar extent again is now doubtful.

Although in 2005-2006, then Defense Minister Ismail Isakov brought substantial success in augmenting the internal morale of the military, this promising change did not last long. Isakov actively implemented better incentives for service and recruitment. Isakov's success demonstrated how the enhancement of public institutions in the

context of a decentralized Kyrgyz government is contingent on initiatives by individual agents. However, as Bakiyev continued to quickly lose his popularity among the masses, he turned out to be reluctant to bring in any substantial changes in the public sector and the military was not an exception. Bakiyev sacked Isakov and his deputies, appointing his former personal guard head, Bakytbek Kalyev, as defense minister.

By 2008, Bakiyev had replaced all influential military officials with cronies who would be loyal to him should the opposition organize mass protests before or after that year's presidential vote. Minister of Interior Moldomusa Kongantiyev and the head of the Security Council, Adakhan Madumarov, worked closely with Bakiev to strengthen his power and the pro-regime Ak Jol party during 2005-2009. Before the July 2009 presidential elections, the ministries of interior and defense ministry worked to quiet opposition forces as public discontent, exposing the control wielded by the ruling regime. Many experts in Kyrgyzstan accuse the president's brother, Zhanysh Bakiev, of being responsibility for

various repressive measures since 2005.

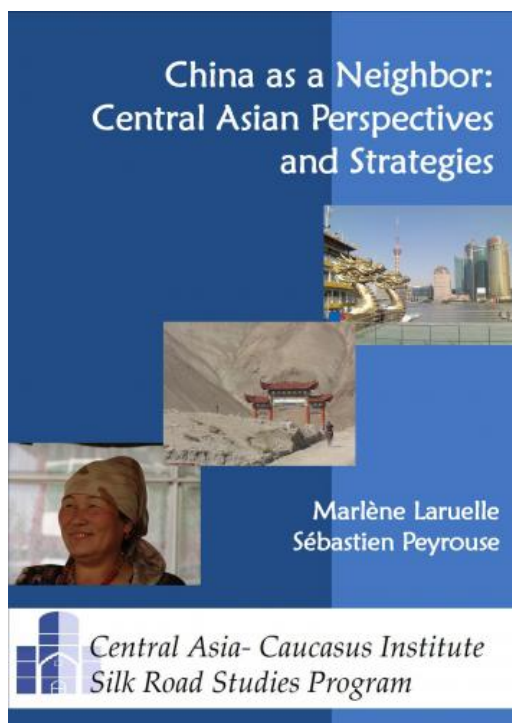
In this environment there is less and less space left for independent mass media, public debate or NGO activity. Partly as a result of a muted NGO community and independent mass media, security officials show an inclination to impose more coercive rules upon society. Recently, Madumarov and head of the National Security Committee Murat Sutalinov proposed to legalize the death penalty again. Finally, last year, the Kyrgyz army was given the official right to intervene into internal affairs.

The Kyrgyz military's continuous increase of political power might prompt military officials to take autonomous political decisions. The question today is whether the military and police will continue to support Bakiev's authoritarian

regime, or become a more autonomous institution. The military could remain loyal to the ruling regime and support Bakiyev's policies as he rules, regardless of how authoritarian his regime becomes. In the case of regime change, the military could turn their loyalty to new regime holders independent of their political views. Alternatively, the military could take autonomous political decisions at times when the state's security is challenged by internal or external threats. These could include mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, or aggressive opposition among secular as well as religious groups. Since the growing role of the military also provides justification for the use of violence by regime opponents against the state, it increases the risk of violent conflict between competing groups. The future of Kyrgyzstan's civil-military relations is therefore more unpredictable today compared to the early 1990s and even the Soviet period.

CONCLUSIONS: Bakiev's ability to physically remove and threaten his political opponents indicates the growing role of the military and security officials in the political domain. The military's forceful engagement in politics could further lead it to take up arms against civilian demonstrations or individual opposition leaders, rent-seeking and extortion of the civilian leadership, and disagreements among military commanders, further leading to violence. Without effective state mechanisms for peaceful transfers of power, the Bakiev regime seeks to secure the support of military officials. Both political and military elites, when threatened, are likely to appeal to coercive methods, rather than democracy and civil liberties.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Dr. Erica Marat is a Nonresident Research Fellow with the Central Asia - Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program.



New Book:

*China as a Neighbor: Central Asian
Perspectives and Strategies*

By Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien
Peyrouse

This Book provides a regional viewpoint
on the expansion of Chinese economic,
political and cultural influence in Central
Asia.

The book can be downloaded free at
www.silkroadstudies.org. Hardcopy
requests should be addressed to Marion
B. Cherry at caciz@jhu.edu.

EU INQUIRY REJECTS RUSSIA'S JUSTIFICATIONS FOR GEORGIA WAR

Svante E. Cornell

The release of a much anticipated EU-commissioned report into the causes of the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 predictably spread the blame for the conflict around. Georgia got its share of the blame, but the text of the report is devastating to Russia's narrative of the conflict. The Report faulted Georgia for its attack on Tskhinvali; but summarily and bluntly dismisses the entire Russian justification for its subsequent invasion, as well as its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Importantly, the report also warns against the dangers of the accepting rhetoric of 'spheres of influence'. Whether this will result in any tangible implications remains more doubtful.

BACKGROUND: Assisted by a small army of experts, Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini has spent close to a year investigating the origins and course of the Russian-Georgian war. Tagliavini's report itself is moderate in size, consisting of 40 pages, but it is supplemented by a 450-page addendum of historical, humanitarian, legal and political analyses by members of her group, as well as a further 600 pages of appendices (mainly documents provided by the conflicting parties). Given its size and the subject matter, the report will undoubtedly be the subject of great debate and controversy.

Predictably, both sides have claimed that it vindicates their version of events. Russian officials and media draw attention to the report's conclusion that Georgia's attack on Tskhinvali 'started' the war; while Georgian officials have pointed to the considerable attention given to Russia's preparations for the war, going so far as to state that "almost all of the facts in the report confirm the Georgian version of events."

The immediate media coverage centered on the seeming confirmation of a familiar narrative: Georgia started the war, but Russia provoked it. But in fact, sound bites aside, the text of the report makes interesting reading. It is not uncontroversial, as certain omissions and nuances appear tailored to political correctness. Nevertheless, on the whole, any reader of the report will find that the Commission apportions an overwhelming part of the responsibility of the conflict to the Russian government. In fact, it practically rejects every item in the Russian narrative of the conflict in language that is surprisingly blunt.

Tagliavini's report does state that Georgia started the war. That should not be confused with the question of responsibility. Indeed, the report acknowledges that firing the first shot does not necessarily mean bearing responsibility for the conflict, as it concluded that "there is no way to assign overall responsibility for the conflict to one side alone." (Para. 36) Indeed, the report details at length the extended series of Russian provocations,

accelerating in the spring of 2008, that precipitated the war.

argument is powerful, and suffers only from one weakness: it fails to consider the far-going



(Reuters)

The report faults Georgia for the weakness of the legal basis of its attack on the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali on the night of August 7-8, and for the use of what it terms indiscriminate force there. The legal argument nevertheless requires closer scrutiny: the mission argues that Georgia was bound by agreements not to use force, but fails to discuss their validity if broken by either the South Ossetian side or by Russia. More poignantly, Tagliavini argues that any Georgian “armed response to ... South Ossetian attacks against Georgian populated villages ... would have to be both necessary and proportional,” concluding that the massive magnitude of the military action makes that argument untenable. This

unification, in practice and in theory, of South Ossetian and Russian military forces. Indeed, for several years prior to the war, South Ossetia’s Defense Minister had been Russian General Vasily Lunev, a career Russian military officer with no ties whatsoever to South Ossetia. A glaring omission in the report is its failure to discuss the Russian staffing of high government posts in the breakaway republics, and its international legal implications. The fact that this is largely uncharted legal territory possibly deterred the mission from discussing the issue.

A crucial question, of course, is the report’s take on Georgia’s claim that it was responding to a Russian invasion. On this point, Tagliavini

equivocates: the mission is “not in a position” to consider the Georgian claims “sufficiently substantiated,” it says in para. 16. This is clearly an exercise in semantics, since the next sentences acknowledge Russian provision of military training and equipment to the rebels, and that “volunteers and mercenaries” entered Georgian territory from Russia before the Georgian attack. One is left wondering what would be necessary for a spade to be called a spade. In this context, Tagliavini appears to have failed to take account of the considerable body of evidence accumulated by scholars such as Andrei Illarionov.

IMPLICATIONS: The main thrust of the report is devastating in its dismissal of Russia’s justification for its invasion – in fact surprisingly so for an EU product. As will be recalled, Russia variously claimed it was protecting its citizens; engaging in a humanitarian intervention; responding to a Georgian “genocide” of Ossetians; or responding to an attack on its peacekeepers. The mission roundly dismisses all of these claims.

The EU report finds that Russia’s distribution of passports to Abkhazians and Ossetians in the years prior to the war was illegal. Specifically, para. 12 states that “the vast majority of purportedly naturalised persons from South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not Russian nationals in terms of international law. Neither Georgia nor any third country need acknowledge such Russian nationality”, adding that “the mass conferral of Russian citizenship to Georgian nationals ... constitutes an open challenge to Georgian sovereignty and an interference in the internal affairs of Georgia.” Consequently, the report finds that Russia’s rationale of rescuing its citizens is invalid, since they simply were not legally Russian citizens.

The report also rejects Russia’s claim of having undertaken a humanitarian intervention. Taking note of the extremely limited circumstances under which such interventions may be legally acceptable, it recalls Russia’s consistent opposition to the entire concept of humanitarian intervention, and reaches a blunt conclusion: “In such a constellation, a humanitarian intervention is not recognised at all.” (para. 22)

The list goes on. The reports summarily dismisses Russian allegations of genocide, noting that these were “neither founded in law nor substantiated by factual evidence.” On the other hand, it faults Russia for failing to intervene against the ethnic cleansing of Georgians from South Ossetia and Abkhazia that took place during and after the war.

The report does acknowledge a Russian right to protect its peacekeepers in South Ossetia, a conclusion that could be questioned given the established presence of other Russian-controlled armed forces on Georgian territory at the time. Of course, had Georgia not bent to pressure from its Western allies and followed through on its intention to declare the peacekeeping forces illegal in June 2008, this argument would have been moot. Nevertheless, the mission concludes that “much of the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defence.” (para. 21) in particular, the report notes the unprovoked opening of a second front in Abkhazia, terming it “an armed attack against Georgia in the sense of Article 51 of the UN Charter.” However, the report fails to discuss whether this attack was premeditated, as is widely assumed given the speed with which it occurred, or constituted a reaction to the events in South Ossetia. Nevertheless, Tagliavini again uses blunt terms: Russia’s response “cannot be regarded as even remotely

commensurate with the threat to Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia.”

Finally, the mission considered the question of Russia’s recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and its conclusion is worth quoting in full: “South Ossetia did not have a right to secede from Georgia, and the same holds true for Abkhazia for much of the same reasons. Recognition of breakaway entities such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia by a third country is consequently contrary to international law in terms of an unlawful interference in the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected country.”

Another important aspect of the Missions is that it did not refrain from taking stock of the failure of the international community’s efforts to address the crisis: “there had been no adequate reaction by the international community which would have been both timely and vigorous enough to contain the continuing build-up of tensions and the increasing threat of armed conflict.” (Observations, para. 2) Indeed, this constitutes one of the international community’s first acknowledgments of its failures in conflict resolution in the South Caucasus and the tragic consequences of this failure.

CONCLUSIONS: While elements of the official EU inquiry into the war in Georgia could be the subject of criticism, on the whole it must be commended as a work undertaken with considerable integrity. The report clearly provides uncomfortable conclusions for all parties – Russia, Georgia, the two breakaway republics, and the West. Nevertheless, it is equally apparent that its most scathing criticism is reserved for Russia’s role in the conflict.

Significantly, the report found that Russia had long been purposefully engaging in provocations against Georgia and unlawful intervention in its internal affairs, and that none of Moscow’s various justifications for its invasion of Georgia hold water. Moreover, the report goes on to fault Russia’s behavior following the conflict, as it continues to be in material breach of the EU-negotiated cease-fire agreement.

While the EU report will be of great use to historians, its main implications should concern the present. This is the case because the conflict between Russia and Georgia is not over. While its military phase only lasted a few weeks, it continues in the diplomatic, political and economic realms. It is destabilizing a part of Europe that the both the EU and the Obama administration have so far failed to pay sufficient attention to. They will ignore only at their own peril one of the report’s final conclusions: “notions such as privileged spheres of interest ... are irreconcilable with international law. They are dangerous to international peace and stability. They should be rejected”. And doing so will take more than either the United States or the European Union presently appear prepared to do. It is to be hoped that this report will change that; nevertheless, it is equally likely that the West will shrug it off and move on.

AUTHOR’S BIO: Svante E. Cornell is Editor of the CACI Analyst, and Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center. He is co-editor of the recently released *The Guns of August 2009: Russia’s War in Georgia*, published by M.E. Sharpe.

RUSSIA'S NEW DEFENSE LAW AND MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE CIS

Stephen Blank

On August 11, President Dmitry Medvedev sent a letter to the Duma urging it to revise Russia's laws on defense. He urged, specifically, that the Russian Armed Forces could be used in operations beyond Russia's borders for the purposes of countering an attack against Russian Forces or other troops deployed beyond Russia's borders; to counter or prevent an aggression against another country; to protect Russian citizens abroad; and to combat piracy and ensure safe passage of shipping. The implications of this law are profoundly negative for the CIS if not for Russia's international relations as a whole.

BACKGROUND: Medvedev expressly justified this demand for legal revision with a reference to last year's war against Georgia by admitting that there was no legal basis for that war, or in other words, that in terms of Russian law it was illegal. Whereas the old law called upon the President to submit a request for military action beyond the borders to the Duma, he did not do so at the time. Thus the Russian government started a foreign war that violated its own laws with impunity. Indeed, it received and also generated a public response of tumultuous approval. The new law therefore aims to provide a retrospective approval for the 2008 war and, as Georgia's government and analysts pointed out, could be used as a pretext for another war justified on the grounds of mistreatment of Russians in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, etc.

But beyond Georgia, this law provides a "legal" basis for the offensive projection of Russian military force beyond Russia's borders against every state from the Baltic to Central Asia on the selfsame basis of supposedly defending the "honor and dignity" of Russian citizens and culture from discrimination and attack. This is not surprising. After all, in the wake of the

Russo-Georgian war, Medvedev announced that he would form his foreign policy on five principles. Among them are principles that give Russia a license for intervening in other states where the Russian "minority's interests and dignity" are allegedly at risk. Medvedev also asserted that Russia has privileged interests with countries which he would not define, demonstrating that Russia not only wants to revise borders or intervene in other countries, it also demands a sphere of influence in Eurasia as a whole.

On the same day as he wrote this letter to the Duma, Medvedev wrote a similar letter that he released on his video blog, excoriating the Ukrainian government for not submitting to Russian policy preferences on a host of issues, including the alleged mistreatment of Russians and the Russian language in Ukraine. Although his immediate motive may have been to lay down a political marker and interfere in Ukraine's presidential election, the charges here and the situation on the Crimean peninsula or in Ukraine generally can be construed as providing Moscow with a casus belli against Ukraine. And there are undoubtedly many in

the military and political elite who would like to retain the Crimea as a Russian territory.

their countries and that this could bring about a delicate political situation, the implication being that Moscow will not hesitate, if



IMPLICATIONS: Again the importance of this projected new law goes beyond Ukraine and Georgia, although they may be obvious flashpoints. It certainly includes the Baltic States, which have been the target of repeated Russian attacks on the alleged discrimination against the Russian minority there. But it also could be deployed quite easily against Central Asian states like Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. Russia clearly was quite angry about the new Tajik language law that banned the official use of Russian as a medium of interethnic communication. Russian officials promptly threatened that this could lead to the banning of Tajik migrant workers in Russia or a mutiny at home against President Rakhmonov. Moscow and its emissaries also like to warn all Central Asian governments, not least Kazakhstan, that they have substantial Russian minorities in

necessary, to play that card against the ruling regimes in Central Asia.

Now Russia has added a military card to the already formidable roster of instruments of pressure that it can deploy against recalcitrant CIS states. It has long been known that military intervention in the event of a destabilization of any of those states has been a contingency plan of the Russian military. And Moscow's success in creating new bases in Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and provisionally in Uzbekistan at Navoi in case of major crises, could facilitate such a decision. It would not take much imagination to claim that a destabilization of the situation in any of these states places Russians at risk, and subsequently use this as a justification for such an intervention. After all, key Russian spokesmen

such as Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov (who was also Defense Minister in 2001-07) have long claimed that the most serious threat to Russian security would be an attempt to unhinge the constitutional arrangements and domestic status quo in the CIS as a whole. Now the “legal” means for a military intervention allegedly to defend Russians against such an attack are being developed. Neither should we forget that Russia has already attacked at least four ex-Soviet republics by means of cyber-strikes to show its displeasure at their domestic policies or to ensure that they follow Russia’s line. Although its successes have varied, Moscow has launched cyber-strikes against Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, aside from Georgia during last year’s war. Thus precedents in this regard have already been set.

CONCLUSIONS: Two other decidedly negative implications come out of this new law. Once again it clearly shows Moscow’s belief that its neighbors are not truly sovereign states. Sergei Ivanov and numerous other officials, including President Vladimir Putin, have made this point repeatedly in 2003-08, and Premier Putin said it again on August 27 when he charged that few states today enjoy true sovereignty – although he blamed the U.S. for this. As long as Moscow professes that its neighbors have a diminished sovereignty as under the Brezhnev doctrine, none of them is truly safe as Moscow can always manufacture grounds for threatening or actually using force against them. Thus, Russia preserves the CIS and Eastern Europe in a state of perpetual tension in its effort to maintain a sphere of influence over these areas and revise the Eurasian status quo. Medvedev now wants the power to conduct war abroad without any shred of accountability to the Duma – or anyone else

– on grounds that invoke the justifications of Hitler and Stalin for their wars and conquests 70 years ago. That justification is that ethnic Russians are Russian citizens wherever they reside, and that the Russian Federation has the legal grounds not only to raise their condition in political fora but to intervene militarily on their behalf because of this alleged citizenship. This doctrine undermines any notion of these states’ sovereignty since it negates their authority over their own citizens and confers upon Russians the benefits of extra-territoriality, one of the most obnoxious of all colonial powers over subjected peoples.

Secondly, this law represents another major nail in the coffin of Russian democracy. Medvedev has already acknowledged that the 2008 war with Georgia was illegal. Henceforth, it will be practically impossible to prevent Moscow from unsheathing the sword any time it wants to. And we should not think it will only do so abroad. The government is converting the North Caucasus into a region ruled under martial law by the FSB whose exploits in Chechnya should give us more than pause. Beyond this, members of the General Staff have already called for using the army at home against dissidents. Ultimately then, this law is another step in a process that joins state-sanctioned militarism to a growing dictatorship, i.e. a regime that, as Lenin observed, accounts to no one and is ultimately guaranteed by its ability to use force without any legal or institutional constraint at home or abroad.

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FIELD REPORTS

KYRGYZ OPPOSITION PARLIAMENTARIAN LOSES IMMUNITY

Nurshat Ababakirov

On September 18, the parliament stripped Kubanychbek Kadyrov, parliamentarian from the Social Democratic Party (SDPK) faction, of his immunity. The decision was pushed through by the presidential Ak Jol party and supported by the pro-governmental Communist Party and is widely seen as politically driven. As an unprecedented step, it marks the Bakiev regime's increasing pressure on the opposition, and especially on the SDPK as the only opposition party represented in parliament.

The removal of immunity was requested by the Prosecutor General, Elmurza Satybaldiev, who claimed it was a "requisite" step in proceeding with the investigations into the arrests of United People's Movement (UPM) activists in Balykchy in Issyk Kul on Election Day. The Prosecutor General declared that Kadyrov was a ringleader of the protests along with nineteen other detained activists; Kadyrov is incriminated for his alleged attempts to disrupt the election process, threatening the lives of police officers, and instigating mass protests.

According to the unofficial version, a few dozen UPM activists, including SDPK parliamentarian Mirbek Asanakunov, were arrested on July 23 when they gathered in front of the Rayon Election Commission's office to complain about widespread irregularities at the polling stations. Kadyrov was arrested later when he gathered roughly a hundred people in front of the local police building to demand the release of UPM observers. Currently, nineteen people are under trial, some of them reportedly severely beaten.

SDPK parliamentarian Roza Otunbaeva, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and a member of the ad hoc commission designated to deal with Kadyrov's immunity, noted that the accusations against Kadyrov relied on the statements of one arrested UPM activist in Balykchy who had been subjected to force, and that the commission did little to acquaint itself with the actual state of affairs. She stressed that the Prosecutor General's allegations were the only source of information for the commission, while arrested people in fact reject these allegations in court.

Former speaker of parliament Abdygany Erkebaev noted that the decision was unprecedented. Attempts were made in the past to bring certain parliamentarians to justice, but these were strictly related to their business activities. UPM leader Almazbek Atambaev said the process is part of an attempt to threaten people in light of the Bakiev regime's increasing pressure following the contentious elections and did not rule out that charges against other opposition members could follow the incrimination of Kadyrov.

With its eleven seats, the SDPK is the only opposition party represented in parliament. It has been under increasing pressure after it came to constitute the core of the UPM, whose leader, Atambaev, ran as the opposition candidate in the July presidential election. The SDPK was highly visible in the election campaign, its office becoming the UPM's headquarters and its website functioning as one of the few sources on opposition activities. As a consequence, its members have increasingly been forced out of the party to either join the

government or leave politics altogether. “The government is teaching us a lesson, some of which is quite effective,” Otunbaeva stated, referring to SDPK’s shrinking membership.

On September 1, SDPK parliamentarian Murat Juraev revoked his mandate in protest of the “radicalization” of the SDPK and the “language of ultimatums” it had chosen. Two SDPK parliamentarians, Rahat Irsaliev and Osmon Artykbaev, also left parliament months before the elections referring to business-related grounds, while stressing that no political motives were behind their decisions. On June 22, Jusupjan Jeenbekov revoked his mandate in an attempt to find his son Baktiyar Amirajanov, a businessman who disappeared in September 2008 and is reportedly kidnapped by criminal groups for extortion. His body was found in the outskirts of Bishkek shortly after the election. Another SDPK parliamentarian, Ruslan Shabotoev, disappeared in September 2008 and is reportedly also abducted. His whereabouts still remain unknown.

In January 2009 businessman and once-vocal opposition member Omurbek Babanov became deputy prime minister and withdrew from the SDPK. UPM leader Atambaev noted that “it will be difficult for businessmen to be in the opposition. Laws are not working, and pressure comes from all sides. Not everyone can get through this process”. The UPM reportedly lost many supporters as well, especially in rural areas where people proved more susceptible to administrative pressure during the

election campaign. Another prominent SDPK parliamentarian, Atambaev’s campaign manager Bakyt Beshimov who was scathingly critical of Bakiev’s authoritarian regime, is currently in the U.S.. His return and as his future plans remain uncertain, but will certainly depend on the political developments in Kyrgyzstan. Although the SDPK’s seats are refilled with MPs from the party list, these are less known and less experienced.

On August 19, Atambaev announced that his party is ready to merge with the Ata Meken party, stressing that he would not compete for its leadership. Ata Meken leader Omurbek Tekebaev confirmed that talks on merging the two parties was on the agenda, owing to their similar social democratic platforms. Tekebaev also made clear that creating a new party out of UPM was “politically premature”, and that the idea arose in the wake of the opposition’s defeat in the elections.

Buttressed by the pro-governmental media outlets, ever harsher means employed by the government make the opposition look increasingly disunited and bankrupt of ideas. This trend is particularly worrisome in light of the administrative reforms called by President Bakiev in September, on which the opposition’s opinion would be crucial. Moreover, information has leaked that some pro-governmental parties are gearing up, generating speculations that the genuine opposition could be completely sidelined from parliament in the near future.

ARMENIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE RELEASES FINAL ASSESSMENT OF 2008 CLASHES

Vahagn Muradyan

The final report of the ad hoc committee investigating the March 2008 clashes between police and protesters after the last presidential election in Armenia was presented by committee chair Samvel Nikoyan during parliamentary debates on

September 16 and 17. The report draws on the Ombudsman’s assessments of the general politico-economic climate at the time, mentioning poverty, social inequality, lack of trust in law-enforcement bodies and marginalization of large segments of the

population as the root causes of the clashes leaving eight civilians and two riot police dead.

The parliamentary ad hoc committee was set up in June 2008 with a mandate to investigate the events and their causes, assess the legality and proportionality of police behavior, and clarify the circumstances of the ten deaths. The parliamentary opposition Heritage Party and the extra-parliamentary Armenian National Congress (ANC), led by 2008 oppositional presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosyan, boycotted the committee's work saying its composition and voting procedure marginalized the opposition.

Condemning the atmosphere of intolerance amplified by the media during the election campaign, the report qualifies the opposition's non-stop rallies at Yerevan's Freedom Square as unlawful. In line with the official view, the ad hoc committee confirmed that the police decided to inspect the rally area in the morning of March 1 to verify reports about stashed weapons among the protesters, and had to engage them after meeting resistance. Importantly, the report concludes that police action during the dispersal of protesters in the morning of March 1 at Freedom Square and later during clashes near the French embassy was largely legal and proportionate. It admitted, however, that the police failed to exhaust all peaceful measures before resorting to force.

The report was released nearly three and a half months after a five-member expert fact finding group – functioning in parallel with the parliamentary committee and endorsed by the opposition – ceased to exist due to insurmountable internal tensions. The group was composed of a representative of the Ombudsman's office, two experts appointed by the opposition ANC and Heritage, and two experts representing the governing coalition. It was set up in October 2008 following a presidential order, tasked with disclosing and transferring facts about the March events to the parliamentary committee, enabling the latter to produce a final assessment.

During its controversial existence, the Group managed to produce only one report (not endorsed by the coalition representatives), questioning the official version of riot police officer Hamlet Tadevosyan's death. Three subsequent reports were submitted by the two opposition members after the Group was officially dissolved in June 2009, relating to the use of special anti-riot equipment by the police; the death of riot police conscript Tigran Abgaryan, and the alleged involvement of civilians loyal to certain high-ranking officials in breaking up the crowd while disguised in military uniforms.

The parliamentary committee's final report effectively dismissed both the group's findings and the opposition representatives' individual reports through presenting them with parallel comments of the Special Investigative Service in charge of the preliminary investigation. Noting that the committee could not investigate the circumstances of the ten deaths for reasons of objectivity, the parliamentary body expressed hope that the law enforcement bodies would clarify the issue and complete the still ongoing investigation.

After the presentation of the report, the ANC issued a statement on September 18 condemning the committee for “deliberately disregarding the facts collected by the fact-finding group for more than 6 months” in order to exculpate the executive, and pledged to continue its work to reveal the truth about the March events. Ombudsman Armen Harutiunian, on the other hand, offered an overall positive assessment of the report, however criticizing the committee for failing to provide an in-depth evaluation of the Prosecutor General's apparent failure to ensure effective control over the course and legality of the investigation.

The sentiments sparked by the report reveal the remaining dividing lines in Armenian society and the continuing crisis of confidence in law enforcement bodies. This was manifested by the short existence of the fact-finding group of experts. In the absence of any direct communication between government and opposition, the group constituted the only platform for dialogue on the most contentious issues. Tensions within the group

and its eventual breakup again confirmed that the sides are not yet ready to cooperate.

Domestic reactions aside, the committee's report still has to stand the test of the international community. In its June 2009 resolution on Armenia, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stated that an independent, impartial and credible investigation into the March events was still necessary and that "the final report by the Ad hoc Parliamentary Inquiry Committee will determine whether the criteria of impartiality and

credibility have been met and whether further investigations are necessary". The Assembly's anticipated assessment could start fresh domestic debates and influence a new course of action. The international community, however, is likely to endorse the report's main recommendations: continued training to increase the professionalism of the police and other law-enforcement bodies, strengthening of political institutions and consistent work to increase the efficiency of justice in order to prevent similar crises in the future.

TURKMENISTAN RESTRICTS STUDENT MOBILITY

Chemen Durdiyeva

This summer's new regulations on studying at foreign universities abroad have caused widespread confusion and resentment among the students in Turkmenistan and also raised questions about President Berdimuhammedov's so called "reformist" image.

The new rule that came into effect in late July requires students to obtain official permission from the National Education Institute of Turkmenistan to be able to study abroad. This rule caught many by surprise as it was initially not officially announced or published in state media sources. Many students found out about the existence of such regulations only when they either got stuck at the airport customs control or when they were simply taken off their international flights in Ashgabat. While some were lucky to return their universities abroad before July, more than a thousand students lined up in panic to get the official "stamp" allowing them to leave the country.

According to the chief of the ad hoc "stamping committee", which is set up to register all students going abroad, the new regulation requires the students to provide the following information: 1. An invitation (or contract) from the university; 2. A copy of the student's passport, and visa of the inviting country; 3. A university license confirming

its accreditation, also showing if it is a private or state university; If it is a private university and located in any of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, the students were automatically denied registration and permit to leave. The head of the committee said that the third requirement mainly applies to students studying in CIS countries, while those studying in Europe or the U.S. are granted a permit to depart.

Young people of conscription age need to obtain an additional permission or a temporary leave from military registration and enlistment offices of the Ministry of Defense allowing them to defer their two year obligatory military service. In this connection, rumors have spread that students also need to get a permission to leave from Turkmenistan's State Migration Service. Hundreds of students or prospective students rushed in panic to Ashgabat from different parts of the country. Within a few days after the news spread, the line of students waiting in front of the doors of the National Education Institute to get a stamp reached one thousand. Some students said they have been waiting in line since five in the morning but were not able to make it by the end of the day. In an attempt to go around the third requirement, some students studying at private universities in the CIS

managed to obtain the required documents from any state universities abroad to be able to return and continue their studies at their respective universities. Others tried to reach their universities through a third country but the authorities strengthened the border screening procedures at all border crossings of Turkmenistan after discovering the different methods students were using to escape the new rule.

Students of the American University in Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek under the U.S. government sponsored program TASP have suffered the most as a result of this new rule. Since AUCA is a private liberal arts university, Turkmen authorities did not recognize it as an institution of higher education under the new rule. Turkmen AUCA students, constituting the second largest ethnic group after the Kyrgyz at AUCA, who were spending their summer vacations in Turkmenistan have been completely denied permission to depart from the country despite the U.S. Embassy's direct involvement in the issue. Confusion rose among many over why the authorities "blacklisted" AUCA, while at the same time granting permission

to transfer AUCA students to the American University in Bulgaria.

No official statement was released for why the government suddenly decided to curb studying in private schools abroad. However, many analysts of foreign media outlets claim that the government is trying to control the type of education Turkmen students are receiving abroad. The controversial new regulations caught international attention, which was nevertheless not sufficient to lift the ban on studying in private schools. Human Rights Watch issued a letter calling on the government of Turkmenistan to "immediately revoke" the travel ban for students studying in private schools abroad. The Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (TIHR), a Vienna based émigré opposition group accused the Turkmen government of returning to late President Saparmurad Niyazov's policies, which considered students studying abroad as a potential threat to his regime. At a meeting with President Berdimuhammedov at the UN last week, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even praised Berdimuhammedov for his previous educational reforms and the controversial regulations were not even raised during the bilateral talks.

COTTON HARVEST AND CHILD LABOR IN UZBEKISTAN

Erkin Akhmadov

September marks the beginning of the cotton-picking season in Uzbekistan. Cotton is often called the "white gold of Uzbekistan", and Uzbek authorities and farmers alike seek maximum yield from the fields. A problem that has been present in Uzbekistan for many years is the use of forced child labor in the cotton fields. The issue has already received great attention locally, as well as from the international community. In 2008, Uzbekistan's authorities admitted that child labor was used and launched an official campaign to eradicate it, adopting a state program on the protection of child rights. At the start of this year's cotton-picking

season in Uzbekistan it is possible to observe and evaluate whether the promises are kept.

In the beginning of 2009, the Center of Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus, based in London, published a report on the use of forced child labor in Uzbekistan's cotton fields. One of the major conclusions of the report is that child labor in Uzbekistan may be eradicated only with an integrated reform of the agricultural sector and a change of the monopolistic policy that favors cotton cultivation. In other words, the report assumes that the state cannot afford to abolish the use of child labor from the most important revenue generating

sector of economy. The forecast of the report is not optimistic, stating that if necessary reforms are not introduced, Uzbekistan's rural population will both remain poor and lose trust in the authorities, which may in turn hamper the country's overall development.

Uzbekistan has signed several international conventions that are directly related to the use of child labor. For instance, it signed the Conventions of International Labor Organization, which contains provisions prohibiting child labor. Certain provisions of the Child Rights Convention which Uzbekistan has also signed are also in conflict with the present practice.

In September 2008, the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan adopted a National Action Plan for realizing these conventions by adopting a resolution on prohibiting the use of forced child labor by enterprises, organizations and private persons. In line with this, the Cabinet recommended the Prosecutor General to toughen control over the requirements for the minimal age of employment and take immediate measures to eradicate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Education also conveyed a message on its intentions to prevent disruption of the academic year through mobilization of pupils and students to the cotton fields.

Nevertheless, while the authorities make promises and elaborate their Action Plans, the situation on the ground does not seem to change. Local human rights organizations report that in several provinces, children are already being mobilized to the cotton fields and schools are being closed for the cotton season. For instance, in Surkhandaryo province seven-to-nine-graders are already in the fields; in Djizakh province nine-to-eleven-graders are mobilized; in Namangan and Andijan province students of vocational schools and lyceums are already involved in "helping the farmers". So far only the authorities of Ferghana province have officially stated that this year, children will not be mobilized for picking cotton as the protection of their rights needs to be prioritized. Thus, in Ferghana province the staff of organizations and

institutions will instead be involved in the harvest this year.

Meanwhile, the authorities of Uzbekistan conduct active propaganda among the population on the importance and value of contributing to the "common cause". On September 22, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoev announced the beginning of universal cotton *hashar* (a local practice of voluntary contribution of financial or labor resources). This message did not explicitly promote the use of child labor. However, since the Prime Minister called for a massive mobilization of resources, it could be assumed that necessary contributions from pupils are expected. Another way of mobilizing people for cotton-picking was used in Andijan province. A local newspaper notes a case when imams in mosques stated that every plant growing out of the soil is the will of Allah; and since cotton is a national wealth, a symbol of well-being and prosperity of the nation, it is a duty of every good Muslim to help pick it. Thus, the newspaper reports, after praying in the mosque many go right to the fields to pick cotton.

Some changes are underway in Andijan province, where the authorities have compelled school principals to assure that parents take responsibility for their schoolchildren's health and safety, including while they are in the cotton fields. Thus, the responsibility would shift from the authorities and their local representatives onto the parents. It is reported that many parents are shocked by such an initiative as they do not see any possible way to supervise their children while they are in the fields. Others interpret it as a statement of the authorities' inability to provide safety and protection to children involved in the cotton harvest.

In sum, the use of child labor on Uzbekistan's cotton fields does not seem to have changed much. Even though the state has officially launched a National Action Plan to eradicate forced child labor and the authorities of some provinces attempt to stress the involvement of the adult population, there still seems to be little incentive for giving up the cheapest source of labor.

NEWS DIGEST

U.S. SEES TURKMENISTAN AS ENERGY LEADER

22 September

The U.S. government expressed its desire to see Turkmenistan emerge as a leader in terms of energy security and energy supply, officials say. Robert Blake, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for the South and Central Asia bureau, briefed reporters on a bilateral meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. "On the energy front, the secretary said that we want to see Turkmenistan really be a leader in terms of energy security and energy supply," said Blake. He added that Turkmenistan had an "important role to play" in the development of the \$10.3 billion Nabucco pipeline for Europe. A January gas row between Kiev and Moscow exposed gaps in the regional energy transport sector. Europe aims to diversify its gas transport options through Nabucco. Nabucco is designed to have the capacity to move 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas each year to European customers from Caspian and Middle Eastern suppliers. The pipeline would run from the Caspian region through Turkey to Austria along a route through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. Despite political backing for the project, it lacks firm commitments from potential gas suppliers. Reinhard Mitschek, managing director of the Nabucco international consortium, however, said supply options were diverse. "We see Azerbaijan, Iraq and Turkmenistan as the first suppliers," he told an Azeri press service. "Other options will also be considered in the future." (UPI)

SAAKASHVILI MEETS CLINTON

22 September

In remarks before the meeting with President Saakashvili in New York on September 21, U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, reiterated Washington's support to Georgia's territorial integrity and democratic reforms. "We are working to try to ensure that Russia abides by the 2008

ceasefire, and hopefully to eventually reintegrate your country as it should be," Clinton said. "We also know that working toward democracy and the changes that you're attempting to achieve are challenging, but we want to support and encourage the steps that need to be taken. And the United States supports Georgia, and we want to make that very clear and unequivocal statement here today. President Saakashvili thanked the Secretary of State "for all the support you've given us." "I also saw your article [on missile defense] this morning in the Financial Times of London, and it was very impressive because the message was very clear-cut, very unambiguous... and we are very grateful to you for that moral clarity, as well as strategic vision of what U.S. role in our region should be," Saakashvili told the Secretary of State before the meeting. Clinton responded: "We think this approach is much more effective, and it will certainly cover Georgia and the Caucasus and it will send a clear message that the United States is committed to the defense of all of Europe in the years going forward. Thank you very much." After the meeting Philip H. Gordon, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, told journalists that during the talks, Clinton emphasized that the U.S. "does not and will not recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia." (Civil Georgia)

ADMINISTRATION DENIES INVOLVEMENT WITH NAZARBAYEV PRESIDENCY INITIATIVE

23 September

The Kazakh presidential administration has not come up with an initiative to make Nursultan Nazarbayev president for life, Deputy Presidential Chief-of-Staff Maulen Ashimbayev said. The presidential administration is not discussing any such proposals, either, Ashimbayev told a congress of political scientists on Wednesday. "This initiative belongs to certain people, representatives of the intelligentsia and political parties. But it has nothing to do with the authorities. This issue is

not being discussed at Ak Orda [the presidential residence in Almaty]. It is not on its agenda, either," he said. Last week, Darkhan Kaletayev, first deputy chairman of Kazakhstan's ruling Nur Otan party, proposed discussing and adopting a law on the nation's leader, which could allow Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has led Kazakhstan since it gained independence in the early 1990s, to become the country's president for life. Nazarbayev is leader of the Nur Otan party. (Interfax)

ROSNEFT INTERESTED IN BTC PIPELINE

24 September

In a major turnaround of Russian policy, the country's largest oil producer has expressed interest in using the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan export pipeline. AzerNews reported Thursday that Rosneft's President Sergei Bogdanchikov has told journalists his firm could benefit from transporting crude via BTC, commenting, "Turkey is the second-largest consumer of Russian fuel, next to Germany. If the project meets the economic interests of both sides, naturally, we will be able to export our oil through the BTC." The State Oil Co. of the Azerbaijani Republic President Rovnag Abdullayev noted in turn, "Everything is possible. If a proposal is received, it could be considered, and even its realization in the future is possible." The \$3.6 billion, 1 million barrel per day, 1,092-mile BTC pipeline, which began operations in May 2005, pumps oil extracted from Azerbaijan's major Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli fields in the Caspian Sea, as well as condensate produced at the offshore Shahdaniz field. Moscow had originally strongly opposed its construction, preferring that Azerbaijan continue to use the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline, which transits Russian territory. (UPI)

FORMER ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SLAMS TURKEY DEAL

24 September

Former Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian has said that the proposed agreement normalizing relations between Ankara and Yerevan will give the Turks "everything they have wanted for 17 years," RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. In an emotional speech in Yerevan on September 22, Oskanian argued that opening the border with Turkey cedes the country's "historical rights" because it would "close the possibility, no matter how formal, of restoring historical justice" regarding territories in eastern Turkey that many Armenians believe should be a part of Armenia. Oskanian also

objects to the creation of a joint panel of Armenian and Turkish experts that would examine the mass killings of Armenians nearly 100 years ago in the Ottoman Empire. The idea for a study was first floated by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a 2005 letter to former President Robert Kocharian, who dismissed it. But the panel is now a part of the agreement between the two countries that is expected to be signed before October 14. Oskanian, who served for 10 years in Kocharian's government, added that Armenia "is very far from being a democratic country," even though "that's what our future and security depend on." (RFE/RL)

ZAKAYEV NEEDS HELP RETURNING TO CHECHNYA - KADYROV

24 September

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov said he is ready to help former separatist emissary Akhmed Zakayev and thousands of Chechens living in Europe return to Chechnya. "We have talked on the phone many times. I told him [Zakayev]: 'If you approve of me, why don't you come home?'" he told me: 'Understand me! Understand me!' I told him: 'I understand you. What are you missing? Do you support my policies?'" He said he does. "Then come back." He was silent," Kadyrov said in an interview with the newspaper Zavtra published on the official website of the Chechen government on Thursday. Kadyrov believes Zakayev, like many Chechens living in Europe, need help returning to their home country. "He probably needs help. And so do thousands of Chechens who left for Europe because of the war. There are 100,000 Chechens living in Europe who left [Chechnya] because of the war," Kadyrov said. At the same time, Kadyrov believes Zakayev is experiencing pressure abroad. "Zakayev is not independent. He is afraid of someone. He is afraid to say what he thinks," Kadyrov said. (Interfax)

POSSIBLE NEW KAZAKH-AZERI PIPELINE

25 September

Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are discussing the construction of a new pipeline through Azerbaijan to the Black Sea to handle Kazakh oil exports. KazInform news agency reported Friday that the chairman of the Kazenergy association, Timur Kulibayev, told participants at an energy forum in the capital Astana, "Yesterday we held talks with Azerbaijan's national oil and gas company, and agreed to carry out research on transporting Kazakh

oil through Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Black Sea." Kulibayev said that the new pipeline was being discussed as paralleling the existing Baku-Supsa pipeline, which terminates in Georgia's Supsa Black Sea port, utilizing its land corridor. In response to a question on the priorities of Kazakhstan in the field of energy exports and how the new pipeline might impact Kazakhstan's relations with Russia Kulibayev replied, "We have excellent relations with all our neighbors. This primarily, of course, means Russia. As you know, in the oil sector we share the Atyrau-Samara pipeline and Caspian Pipeline Consortium system." (UPI)

TURKMEN DETAINEES FROM BRAWL RELEASED AFTER CHINESE REQUEST

25 September

The last 30 of some 200 Turkmen workers detained after a huge brawl between Chinese and Turkmen workers at an energy company in eastern Turkmenistan have been released, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports. The September 12 clashes involved workers for a Chinese energy company building a natural-gas pipeline in the eastern Samandepe and Yoloten regions of Turkmenistan. The brawl left at least 15 Chinese workers hospitalized with injuries and hundreds detained, including about 200 Turkmen. Turkmen workers had complained of discrimination -- with Chinese employees allegedly getting higher wages for the same work -- and poor working conditions. The release of the detainees reportedly comes after a request by officials from the Chinese company following a strike by the Turkmen workers who had been released, which resulted in a 10-day work stoppage. The Chinese company has reportedly pledged to fulfill the demands by the Turkmen employees to improve working conditions. The Turkmen Foreign Ministry and the Chinese Embassy in Ashgabat have not commented on the issue. The \$7.3 billion Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline project began in 2007 and will take natural gas from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and on to China. Gas is scheduled to begin flowing by the end of this year and will be at full capacity in 2011. (RFE/RL)

ARMENIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES SUPPORT TURKEY DEAL

25 September

Armenia's National Academy of Sciences has officially given its support for its country's proposed normalization of diplomatic ties with Turkey

during a closed-door session with Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian and more than 150 academics, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. The state-funded institution, which rarely challenges government decisions, discussed the matter as part of the internal political consultations which Ankara and Yerevan agreed to hold with their constituencies before signing the deal next month. Academy of Sciences President Radik Martirosian reportedly praised Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian for his "dynamic and active foreign policy." He said that although all Armenian presidents had sought to normalize relations with Turkey, only Sarkisian has made progress. A press statement from his office also welcomed the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border "without preconditions" and Sarkisian's efforts to "settle relations with neighbors and get Armenia out of the [Turkish] blockade." Many Armenian opposition parties and their leaders have sharply criticized the rapprochement efforts of Ankara and Yerevan. (RFE/RL)

UZBEKS SUSPEND GAS SUPPLIES TO SOUTH KYRGYZSTAN

26 September

Uzbekistan has suspended its gas supply to the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz and Uzbek services reported. Osh Deputy Mayor Alymzhan Baygazakov told RFE/RL that gas supplies were suspended recently to the southern Kyrgyz cities of Osh, Jalalabad, and Batken. He added that Osh owes some \$2 million of Kyrgyzstan's overall \$18 million gas debt to Uzbekistan. Salamat Aytikeev, the head of the KyrgyzGaz state energy company, traveled to Tashkent to conduct negotiations with his Uzbek counterparts on September 24. Kyrgyz Prime Minister Igor Chudinov previously told RFE/RL that Kyrgyzstan would hold negotiations with the Uzbek side in order to decrease the price of gas. Kyrgyzstan currently buys Uzbek gas for \$240 per 1,000 cubic meters. On January 1, Uzbekistan increased the gas price it charges neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, saying last year's price of \$145 per 1,000 cubic meters was far below market rates. Uzbekistan provides energy resources to Kyrgyzstan and the Uzbeks are dependent on the Kyrgyz for water. Uzbekistan has on several occasions stopped exporting energy to Kyrgyzstan, souring relations. Ties between the two have worsened over Kyrgyz plans to build hydroelectric

power plants that might reduce the amount of water Uzbekistan would receive Kyrgyzstan. (RFE/RL)

AFGHAN MINISTER ISMAIL KHAN ESCAPES TALIBAN ATTACK

27 September

A roadside bomb targeting an Afghan cabinet minister has exploded in the western city of Herat, killing at least three people, officials said. Energy and Water Minister Mohammad Ismail Khan, a prominent anti-Taliban commander, was not hurt, police said. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on Khan, a key member of the Northern Alliance (aka United Front) whose forces helped U.S. forces in toppling the Taliban in 2001. "The target was Ismail Khan," Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, told Reuters by telephone from an undisclosed location. The explosion occurred outside a school in Herat, killing three people and wounding 16, residents and a doctor said. Police in Kabul said Khan survived the attack unscathed. "He was on his way to Kabul and is fine," a police source in Kabul said. "But civilians have been killed." (Reuters)

RUSSIAN PATROL BOATS EXPECTED IN ABKHAZIA IN NOVEMBER

27 September

A unit of Russian coast guard boats will be deployed in Ochamchire to protect Abkhaz "territorial waters" in mid-November, Yuri Zvirik, commander of the Russian Federal Security Service's boarder guard unit deployed in the breakaway region, said on September 28. "Number of modern boats will join our family to become reliable guards of the Abkhaz borders," Abkhaz news agency, Apsnipress, reported quoting Zvirik. Russian coast guard vessel, Novorossiysk, which was sent to patrol the breakaway region's waters on September 21, will be joined with Mangust and Sobol types of patrol boats. Russian reports said that total of ten boats would be deployed in Ochamchire. Novorossiysk docked in Sokhumi on September 27 as part of ceremonies marking, what Abkhazia calls "the day of liberation of Sokhumi." On this day, sixteen years ago, Abkhaz forces, backed by their allies from Russia, captured Sokhumi after almost two weeks of siege. Meanwhile in Tbilisi, as usually the day of fall of Sokhumi was marked with wreath laying ceremony at the memorial of Georgian fallen soldiers. New Defense Minister, Bacho Akhalaia, told journalists after paying tribute to the Georgian fallen soldiers at the memorial on September 27: "It

is our duty – of our structure [MoD] and of the entire society and of the state – to accomplish this deed for which these people [fallen soldiers] sacrificed their lives." (Civil Georgia)

ABKHAZIA GETS RUSSIAN FIXED-LINE, MOBILE CODES, WHICH COULD BE IN EFFECT AS OF NEXT WEEK

28 September

Russia and Abkhazia have signed a memorandum, whereby Abkhazia receives Russian fixed line and mobile telephone codes, which could be introduced by the republic as early as next week, said Kristian Bzhanian, head of the Abkhaz presidential department of governmental information and mass media. "One of the important aspects of the Memorandum of cooperation in the communications sector, signed between Russia and Abkhazia in Moscow today is the change of the telephone codes. As for the change of codes, there will be two of them: for fixed-line operators the code will be 840, for mobile operators - 940. Most importantly, Abkhazia will be in the seventh zone, that is under Russia's international code," Bzhanian, the Abkhaz signatory to the memorandum, told Interfax on Monday. On the part of Russia, the document was signed by Deputy Communications Minister Naum Marder. (Interfax)

ROMANIA, AZERBAIJAN SIGN OIL, GAS ACCORD

28 September

Romania and Azerbaijan signed an accord to cooperate on bringing oil and gas from the energy-rich Caucasus nation into Europe, their leaders said on Monday. The strategic accord includes "cooperation on the Nabucco gas pipeline and the Pan-European Oil pipeline," Romanian President Traian Basescu told reporters after signing it with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev. He said that the Azerbaijani state oil company Socar "plans to expand its activity into the European Union through Romania," which joined the bloc in 2007. The Pan-European Oil pipeline (PEOP) is an EU-backed project aiming to pipe oil from the Black Sea to Italy. Nabucco is a key pipeline project aimed at reducing Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies. Basescu said Socar may ship crude to the Romanian black sea port of Constanta and refine some of it in Romania, or pump oil from Constanta to the northeastern Italian port of Trieste. The European Union said earlier this month it was in

talks with Azerbaijan on providing gas to supply Nabucco, a 3,300-kilometre (2,050-mile) pipeline between Turkey and Austria scheduled to be completed by 2014. Monday's accord between Romania and Azerbaijan also included cooperation agreements on security and culture. (EU Business)

FIVE MILITANTS KILLED IN SUSPECTED U.S. DRONE STRIKE IN WAZIRISTAN

29 September

A suspected U.S. drone aircraft fired two missiles at a Taliban commander's house in Pakistan's South Waziristan region, killing five militants, intelligence officials said. The strike on September 29 took place about 60 kilometers northeast of Wana, the main town in South Waziristan, the Pakistani officials said. South Waziristan is on the Afghan border and a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants. "The house of the commander has been completely destroyed and five dead bodies, three Pakistanis and two Uzbeks, have been recovered," one of the intelligence officials, who declined to be identified, told Reuters. He identified the commander as Irfan Mehsud. Residents said six militants were wounded and that Pakistani Taliban fighters had cordoned off the area and were not letting people approach. The United States stepped up its attacks by pilotless drones on militants in northwestern Pakistani border sanctuaries last year as the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan intensified. There have been nearly 60 such strikes since the beginning of 2008, including one in early August that killed Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud. About 500 people, most of them militants, have been killed in the strikes since early last year, according to a tally of reports from Pakistani security officials and residents. Pakistan officially objects to the drone strikes, saying they violate its sovereignty and the civilian casualties they sometimes inflame public anger. (Reuters)

ROADSIDE BOMB KILLS 30 AFGHAN CIVILIANS, OFFICIAL SAYS

29 September

A roadside bomb killed 30 civilians in southern Afghanistan, including 10 children and seven women, the Interior Ministry said. At least 39 others were wounded when the bomb hit a bus in Maiwand district outside the southern city of Kandahar, it said in a statement. Provincial government spokesman Zalmai Ayoubi said the bomb went off on a highway where a similar blast killed three civilians a day earlier. He blamed the

Taliban for planting the devices. Homemade bombs have become by far the deadliest weapon used by insurgents fighting Western and Afghan government forces, and civilians are frequently killed in the blasts. Reuters could not immediately reach the Taliban for comment, but the militants usually distance themselves from blasts when civilians are the victims. In a separate bomb attack, one woman was killed and another was wounded in the Spinghar district in east Afghanistan. Ousted from power in a U.S.-led invasion in 2001, the resurgent Taliban largely rely on roadside bombs and suicide attacks in their campaign against the foreign and Afghan forces. More than 1,500 civilians have been killed by violence in Afghanistan so far this year, the United Nations said last week. It said 68 percent of the civilian killings were a result of militant attacks, while 23 percent were caused by Afghan and foreign troops led by NATO and the U.S. military. (Reuters)

KYRGYZGAZ SAYS IT CAN'T REPAY DEBT TO UZBEKISTAN

30 September

KyrgyzGaz head Salamat Aytikeev says the energy company is unable to pay Kyrgyzstan's natural gas debt to Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Uzbekistan began suspending its gas deliveries to the southern Kyrgyz cities of Osh, Jalalabad, and Batken on September 22, citing the debt as the primary reason. Aytikeev told RFE/RL that unpaid energy bills from residents amount to \$5 million and that debts by companies and electric power plants make up the rest of KyrgyzGaz's \$18 million debt to Uzbekistan. Aytikeev said the only possible way to resolve the situation would be a state credit or after intergovernmental negotiations that would allow payment of the Kyrgyz debt to be delayed. Kyrgyzstan currently buys Uzbek gas for \$240 per 1,000 cubic meters, up from the \$145 per 1,000 cubic meters that Uzbekistan charged the previous year but which Tashkent said was far below market prices. Uzbekistan provides energy resources to Kyrgyzstan, while the Uzbeks are dependent on Kyrgyz water supplies. Uzbekistan has on several occasions in previous years stopped exporting energy to Kyrgyzstan, souring relations. Ties between the two have worsened over Kyrgyz plans to build hydroelectric power plants that might reduce the amount of water Uzbekistan would receive from Kyrgyzstan. Russia's state-controlled Gazprom owns 75 percent of KyrgyzGaz. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKH WEEKLY OFFERS BANK DEBT CANCELLATION TO PAY FINE

30 September

The independent Kazakh weekly "Respublika" is offering the BTA Bank a mutual cancellation of debts in order to pay off a court ordered fine for libel, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Guzyal Baydalinova, the newspaper's owner and editor in chief, told journalists in Almaty that she is prepared to pay the fine by cashing in some 40 million tenge (\$267,000) in bonds she has with the TuranAlem Finance Bank, an affiliate of BTA Bank.

Baydalinova said that in the event that TuranAlem cannot repay her bonds, the BTA Bank is legally obliged to cover for it, as an affiliate bank. She added that if the court and BTA Bank reject her proposal for a crosscancellation of debts between "Respublika" and BTA she will file a lawsuit in Kazakhstan and Great Britain against the bank to have it recognized as bankrupt. An Almaty district court ruled on September 9 that "Respublika" must print an apology to BTA Bank and pay 60 million tenges (some \$400,000) to BTA as "compensation for moral damage" for an article the weekly published that was deemed libelous by the court. Oksana Makushina, the deputy editor in chief of "Respublik," said the case against the newspaper is politically motivated and the verdict means the weekly will have to close. Last month the newspaper's editors told journalists that they would likely move their operations to the Internet if they lost the court case. Earlier this summer, the opposition newspaper "Taszharghan" (The Stone Breaker) had to end publication after it lost a similar libel case. (RFE/RL)

UZBEKISTAN HALTS GAS SUPPLIES TO TAJIKISTAN

30 SEPTEMBER

Uzbekistan has halted natural gas supplies to neighboring Tajikistan due to an \$18 million debt, leaving all Tajik households without gas, a source at the Tajik state gas company has said. "Households have been switched off completely," the source said. "[Aluminium producer] TALCO and [cement maker] Tajikcement are receiving gas from local deposits." The source said Tajikistan was in talks with Uzbekistan to renew supplies and postpone debt repayment. The two countries are at odds over a number of issues including energy and water resources. Uzbekistan this week also reduced gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan, another former Soviet Central Asian republic, for the same reason. (Reuters)

EIGHTY-FOUR MILITANTS KILLED IN CHECHNYA IN 2009 - MINISTER

30 September

Eighty-four militants, including three group leaders, have been killed in Chechnya this year, and 16 militants have died in security operations in Chechnya and the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan, the Chechen interior minister said on Wednesday. "According to our information, 43 people living in the Chechen Republic have been recruited and joined bandit groups this year, including 11 in September," the minister, Ruslan Alkhanov, said at conference between Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov and top Chechen security officials. Alkhanov added that police had identified four recruiters and arrested one of them. "Seventy-two caches of weapons and ammunition have been found on the territory of the Chechen Republic since the start of 2009, and 11 groups of militants have been routed," he said. (Interfax)