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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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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.

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

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CLUELESS IN THE CAUCASUS: THE US RESET POLICY AND THE CAUCASUS

Stephen Blank

In August-September 2010 Russia announced that it had stationed S-300 missiles in Abkhazia since 2008, thereby admitting that it had deliberately broken the agreement with the EU that ended the Georgian war. Moreover, this is part of Russia's larger comprehensive military buildup there that has led to five military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, also in violation of the 2008 accords. Moscow has also moved decisively to establish itself as the unchallenged gendarme of the Caucasus by extend the lease on the Gyumri military in Armenia while selling Azerbaijan S-300 air defense missiles. The important element is the impunity with which Russia has violated its commitments, primarily due to Washington's failure to react.

BACKGROUND: The Obama Administration's reset policy presumes common interests with Moscow in Central Asia – something Kyrgyzstan's experience should have disproved – and the need for Russian support in Iran and Afghanistan. Even though the geopolitical rivalry with Moscow continues in Central Asia despite the Administration's public rhetoric about win-win solutions there, what has struck every Russian observer who has commented on these issues is the passivity, mute response (and these are their terms), etc. of Washington's responses to Russian encroachments on the Caucasus and Ukraine, and its silence about events in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, they unanimously cite their belief and that of the Russian government that Washington has accepted Moscow's demands for a free hand and sphere of influence in the CIS.

Notwithstanding U.S. public disclaimers to the contrary, those Russian writers are correct. Official U.S. statements about the reset policy are notable for their silence concerning geopolitical and regional rivalries in Eurasia. Instead, Administration spokesmen repeat the same bromides that the Bush Administration

used about America's opposition to zero-sum games in Eurasia and reiterate that Washington desires not rivalry but win-win policies where nobody must choose between Moscow and Washington. Thus the State Department's Press Briefer, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Ian Kelly, writes that it is in the U.S. interest to engage Russia in a sustained way on issues that are important to it: proliferation, arms control, and Afghanistan, not regional security in Eurasia.

From conversations with U.S. officials it is clear that Pentagon officials are at a loss to explain why this is the case. But this outcome appears to reflect the deliberate policy of prominent officials in the State Department and National Security Council who believe that the importance of the proliferation and terrorist threats that America faces obliges it to make concessions to Russia to elicit its cooperation on Iran and Afghanistan. These policymakers extol the supposed concessions that Russia has made to the U.S. in Iran, e.g. supporting sanctions, and Afghanistan, but overlook that a U.S. victory in Afghanistan is in Russia's interest whatever we do and that the sanctions it supports in Iran do not suffice to stop Iran



(RIA Novosti)

from building nuclear weapons. Indeed, Moscow has now returned to making energy deals with Iran and opening the Bushehr nuclear power station.

These policymakers apparently also believe that small Eurasian states are troublemakers that cause problems to the United States in its quest to resolve those big issues with Russia and that in any case these states are in Russia's "backyard" and that Russia is the region's hegemon. Thus our policy equates to the notion of big states solving big problems together and not letting "small problems" and "small states" clutter the agenda with their problems. Therefore the U.S. may implicitly concede these small states and problems or a leading role in them to Russia, especially as Russia appears to be embarking on a new policy premised on cooperation with the U.S. and Europe. State Department officials openly say that the U.S. has no interest in Azerbaijan other than overflights to Afghanistan, and that energy is Europe's issue, not ours, an incredible renunciation of fundamental longstanding principles of U.S. strategy.

IMPLICATIONS: Consequently, even though it is not admitted, the Administration has accepted Russia's continuing pressure on Georgia and refuses to rearm it with defensive

weapons despite Moscow's violations of the 2008 accords and large-scale regional military buildup. In addition, Washington is still encouraging the training of Georgian forces for service in Afghanistan-type wars, not defense of the homeland, despite the constant pressure and Russian threats like constant Russian provocations over the new *de facto* border it created with Georgia by declaring Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be independent. These provocations generate the real possibility of a new war between Moscow and Tbilisi. And Russian experts are not shy about predicting further cases of territorial "revisions."

Apologists for this policy also claim that we should stop seeing the small states of Eurasia in strategic perspective because, allegedly, geopolitical rivalry with Russia has subsided. Of course, following this line means abdicating all interest in these regions, foregoing a strategic approach to Eurasia, and abandoning local governments who depend on America for support. But in fact Washington is doing this. By refusing to see the visible linkage between the need to end the increasingly dangerous and explosive tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh where repeated incidents are occurring, and the normalization of Armeno-Turkish relations, the Administration has incurred Azerbaijan's ill will because it clearly feels neglected – while winning no support in Armenia. And this is despite cabinet visits by Secretaries Gates and Clinton to Baku.

This neglect merely opens the door to Moscow, which, as President Medvedev recently said, sees itself as responsible for security in the region and has moved to assume primacy in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh issues. Thus, beyond the deals cited above, Moscow has increased its pressure on Baku to formally

desist from using force to recover Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia sweetened its offer by changing its position on the future disposition of the Lachin corridor to Azerbaijan's province of Nakhichevan, the birthplace of the ruling Aliyev family to support its return to Azerbaijan. Reports have also circulated that Moscow wants a military base in Azerbaijan – i.e. an expanded presence for a longer duration at the Qabala air defense base – and also a stronger position in Azerbaijan's economy. Russia is particularly eager to integrate Azerbaijan into the Kremlin's Caspian energy framework.

This objective has taken on an added sense of urgency because Russia, Iran, and Qatar are now seriously exploring the creation of a natural gas cartel, and because Turkmenistan's gas fields have been shown to be of world-class size. Azerbaijan, also a major gas producer in the Caspian Basin, is the only holdout that prevents Russia from monopolizing trans-Caspian energy flows to Europe, and it has just signed a deal to ship its gas through Georgia to Romania and Hungary. (See September 15 issue of the Analyst) Therefore tying up its gas exports is vital to Russia's overall security projects in Eurasia. During the Russian-Georgian war, Baku, acting prudently, redirected some of its energy flows from the BTC route to Russian installations. Moscow now wants to make this shift permanent.

CONCLUSIONS: Russian leaders and commentators alike see U.S. policy as an abdication of its position in Eurasia and will press harder to consolidate their advantage, leading to bigger encroachments and more rivalry. To the extent that America ignores regional developments, there will be still more of the already widespread if concealed discouragement about U.S. policy in Eastern

Europe and the South Caucasus. Moscow's recent moves in the Caucasus, Ukraine, and Central Asia, its continuing economic and military pressure on targeted states like Moldova and Georgia indicate Russia's continuing commitment to a policy based on officially sanctioned geopolitical rivalry with the U.S. in Eurasia. Indeed, the recently leaked document outlining the new turn in policy towards the U.S. and Europe simultaneously insisted on moves to consolidate even more Moscow's domination of the CIS. Energy wars against Belarus, economic pressure, enhanced military threats, and power projection in the Caucasus, and subversion of governments in Kyrgyzstan as in the case of the Bakiyev regime, as well as official documents like the defense doctrine of 2010 all demonstrate Russia's insistence that the U.S. remains the primary adversary and rival in Eurasia.

U.S. analysts fully grasp that the regional rivalries in Eurasia are the most contentious issue on the US-Russian agenda. But burying our heads in the sand or misreading Russian policies, interests, and mentalities is not an answer. Rather it is an evasion of one even if that evasion ultimately constitutes a policy. One need only examine recent Russian foreign policies across the CIS, not just the Caucasus, to realize that the idea that the U.S. can abandon its responsibilities, interests, and its partners to Russia will bring neither security, nor an end to geopolitical rivalry. If anything, Russia's appetite for rivalry will then only grow with the eating.

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KYRGYZSTAN POSTPONES DECISION ON OSCE MISSION TO AFTER ELECTIONS

Asel Murzakulova

Rosa Otunbaeva's initiative to invite the OSCE Police Advisory Group to take part in post-conflict rehabilitation in Kyrgyzstan has led to wide discussions. Supporters of bringing in the Advisory Group believe that it will help stabilize the situation and ease public distrust in the national police. The opponents insist that the Advisory Group will interfere with Kyrgyzstan's domestic affairs, which could in turn escalate the conflict and reinforce separatist movements in Kyrgyzstan's South. Under pressure from both sides, Otunbaeva openly declared that she will consider inviting the mission only after the parliamentary elections on October 10.

BACKGROUND: In mid-July, representatives of the foreign ministries of the 56 OSCE member states met in Almaty for an informal meeting to discuss the introduction of the OSCE Police Advisory Group in order to help stabilize the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan. The mission would deploy 52 police officers from the OSCE member states to the Osh and Jalalabad provinces for a period of four months. The group will not have executive rights and will not be armed. Its key aims include assisting in confidence building between the national police and social groups, monitoring the situation, and defining measures to improve the work of local police.

However, there is no consensus on this issue among Kyrgyz politicians. President Otunbaeva insists on the need for international support in investigating the causes of the conflict and implementing post-conflict rehabilitation. From the first alarming hours, she has called for international support in resolving the conflict, outlining the need for Russian help. After Russia refused Otunbaeva's proposal, the role of the OSCE in post-conflict rehabilitation has been actively discussed.

For Otunbaeva, the decision to bring in the Advisory Group would help the new authorities gain increased international support and recognition in the context of growing international pressure to conduct an objective investigation of the conflict.

Appointed shortly after the Osh events, Interior Minister Kubatbek Baibolov has repeatedly called for deploying the Advisory Group. Former Interior Minister Ismail Isakov has an opposing view, along with former member of the Provisional Government Temir Sariyev. The movement "Kyrgyzstan is against the introduction of foreign forces" has declared that it is ready to block traffic at Osh city airport, while a union of the twelve youth organizations in Osh has announced that they will conduct unlimited protests. Local authorities in Osh have also actively protested the Advisory Group deployment.

The legislative authorities of the Osh City Council have rejected consultative support from the Advisory Group. A major role in the opposition to international assistance is played by Melis Murzakmatov, the head of Osh city, who openly questions the policies of both the president and the provisional government,



(Central Asia Newswire)

underlining that their decisions will not be implemented in Osh. An attempt by the president to remove him from his office failed as locals organized protests in his support, and Otunbaeva had to step back in fear of renewed destabilization. Murzakmatov is not alone in his position, but relies on Bakiev's supporters who have in turn organized the political party "Ata Jurt" and will likely play a serious role in the parliamentary elections. The opponents of Otunbaeva's decision voice two main arguments. First, that the situation in the South is stabilizing and the need for foreign engagement is becoming less urgent. Second, they argue that foreign involvement in post-conflict rehabilitation may provoke new conflicts in the South, which overshadows the potential positive effects of introducing the Advisory Group.

IMPLICATIONS: The upcoming parliamentary election is currently a decisive factor in Kyrgyzstan's political processes. Debates over the Advisory Group can be considered maneuvering for political mobilization in the coming election. Simultaneous with these debates, Otunbaeva has signed several decrees changing the judiciary corpus at the rayon level. All election disputes will now be solved at this level. The existing combination of two factors – a high number of parties and a weak judiciary system to handle disputes over

election results – will no doubt further upset political stability. Despite many statements by the current government on its will to provide free and fair elections, it is becoming clear that administrative resources are already being used by the parties whose leaders are represented in the government.

The Osh events led to radical changes in electorate preferences. Before these events, the most supported parties were the Social-Democratic Party, Ata-Meken and Ak-Shumkar. It is now questionable whether these parties will be able to obtain 50 percent of the votes. The leading parties are losing their weight and have acquired a negative image due to their inability and unwillingness to resolve the conflict. This implies a chance for new

parties to quickly become popular if they are able to propose different policies and oppose the current government's decisions on urgent issues.

New political parties as Butun Kyrgyzstan, Ata Jurt and Respublika are busy gathering support in the South by criticizing the current government's policies. If these parties win, the introduction of the Advisory Group will be out of the question. It should be noted that several pro-Russian parties, such as Sodrujestvo, the Communist Party and USSR are also against this initiative.

The Advisory Group's focus on ethnic minority rights also raises doubt and anxiety among nationalistic groups, who consider the OSCE activities as an attempt to initiate increasing autonomy for the South. These fears are fueled by an information vacuum, as the Government refuses to make public the text of the memorandum, and as the consultations are conducted behind closed doors.

In the debate over the Advisory Group's deployment, it is rarely mentioned that from 2003, the OSCE is already participating in police sector reform in Kyrgyzstan, within which 4,000 police officers have been trained already. Between 2003 and 2010, the OSCE has spent US\$ 6.75 million on various projects for police reform, and a large share of this money was spent in Osh.

The negative reactions to deploying the Advisory Group are closely connected to the negative image in Kyrgyzstan of the OSCE as an institution. Before Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the OSCE was considered a promoter of human rights by European

standards. However, that image is now changing. After Kazakhstan's actions to prevent Kyrgyz citizens of Uzbek nationality from entering Kazakhstan during the Osh events, the OSCE is commonly considered to display double standards.

CONCLUSIONS: In Bishkek, doubts are growing over the deployment of the OSCE Police Advisory Group in the context of the ongoing hot debates over the parliamentary elections. Despite continuing consultations between the Kyrgyz government and the OSCE, new political groups will come to power in October and will decide whether the consultations will continue or the initiative will be rejected. Today, questions regarding the mission's duration and Kyrgyzstan's right to request the mission are discussed intensively. The issue of introducing the Advisory Group once again demonstrated the variety of interests in Kyrgyzstan's politics, in which there is no single decision-making center. For the opposition parties, Otunbaeva's decision to postpone the decision to after the election period is a symbolic victory in itself. However, it is questionable whether the new parliament will be capable of consolidating political groups. The election results will likely cause many multiple disagreements across the fragmented political landscape, which may in turn lead to renewed political instability. In this context, the OSCE will likely devote its efforts to election monitoring, rather than on deploying the Advisory Group.

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THE INTERNET'S SLOW ADVANCE IN THE TURKIC WORLD

Kevin Cross

In spite of its current messiness, Kyrgyzstan's revolution provides an illustrative example for those who claim that Internet freedom leads to political freedom. They find in Kyrgyzstan, as they did in Iran, a wired population and a political revolution, and assume that one causes the other. There is only tentative evidence of this claim, but there is more substantial evidence of the reverse causal relationship; that is, political freedom causing Internet freedom in the Turkic world.

BACKGROUND: Internet subscriptions in Turkic states are quite low relative to both global rates and Turkic subscription rates to a comparable technology: cell phones. Today most Turkic peoples use cell phones, but only a minority uses the Internet.

Globally, mobile phones subscription growth has slightly outpaced the growth of Internet subscriptions, but in Turkic states mobile phones subscriptions have far outpaced Internet subscriptions. Over half of the Turkic peoples have mobile phone subscriptions, but barely 10 percent have Internet subscriptions.

The ratio of Internet-to-mobile subscriptions (Internet subscription rate/cell phone subscription rate) illustrates the relative growth of the two technologies. Only in Kyrgyzstan does the ratio approximate the global ratio; everywhere else in the Turkic world, the ratio is smaller than the global ratio.

This ratio is smaller in Turkic states not because these states have extraordinary mobile phone subscription rates, but because they have lower Internet subscription rates than the global average. Income does not play an exclusive causal role: Turkic states, on aggregate, also have a lower Internet subscription rate than countries with equivalent GDP per capita income (US\$ 8,000). Kyrgyzstan provides

further evidence that income is not everything when it comes to Internet proliferation — it is both the poorest and the most wired Turkic state. Certainly poverty prevents individuals from subscribing to phones and the Internet, but if poverty has a constant effect on Internet and phone subscription rates, the ratio should either vary in correlation with income, or stay uniform as income differs between states. However, in reality the ratio differs both across and within different wealth levels.

What about timing? The Turkic region is remote and the Internet market was only launched in the last decade. A comparison with the cell phone market provides a helpful contrast: cell phones services also arrived late, but rapid sales more than compensated for the delay. In fact, mobile phone markets that opened later experienced faster growth than markets that opened earlier. For example, cell phones were introduced in Turkey in 1996 and in Kazakhstan in 2000, but today there are more cell phone subscribers per capita in Kazakhstan than in Turkey. Mobile phone use has increased rapidly in every Turkic state, with growth in Turkey beginning in the late 1990s and steadily growing since. Only in Kyrgyzstan has Internet growth kept reasonably apace.

If not poverty or delayed market entry, what has impeded Internet subscription in the Turkic



(Itar-Tass)

world? The answer, in short, is political history. Most Turkic states, including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, run Internet markets in the Soviet style. The approach is a contradictory one: on the one hand, regimes announce ambitious Internet development plans “as a means for national development”. On the other hand, they construct elaborate curbs on online content. The Open Net Initiative (ONI) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) rank Turkic states—notably Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan—among the world’s worst enemies of the Internet.

Repression is one reason for this state of affairs; access is another. In Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan, logging on is exceedingly costly. Until recently, access in Turkmenistan was only possible in one kiosk in a well-guarded café. Even now, connection speeds remain absurdly slow. In Azerbaijan, one state-owned ISP, Delta Telecom, monopolizes service and charges a

minimum of US\$ 75 for a one-megabyte-per-second connection. At that price, only 13 percent of Azerbaijanis, who on average earn US\$ 100 per month, can afford to surf the Web. Costs have also been an issue in Kazakhstan, with Internet service going at about a thousand times higher than in Western Europe.

As in Uzbekistan, the Kazakh government has insisted that Internet proliferation is a priority: “President Nursultan Nazarbayev”, states ONI, “is determined to turn Kazakhstan into an IT powerhouse in the region”. Usage is climbing as rates fall, but now state censorship is increasing, leading ONI to conclude that “The Kazakh government exhibits an ambiguous and at times contradictory approach to the Internet” — a statement that sums up Internet policies of the more repressive and obstructionist Turkic regimes.

Turkey and Kyrgyzstan are different — Turkey especially. In fact, Turkey is so different from its Turkic brethren that it is less useful as a test case. Dozens of variables might explain Turkey’s relatively greater political freedom and Internet subscription rates. Notably, Turkey was never part of the Soviet empire.

Kyrgyzstan is similar to other Turkic states in all but two relevant variables: its free Internet regime and its susceptibility to political turmoil. Since these are the two variables in

question, and all other things being somewhat equal, Kyrgyzstan therefore provides a more useful test case than Turkey. ONI has judged Kyrgyzstan to be the least repressive of the Turkic states. Kyrgyzstan chose some years ago to allow private companies to provide Internet services. Now, Internet access is cheap and available — early privatization of Kyrgyzstan's Internet service provision has made the Internet affordable for the majority of the population. Despite having the lowest GNI per capita of any of the Turkic states, the Kyrgyz generally do not cite cost as an obstacle to Internet usage.

IMPLICATIONS: In Kyrgyzstan, unlike its Turkic neighbors, geographic access and “lack of interest” rather than high cost and state censorship prevent further Internet access. In other words, the market has been efficient. Kyrgyzstan's Internet proliferation, restrained by demographics and geography rather than regime control, is an example of what other Turkic states might have achieved had their political environment been more liberal. Granting service providers the liberty to compete allowed the proliferation of the Internet. Whether the proliferation of the Internet will, in turn, liberalize Kyrgyzstan's polity is another question — one that recent events have intensified rather than answered.

In the early years of Internet expansion some experts doubted whether closed Internet systems — of the kind found in Russia, China, and Iran — could survive. Content, artistic and political, it was thought, wanted to be free. Then came the failure of the “twitter revolutions” in Moldova and Iran. The populations of China and Iran became increasingly wired, but hardly more liberated. Today, closed systems are entrenched in many

countries, providing a model for other hybrid or authoritarian regimes. Thomas Carothers' observation about the end of “the transitional paradigm” applies not only to regimes, but also to cyber-regimes.

Turkic Internet markets are inchoate, and the shape of their control is yet to be determined. These markets could move toward free regimes of the kind found in the West, or toward controlled systems common in the region. Karimov, Aliyev, and Berdimuhamedov — even the governments of Turkey — clearly lean toward the latter. Controlled systems have proven sustainable and manageable.

While discouraging to Western rights activists, the endurance of oppressive cyber-regimes may actually encourage Internet proliferation, since such regimes have been shown that the Internet can be tamed. Turkic regimes may begin promoting Internet proliferation, confident that increasing Internet access does not inevitably lead to increasing political freedom.

CONCLUSIONS: Amid the stagnancy of the other long-serving Turkic regimes, Kyrgyzstan's frequent political upheavals represent a threat and a challenge to regional stability. Unlike their neighbors, the Kyrgyz have now known some measure of Internet freedom. The continuation of their free cyberspace through political turmoil provides some hope to the cyber-optimist that the road to Internet freedom is mostly one-way. That is, the transition from free cyberspace, if it should come, may prove just as difficult as the transition to it.

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DAGESTAN: THE EMERGING CORE OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS INSURGENCY

Emil Souleimanov

In recent months, violence has increased significantly in the Republic of Dagestan, the most populous autonomous republic of Russia's North Caucasus with its 2.5 million inhabitants. On September 4, the republic's minister for national affairs, Bekmurza Bekmurzayev, was assassinated. The next day, the Russian military base at Buynaksk was attacked by a suicide bomber, claiming the lives of four federal soldiers. Shootings, bombings and police raids against the strongholds of Islamist insurgents occur on a daily basis and have become an integral part of the political landscape of this mountainous republic. Yet what are the causes, current situation and prospects of the insurgency in Dagestan?

BACKGROUND: Dagestan is situated in the Northeast Caucasus, which has historically made up the most traditionalist area of the former USSR, along with the Fergana Valley. Alongside neighboring Chechnya and Ingushetia, the blood feud is still commonplace in Dagestan, whose ethnic groups are broken down into competing clans. Customary law (adat) still plays an important role especially in the mountainous areas to the south, center and west of the country. Accordingly, Dagestani society lives in line with the patriarchal code of honor where the main virtue of a woman consists in her purity and that of man in his courage, ability to revenge humiliation, and to ensure dignified livelihood and protection for his family members. Importantly, Dagestan has historically been regarded as the cradle of Islam in the North Caucasus. Religiosity is widespread across all strata of Dagestani society. Islam, more precisely Sufi Islam with its locally most common Naqshbandi and Shazali tariqahs, has historically played a crucial role both as a symbol of self-identification of ordinary Dagestanis, as part of tradition in their daily life, and hence as a source of legitimization of public activity. Another important factor is its multiethnic

character as Dagestan is home to dozens of ethnic groups. As no ethnic group forms a majority, members of various Dagestani peoples and clans are involved in constant competition over the republic's limited resources (around 90 percent of the republic's budget comprises of direct subsidies from Moscow), which is documented in the complicated system of republican and local-level power-sharing mechanisms. Albeit latent, tension exists among members of various ethnic groups. Notwithstanding episodic excesses that periodically occur due to apolitical reasons, local authorities have so far managed to keep it low profile. In fact, Dagestani peoples are quite prone to nationalism. Even though they live side by side, intermarriage is rather uncommon among members of distinct ethnic groups. Last but not least, Dagestan's corruption, clientelism and nepotism is appalling even by Caucasus standards, with an unemployment rate reaching 80 percent, nearing absolute numbers among youth.

IMPLICATIONS: Fifteen years ago, there was nearly no talk about Islamist insurgency in Dagestan, a decade ago its instances were extremely rare, yet since then it has been increasing drastically. Although some



(Trend)

Dagestani communities were the first in the North Caucasus to embrace Salafism in the beginning of the 1990s, the failed incursion of the united Dagestani-Chechen Jihadist insurgents to Western Dagestan in August 1999 largely discredited the ideology across the republic. What happened since then? First, since “Islamist terrorism” was widely recognized as a primary threat to national security in 1999-2001, thousands of mostly young Dagestanis, accused of terrorism and “Wahhabism”, have been taken into custody by local authorities where they were often subjected to Soviet-style interrogation. Deep religiosity has been considered especially suspicious by the authorities, which have been waging full-scale war against real and alleged “Wahhabis” and their sympathizers. Yet for many undereducated, underpaid and corrupt policemen facing impunity, capturing people for ransom has provided for a source of solid income. As authorities have lacked enough evidence to put alleged “Wahhabis” in jail, these were eventually set free following a few

months of torture. Many of them never made peace with what was done to them in prisons, and have turned to violence to retaliate the humiliation. In case someone’s relative was killed or seriously wounded, their brothers, sons or cousins have pledged oaths to take revenge for the sake of family honor. As it is difficult for individuals to combat authorities on their own, many young Dagestanis have joined

the insurgent movement in the mountains, where there were exposed to the basics of Salafism. The adoption of a common ideology of resistance has cemented the insurgence, shaping specific – now rather de-individualized – goals (the establishment of an Islamic state independent from Moscow) and targets (the Russian occupiers and their Dagestani “marionettes”). The collective memory of Dagestani peoples draws upon the notion of age-old anti-colonial, e.g. anti-Russian, resistance. Fighting local renegades is an even more important task.

Likewise, many Dagestanis have joined the insurgency in protest of the societal sins, be it corruption, erosion of traditional values, inability to realize themselves professionally or in search for a better, Islamic, future for their homeland. Most importantly, membership in Jihadist groups (jamaats) has helped individual combatants to overcome ethnic, sectarian and clan-based loyalties, forging an unprecedented sense of social solidarity based on religion.

Thus, the ideologization of resistance has evolved side by side with the politicization of violence.

As a result, a regular civil war is now underway in Dagestan. Approximately 2,500 young Dagestanis are involved in the insurgency, which makes up at least a half of all North Caucasian combatants. Yet their numbers grow as more and more desperate youngsters join their ranks. Unlike neighboring Chechnya with its “normalized” public space, insurgents rely on sufficient sympathies and support from ordinary Dagestanis who are antagonized by both corrupt local authorities and increasingly violent and indiscriminate police forces. While many Chechens have postponed revenge to “better times” in order to avoid reprisals, this process is ongoing daily in Dagestan, where the insurgency has expanded from areas dominated by the Avars, Dargins, and Laks to the Lezgi-dominated south and Kumyk east. Moreover, in some areas of Dagestan local authorities as well as businesses have become targets of racketeering by insurgents. To survive physically, they have to pay those they are supposed to combat; something unheard of in contemporary Chechnya.

CONCLUSIONS: The emblematic feature of the Dagestani insurgency has been its avalanche-like mobilization, provided for by the prevalence of traditional institutions in the Northeast Caucasus. Regardless of the liquidation of some influential field commanders, most recently emir Seyfullah, the movement will not be broken down overnight as individual fighters will continue to wage their wars of revenge. That, in turn, will bring about more reprisals from the local authorities, which will lead to a path of Chechenization as increasing numbers of Dagestanis will become involved in blood feud. As in the case of

Chechnya and Ingushetia, the Dagestani insurgency is in its core primarily not a political or religious phenomenon, even though it is organized along the lines of Salafi Islam. This is where its main strength lies. Unlike Chechnya, where ordinary people have experienced two atrocious wars and whose vast majority is thus willing to accept peaceful life under any government, many Dagestanis are euphoric about squaring their accounts with the ones they truly resent. Yet imposing a kind of sultanistic authoritarian regime that has been established in Kadyrov’s Chechnya in recent years would be a rather unfeasible task for ethnically heterogeneous Dagestan. Additionally, particular jamaats are becoming increasingly mixed ethnically; they continue to be highly autonomous units, based on the principle of territorial, rather than ethnic, kinship, tending to act on their own which makes them difficult to trace down and combat. Yet they share both a common idea of resistance, a strong desire for personal revenge and a hated enemy, thus relying on increasing sympathies from native populations which have always had a tradition of hospitality toward anti-state outlaws. As the war goes on, Dagestani insurgents gain skills from guerilla warfare, as well as awareness of trans-ethnic solidarity with their Dagestani, Chechen, Ingush, Balkar, and Cherkes brethren in arms. In the months and years to come, Dagestan is thus very likely to retain its standing as the epicenter of the North Caucasian insurgency.

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FIELD REPORTS

MAJOR SECURITY OPERATION UNDERWAY IN EASTERN TAJIKISTAN

Alexander Sodiqov

On September 22, the Tajik army and law enforcement agencies began a massive security operation in Rasht valley in the country's east. The operation reportedly targets former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) rebels and "foreign mercenaries" who were behind the deadly assault on government forces three days earlier. The UTO was a loose alliance of Islamic and democratic activists that opposed the government of President Emomali Rahmon in the 1992-1997 civil war in the country. Rasht valley with its rough terrain and strong Islamic traditions served as a UTO stronghold during the war.

23 soldiers were killed and many more critically wounded when a group of military vehicles was ambushed in the Kamarob gorge in Rasht valley on September 19. Another five soldiers died in a hospital from the wounds they received in what appears to be the deadliest attack against government forces since the end of the civil war.

The Ministry of Defense was quick to blame "Islamic rebels" allied with former UTO field commanders for the brazen assault. The day after the attack, Tajikistan's television First Channel showed an Islamic Revival Party (IRPT) activist who had been detained earlier confessing that his brother, Alovuddin Davlatov (also known as Ali Bedak), planned and carried out the deadly attack in the Kamarob gorge. Davlatov who had been a prominent Islamic opposition rebel during the civil war was also accused by his brother of forming a "terrorist group" that included about 100 militants from Chechnya, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and setting up a "terrorist camp".

As Tajik security forces launched the operation in Rasht valley, the State Committee for National Security (GKNB) released a statement on September 23, asserting that another two prominent ex-opposition rebels – Mirzokhuja Ahmadov (also known as Belgi) and Abdullo Rahimov (also known as Mullo Abdullo) – were also part of the group that had attacked government forces. Mullo Abdullo has been targeted by Tajik security agencies since early 2009 when a large-scale security campaign was undertaken in Rasht to capture him and his militants who had reportedly infiltrated from Afghanistan.

Mirzokhuja Ahmadov, on the other hand, was seemingly on good terms with President Rahmon's administration. Following the peace settlement in 1997, Ahmadov long served as head of the police organized-crime division in Rasht before leaving the post under intense pressure after the murder of a special police unit (OMON) commander, reportedly by Ahmadov's men. Earlier in September, when Tajik security services searched the area for convicts who had escaped prison in Dushanbe, President Rahmon sent a high-level delegation consisting of the defense and interior ministers and deputy head of the GKNB to assure Ahmadov's safety and enlist his support in the search operation.

The GKNB statement claimed that Ahmadov long harbored Mullo Abdullo in his house. It also asserted that Ahmadov left behind a massive arsenal of small arms and explosive devices.

Meanwhile, on September 23, the Al-Qaeda-linked Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) sent a message to Tajik media claiming responsibility for the deadly attack that prompted the security operation in Rasht. The IMU suggested that the military convoy was attacked in retaliation for the Tajik government's continued suppression of Islam, the banning of Islamic headscarves in public offices, and cooperation with the U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan.

It is not clear at the moment how the IMU's statement is related to the government's blaming of the September 19 assault on former UTO field commanders. Although Tajik security agencies have frequently asserted that Mullo Abdullo was linked with IMU, Ahmadov and Davlatov stayed clear of

such accusations. The IRPT spokesperson Hikmatullo Sayfullozoda suggests that the IMU's claim of responsibility for the incident in the Kamarob gorge is "self-promotion" prompted by the Tajik government's inability to investigate the attack properly and its fear of everything Islamic.

The attack on government forces was the latest in a series of security incidents in the country following a high-profile prison escape in Dushanbe on August 22 and the bombings of a police station in Khujand and a nightclub in Dushanbe on September 3 and September 5 respectively. These incidents have put the spotlight on Tajikistan's degrading security sector, repressive policies against unconventional Islamic groups, and growing frustration with the administration of President Emomali Rahmon.

ARMENIA TO START CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NUCLEAR REACTOR

Haroutiun Khachatrian

Armenia declared in August 2010 that it would start preparations for a new nuclear power unit next year and will start construction of the unit in 2012. This statement followed the state visit of Russian President Dmitri Medvedev to Armenia on August 19-21, during which a document on the construction of new nuclear power units in Armenia was signed between Armenia's Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and Russia's state owned nuclear power enterprise Rosatom. The new nuclear power unit is to replace Block Two of the Metsamor nuclear power plant, 40 kilometers west to Yerevan, which is planned to be closed in 2016. The capacity of the old block built in 1980 is 407 megawatts, corresponding to 12 percent of the total power generating capacity in Armenia. However, this block provides up to 40 percent of Armenia's electricity production, as its power is cheaper than that produced by the existing thermal stations (these provide about 45 percent of the power in the country, while the remaining 15 percent is produced

by hydropower stations). The new block will have a designed capacity of 1060 megawatts. It will be placed on the territory of the Metsamor plant, in order to use the existing infrastructure, which will make the construction cheaper and faster. Construction is planned to take five years, with an approximated cost of US\$ 4.5-5.0 billion. The newly created venture Metsamorenergoatom will operate the construction and subsequent exploitation of the completed block. This company has two shareholders, Armenia and Russia, and is also open for other investors. Each of the two current shareholders has pledged investments worth 20 percent of the block's cost, i.e. around US\$ one billion. Russia's contribution amounts to supplying the nuclear reactor and the required equipment. This means that the Russian party will not provide funding for the construction. The current shareholders hope that other investors will join to provide the remaining 60 percent of the necessary

funding as the construction starts. The cost return is expected to take 20 years.

Armenia has power-producing capacities which well exceed its own needs and hence it can export electricity to its neighbors. It currently provides electricity to Iran and, in smaller quantities, to Georgia. For political reasons, Turkey and Azerbaijan reject importing electricity from Armenia, although their regions bordering Armenia face power shortages. Nevertheless, Armenia seeks to enhance its power-generating capacity further by constructing new units for energy production. Among these are the modern thermal power unit at the Yerevan thermal power plant launched last May (built with Japanese assistance); the fifth block of the Hrazdan thermal plant which will be launched later this year; and a modern hydro power station will be built on the Araxes river bordering Armenia and Iran, the construction of which is planned to start later this year. In addition, the Armenian leadership has frequently declared its intention to build another nuclear power unit before the current one will be shut down. This has been considered as an important element of Armenia's energy security, as it lacks its own fuel resources.

The construction of the new nuclear unit will enable Armenia to cover almost all of its own electricity needs for through nuclear energy. This will, however, not result in any strong decrease of the gas imports as Armenia currently uses only 15 percent of

the imported gas for power production, while the share of the gas consumed by the population is much higher at 40 percent. In fact, the actual strategy for electricity production will depend on the prices for gas and nuclear fuel. The actual calculation is even more difficult since the new thermal blocks in Yerevan and Hrazdan are more resource-saving and use less gas per kilowatt of electricity produced than do the current units. A new nuclear unit will thus provide more flexibility to Armenia's energy system and enhance its exporting capabilities. The fact that the construction of this new unit will be a heavy burden for Armenia as it will cost around one tenth of its state budget during a five-year period, has been ignored by the authorities. The government will obviously seek an external source of financing, e.g., a loan.

Finally, the construction of the new nuclear unit in Armenia will enhance the economic positions of Russia in the region. Most of Armenia's power-generating capacities are under different forms of Russian control and Russia's considerable stakes in the new nuclear unit will add to Russian economic and exporting potential. Moreover, the deal on a new unit in Metsamor contributes to the dominance of Russian nuclear technology in the region, adding to the construction of Bushehr in Iran and likely a nuclear power station in Turkey.

PRISON RIOTS UNDERMINE KAZAKHSTAN'S CREDIBILITY BEFORE OSCE SUMMIT

Georgiy Voloshin

At a time when Kazakhstan is preparing to hold an OSCE summit, local media are buzzing with shocking news from a number of detention facilities across the country. The latest episode in a string of prison scandals took place on September 20 in Karaganda Oblast, where eight convicts ripped open their bellies in protest against cruel treatment from

the prison administration. According to prison officials, rebellious inmates were demanding free movement around prison precincts, unlimited transfers of food and personal belongings from relatives, exemption from community service imposed by the Criminal and Procedural Code of Kazakhstan as well as a right to wear civil outfits.

Earlier on August 12, 2010 prisoners from another penitentiary institution located in Akmola Oblast staged a riot that could only be quelled by special forces numbering at least 100 well-equipped police officers and 60 prison guards. The prison administration even resorted to the use of an armored vehicle to deny the organizers of the uprising any possibility of breakout. One person was killed during the assault on prison premises, and another prisoner died in hospital after more than half his body had been damaged by fire. 81 persons were seriously injured and rushed to local hospitals. Speaking to the press in the wake of these events, the president of the Public Supervisory Committee for Akmola Oblast Lyubov Rubezhanskaya stated that most of the prisoners' claims were unsubstantiated at the outset, as they had purportedly been granted appropriate clothes, nutrition and medical care.

As Ms Rubezhanskaya explained, an ordinary conflict among inmates grew into confrontation with the prison administration and led to the assault on the building to prevent further tensions.

"They demand that they be permitted to wake up at any time in the morning, watch TV without limitations and avoid community work" she said, adding that the main reason for mutiny in penitentiary institutions is the absence of mandatory labor service which now embraces only 25 percent of the prison population. But in order to change the current setting, she thinks, it is necessary to implement legislative changes at the national level.

At the same time, Victoria Tyuleneva, director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, believes that the prisoners' behavior is understandable if one takes into account the rampant occurrences of torture and other forms of cruel treatment in detention facilities as well as the unwillingness of prison officials to meet prisoners' basic demands.

It is not the first time that convicts are forced to use such means to make themselves heard. On July 30, nearly 50 people in Almaty Oblast staged a riot in

protest of poor conditions of detention and regular beatings by prison guards. After the administration managed to suppress discontent, almost 100 relatives gathered in front of the prison doors to ask for explanations. This attempt to elicit any information about the causes and consequences of this incident had little effect, and one woman fainted and was taken to hospital as a result of a scuffle with prison officials.

A similar protest took place on July 22 in North Kazakhstan Oblast, with 30 prisoners participating in a mass self-mutilation campaign designed to draw the attention of media and human rights activists to the dreadful situation in Kazakhstan's penitentiary system.

Vadim Kuramshin, who has been trying to shed more light onto the most horrific cases of physical violence in Kazakhstani prisons, promised to hand over all the evidence collected with the help of his colleagues to Manfred Novak, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment. In May 2009, Novak paid a nine-day visit to Kazakhstan in order to identify problems in the country's penitentiary regime and present a detailed mission report to the international community. Speaking at a press conference that concluded his trip to Kazakhstan, Novak noted that "the use of torture and ill-treatment certainly goes beyond isolated instances" and even confessed that he had been told of "kicking, asphyxiation through plastic bags and gas masks used to obtain confessions from suspects".

According to Kuramshin who organized a press conference one day after the violent suppression of the prison riot in Akmola Oblast, the UN Special Rapporteur will be able to familiarize himself with the consolidated report on human rights violations in Kazakhstan on October 1, 2010. Human rights activists still hope that the involvement of a high-level internationally known figure might draw the attention of the world community and OSCE Member States to the vices of Kazakhstan's penitentiary system before the December 1-2 OSCE summit in Astana.

Another heavy blow to Kazakhstan's credibility came from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee's Secretary General Bjorn Engesland who made public his decision to confer the 2010 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Yevgeny Zhovtis, former head of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for human rights and the rule of law. In September

2009, Zhovtis, whose activity in favor of human rights and freedoms has been known all over the world for more than two decades, was convicted to 4 years in a penal settlement for manslaughter. His supporters argue that the verdict was politically motivated.

GAZPROM AND SOCAR CLOSE NEW DEAL ON AZERBAIJANI GAS EXPORTS

Mina Muradova

In early September, Gazprom reached a deal to double supplies from Azerbaijan next year, making good on the Russian gas monopoly's promise to buy "as much gas as SOCAR can supply". Experts believe that Russia's purpose is not related to a lack of own resources, but aimed to undermine the European Union's plans for alternative gas pipelines, in particular the Nabucco pipeline.

On September 3, the Chairman of the Gazprom Management Committee, Alexey Miller, attended an extended meeting in Baku with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev during Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's official visit to Baku.

The meeting resulted in the signature of an addendum to the effective gas purchase and sale contract for Azerbaijani natural gas between Gazprom and the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). According to the addendum, the annual volumes of gas purchases will grow to two billion cubic meters (bcm) starting from 2011 and to over two bcm from 2012. This year, it is buying one bcm.

Miller stated that the signed document is fully in line with the basic contract, which does not limit the maximum volume of gas supply from Azerbaijan. "Owing to territorial proximity, the absence of transit zones and existing gas transmission infrastructure availability, the cooperation deepening in the gas sector between Azerbaijan and Russia is considered the most

economically beneficial option for both partners. It is absolutely clear, therefore, that Azerbaijan gives priority to increasing its export volumes particularly for Russia", Gazprom said in a statement issued following the meeting.

The deal raises doubts about the future of alternative gas supply routes from Azerbaijan to Europe, especially the Nabucco pipeline. Azerbaijan is seen as the primary supplier of the Nabucco route which is planned to run 3,300 kilometers from Turkey to Austria, and will reduce Europe's dependence on Russia for gas supplies.

The latest gas supply deal is the third agreement signed in a year between the two countries, since Baku and Moscow agreed in October last year to ensure Russian purchases of Azerbaijani gas.

During the news conference in Baku, Medvedev characterized the energy cooperation between the two countries as the most important sphere of bilateral cooperation and said "we agreed to organize a particular summit of the heads of states dedicated to this topic".

Having been a dominant gas exporter to Europe for a long time, Russia has opposed Nabucco, the completion of which would create an alternative export route bypassing Russian territory and endanger Moscow's interest in controlling energy exports from former Soviet republics. In consequence, many experts believe that Moscow's

current purpose is to maintain its dominance on Europe's gas market.

Strengthening energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia also raises a question about Azerbaijan's capability of supplying sufficient volumes of gas for the Nabucco pipeline.

During a joint news conference on September 3, President Aliyev praised the deals with Moscow as "strategic and evidence of dynamic and effective development of bilateral relations". He said that this project has a "big future", with the advantage that gas can be transited directly between the two countries.

At the same time, Aliyev reassured that Azerbaijan's reserves are "large enough" and sufficient for ensuring diversified gas exports. According to the Azerbaijani leader, the country's proven gas reserves are estimated at two trillion cubic meters (tcm), while "we see realistic reserves of up to five tcm".

The Nabucco pipeline consortium also expressed its confidence in reliable gas supplies from Azerbaijan. Gas reserves in Iraq and Azerbaijan are sufficient for bringing the Nabucco pipeline onstream by late 2015 with or without phase two production at Azerbaijan's giant Shah Deniz deposit. Azerbaijan claims phase two production at the field, co-led by BP and Statoil and estimated to 1.2 tcm of gas, could begin in late 2016.

During a news conference in Baku, the Nabucco Managing Director Reinhard Mitschek said gas would be available from reserves held by the Azeri state energy company SOCAR.

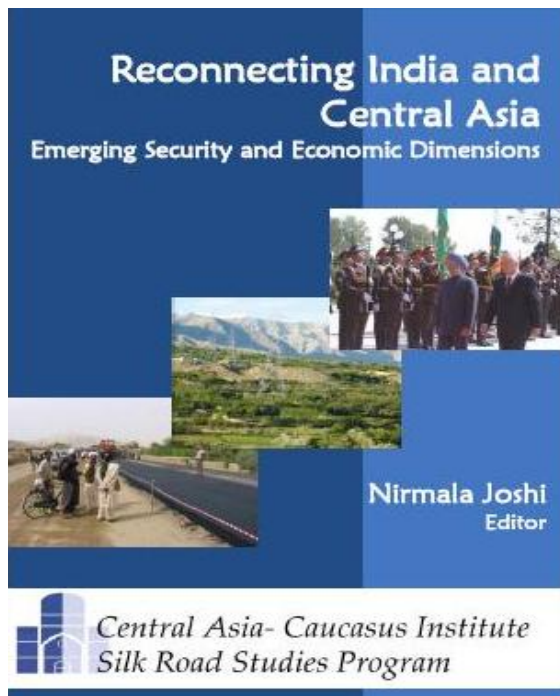
Azerbaijan says it plans to send 10 bcm of gas from Shah Deniz II to Europe, but also underlines it has alternatives to the Nabucco pipeline including the Italy-Turkey-Greece Interconnector (ITGI) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP).

The Nabucco consortium announced last week that the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank signed a mandate letter to back the project, whereby the three banks will start due diligence for loans that could reach 4 billion Euros.

Medvedev brushed off the accusation that Russia is trying to corner regional energy supply and deprive Nabucco of an important source of gas.

"We cannot and must not hamper other projects", Medvedev said

In his turn, Aliyev reassured Western energy partners that strengthening energy cooperation with Russia would not come at their expense. "We don't see our work in the gas sector as an opportunity for unfounded competition. We are working not on the basis of political reasons, but economic practice", Aliyev said.



New Book:

***Reconnecting India and Central Asia:
Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions***

Edited By Nirmala Joshi

This book constitutes an overview of the emerging and deepening relations between India and Central Asia in both the political and economic fields.

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

NEWS DIGEST

GEORGIA HIRING 1,000 ESL INSTRUCTORS 15 September

Georgia has embarked on an ambitious program to staff public schools with 1,000 native English speaking teachers by the end of 2010. As the first state sponsored ESL program in Eastern Europe, this is a top priority for President Mikheil Saakashvili's government to prepare Georgian youth to take part in the global economy. The first group of 50 teachers arrived in Georgia on July 30th. The President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, met with the second group of 102 native English on August 15th. "The main requirement is to make Georgian children of 5-16 ages the English language speakers. We will achieve this goal in following 4 years; this will give Georgia opportunity to make next steps for the development in the Post-Soviet area in the future decades," announced the President at the meeting with the foreign teachers in Batumi. This program builds upon Georgia's internationally recognized success in education - in January 2010 Georgia was awarded Vice-Presidency of UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia commenced work on this initiative in early 2010 and in May 2010 Footprints Recruiting, a Vancouver, Canada based recruiting company, was contracted to supply teachers for this project. Footprints CEO Ben Glickman traveled to Tbilisi and signed a contract with Director Gia Mamulashvili of the Teacher Professional Development Center on May 17th, 2010. "This is a great opportunity for recent graduates to gain valuable teaching experience while waiting for the domestic job market to improve," Mr. Glickman stated. With the recession, ESL job opportunities have become more competitive in traditional markets such as Korea and Japan. ESL teachers in Georgia are not required to have any teaching experience. Although the monthly stipend - 500 Georgian Lari - is modest by western standards, the benefits of free airfare, free housing, teaching experience, and a cross cultural make the experience worthwhile for many applicants.

"Georgia rocks. This experience so far has been amazing." Stated Joanne O'Malley, a Footprints teacher in Georgia. Footprints recruits ESL teachers for the Ministries of Education in Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Georgia as well as private sector companies in countries worldwide. (PRNewswire)

CHECHEN SEPARATIST ZAKAYEV ARRESTED IN POLAND

17 September

One of Russia's most wanted men — a charismatic Chechen activist who counts Vanessa Redgrave among his supporters — was arrested in Poland Friday on Russian charges related to Chechnya's separatist war of the 1990s, but later set free. Akhmed Zakayev faces charges of murder, kidnapping and terrorism. Zakayev, who was granted asylum in Britain years ago, maintains the accusations are trumped up and defiantly told Radio Free Europe the day before his arrest that he was in Poland "absolutely legally" and would not hide from authorities. The Kremlin casts the dapper activist as a dangerous guerrilla mastermind. The 51-year-old was apprehended "without any trouble" as he left a home in Warsaw early in the day and turned over to prosecutors, national police spokesman Mariusz Sokolowski said. On Friday evening a Warsaw regional court released Zakayev, who was in Warsaw to attend an international conference on Chechnya. Prosecutors had sought to extend his detention. Conference organizer Adam Borowski said the court decision meant Zakayev would stay in Poland pending a court decision on whether he can be extradited. However, court spokesman Wojciech Malek said the ruling means Zakayev is free to leave Poland if he wants. Prosecutors can appeal the decision within seven days. It was unclear when any decision on a possible extradition might be made. Prosecutors' spokeswoman Monika Lewandowska said prosecutors have not yet received a formal extradition request from Russia. Zakayev walked out of the court and told reporters he would attend the conference's final day Saturday,

but didn't talk about his plans beyond that. Zakayev — who with his silver beard and impeccable tailoring looks more the diplomat or professor than guerrilla fighter — appeared relaxed in a crisp white shirt and suit as he arrived in a police car at the prosecutor's office. "I am not expecting anything that would violate the rules of the law," he told television cameras upon his arrival. "Poland is a democratic, law abiding nation. When I learned that there will be no problems I decided to come." The arrest came as a surprise to many in Poland — which has prided itself on supporting the spread of independence and democracy by offering support to activists abroad, including from Chechnya, ever since it broke free of Moscow's influence in 1989 and triggered similar upheavals across Eastern Europe. The detention came at a time when relations between Moscow and Warsaw are beginning to thaw. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is scheduled to visit Poland later this year as a sign of a "new start" in bilateral relations that offer a huge potential in all fields, the Russian ambassador has said. If Zakayev is not turned over to Moscow, the diplomatic bridge-building could run into trouble. In 2002, both Denmark and Britain experienced a cooling of ties with Russia after they rejected similar requests to extradite Zakayev. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said before the arrest that police would be legally bound to pick Zakayev up if he showed up for the World Chechen Congress because there was an international warrant for his arrest distributed by Interpol. Later, however, he indicated that Poland was not prepared to send Zakayev to Russia just to keep Moscow happy. Zakayev will be treated "in accordance with our understanding of Poland's interests and with our sense of decency and justice, and we will not be trying to meet anybody's expectations," Tusk said. Kremlin-backed Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov brushed aside Zakayev's comments saying "he is a good actor and behaving like one," and called for his prompt return to Russia. "By law, he needs to be given a life sentence," Kadyrov said according to Russian news agencies. "This is what I think. Killing him or something else would be a pleasure to him. He needs to be jailed for life, so that he sees what he did." (AP)

OSCE TRAINING KYRGYZ FORCES

20 September

Hundreds of volunteers in southern Kyrgyzstan took part in a one-day training course for citizen patrols, a delegate from the OSCE said Monday

from Bishkek. Lilian Darii, the deputy head of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe mission to Bishkek, said volunteer forces were able to add another layer of security in the south the country. "During the last few months voluntary citizen patrols demonstrated their solid contribution in supporting the police to restore and maintain public order across the country," she said in a statement. "I hope that OSCE support during this pre-electoral period will further contribute to enhancing stability in the country." Violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal Abad killed at least 350 people in the wake of an April coup that brought Roza Otunbayeva to power as the interim president. Otunbayeva threatened to postpone parliamentary elections scheduled for October if ethnic violence broke out again in the south. "We are now planning to engage citizen patrols during and after parliamentary elections to help the police in maintaining law and order in all parts of the country," said Shamsybek Mamyrov, the deputy head for voluntary citizen patrols in Kyrgyzstan. (UPI)

UZBEKISTAN URGES INVESTIGATION OF KYRGYZSTAN UNREST

20 September

Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov called on Monday for an independent international investigation of the June ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan that sent more than 100,000 refugees into his country. In text of remarks to a U.N. development summit, Karimov said such an investigation was the only way to promote reconciliation between the ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks who each make up roughly half of the population in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Nearly 400 people were killed in several days of violence, which began on June 10 and were triggered by attacks by unidentified people in balaclavas. Unofficial estimates place the death toll much higher. Many victims were shot and some, including women and children, were burned inside their homes. Earlier this year, the New York-based Human Rights Watch nonprofit group said some Kyrgyz government troops took part in mob attacks against Uzbeks and that a brutal official probe into the violence was making matters worse. Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic that hosts both U.S. and Russian military air bases, has struggled to assert control over southern parts of the country since assuming power following a popular revolt on April

7. "I am convinced that the timely holding of objective and independent international investigations which rule out any prejudice and one-sided approach ... can pave the way to reconciliation and accord between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek minority in the south of Kyrgyzstan," Karimov said. He said violence could erupt anew without such an investigation. Karimov rejected calls for an international investigation into Uzbekistan's handling of a 2005 riot in the town of Andizhan where, according to witnesses, government troops killed hundreds of protesters. (Reuters)

KAZAKH ACTIVISTS ALLEGE THEY WERE 'KEPT FROM TRAVELING TO ALMATY'

23 September

Activists of the unregistered Kazakh opposition party Forward (Algha) were unable to travel to Almaty today for a discussion on organizing a referendum seeking President Nursultan Nazarbaev's resignation, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Adilzhan Kenzhegaliev, a coordinator for Algha's Atyrau branch, told RFE/RL that 15 party activists who planned to travel by train to Almaty could not do so as their seats were occupied by other passengers with valid tickets. The activists planned to go to Almaty to take part in a discussion organized by Algha on initiating a referendum asking people whether Nazarbaev should resign. The discussion is scheduled for September 25. Kenzhegaliev said Kazakhstan's security services have organized the double-ticketing situation to prevent the activists from attending the Almaty event. Also today, a court in Atyrau fined two Algha activists \$35 each for resisting police. Almagul Dzhirenshieva and Raikhan Kenzhegulova were detained by police as they prepared to leave Atyrau for Almaty earlier this week. (RFE/RL)

REGIONAL ANTI-TERRORISM DRILLS ENTER ACTIVE STAGE IN KAZAKHSTAN

24 September

Joint anti-terrorism exercises of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Peace Mission 2010, enter their active phase on Friday at the Matybulak range in southeast Kazakhstan. The 17-day drills, which began on September 9, are aimed at testing the interoperability of the SCO armed forces in rendering assistance to a member state involved in an internal armed conflict or subjected to a terrorist attack. The exercises involve some 5,000 servicemen from five of the six SCO member states - Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and

Tajikistan. Uzbekistan has chosen not to take part. More than 300 military vehicles and over 50 combat aircraft and helicopters from Kazakhstan, China and Russia are employed. Established in 2001 as a non-military alliance, the regional mutual security group SCO was initially aimed at dealing with Islamic extremism and other security threats in Central Asia, but has since expanded its scope to include cooperation in disaster relief and trade. (RIA Novosti)

AT LEAST 42 INJURED IN SUICIDE BOMBING IN RUSSIA'S NORTH CAUCASUS

25 September

Russian media reports say a suicide bomber has blown himself up in the republic of Daghestan, injuring at least 42 people, including several police officers. The bomber broke through a police cordon in the capital, Makhachkala, where security officers were battling militia fighters. At least two Islamist rebels were killed in that incident. On September 24, at least five suspected Islamist terrorists, including a woman, were killed in Daghestan. Daghestan has been the scene of bloody clashes between forces loyal to Moscow, criminal gangs, and Islamists striving for independence from Russia. The region is plagued by almost daily violence. (RFE/RL)

TAJIK SPECIAL SERVICES KILL ANOTHER SUSPECTED MILITANT WEEK AFTER DEADLY AMBUSH

26 September

A "foreign mercenary," who reportedly took part in a deadly ambush on Tajik troops a week ago, has been killed in an ongoing special operation in eastern Tajikistan, the republic's state TV reported. According to the TV report, the suspected militant was in possession of an assault rifle, as well as plans of future terrorist attacks and a bomb-making manual. The militant's name and country of origin was not disclosed for investigation purposes. It was earlier reported that mercenaries from Pakistan and Afghanistan took part in the attack, which left some two dozens of servicemen dead, RIA Novosti reported. According to official reports, 25 people were killed and 14 seriously injured on September 19 when they were ambushed in a remote Tajik valley. Three people later succumbed to their injuries, and 11 remain in hospital. The operation against militant leaders Abdullo Rakhimov, Mirzokhudzha Akhmadov and Alovuddin Davlatov, who are blamed for the attack, began in eastern Tajikistan on

Wednesday. Eight suspected militants have been killed so far. (Trend)

SAAKASHVILI: GEORGIA 'NOT FIXATED ONLY' ON NATO

26 September

President Saakashvili said Georgia still aspired to join the NATO, but said Tbilisi was not "fixated" on that goal.

Asked during an interview with Al Jazeera's English-language channel whether he was optimistic that Georgia would join NATO by 2013, when his second and final presidential term expires, Saakashvili responded: "We never made any deadlines." After the NATO Bucharest Summit in April, 2008, Saakashvili announced: "I am sure that we will become a NATO member before my presidential term expires [in 2013]." In the interview with Al Jazeera's David Frost, Saakashvili also said that although Georgia's aspiration remained to join the NATO, a difficult geopolitical conditions in the region should also be taken into consideration. "You should realize that we are a small country in the middle of very complicated geopolitical region," he said. "We are strategically an important country... there are lots of political factors in play." "Of course we did not change our mind [in respect of NATO aspiration], but on the other hand, we are developing relations with all the other countries in the region. We are developing relations with the countries to the south, with other former Soviet countries - countries like Ukraine; in Central Asia, Caspian [region]; Turkey and the European Union; we started Association Agreement talks with the European Union... We signed strategic relations treaty with the United States." "So we are not fixated only on one goal, there are many other things," Saakashvili added. "Of course we never gave up our aspirations - we want to be members of a serious club, we want to have secured future." During the interview, Saakashvili was also asked whether he intended to remain in power as PM, after expiration of his presidential term. In his response Saakashvili used the similar formulation he usually applies to when speaking on the matter. He said that he was "not concentrated on what happens after 2013", instead he was focused on implementation of his goal of making economic and political reforms irreversible before 2013 and also added that he would do his best to keep his team of reforms and "ideology of reforms" in power after his presidential term expires. "How can I help to keep

it - I'll decide that when the time approaches," he added. (Civil Georgia)

AFGHAN PRESIDENT KARZAI'S BROTHER TARGETED IN U.S. INVESTIGATION

27 September

U.S. prosecutors have launched a criminal probe of one of the brothers of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to determine whether he should be charged with tax evasion, racketeering, or extortion, according to unnamed sources quoted in "The Wall Street Journal." The paper notes that "any move to indict Mahmood Karzai, who is a U.S. citizen, carries huge risks for American officials, whose anticorruption efforts have often provoked sharp backlashes from President Karzai." U.S. authorities are quoted as saying that the investigation into the activities of Mahmood Karzai, the president's oldest brother, is a result of a corruption probe being conducted by federal prosecutors in New York. Mahmood Karzai denied any wrongdoing, saying, "They won't find anything; I'm just a businessman," according to the paper. Any decision on whether to prosecute under U.S. jurisdiction would rest ultimately with the Justice Department. Mahmood Karzai ran a restaurant in Massachusetts before 2001, but has expanded his interests to include a one-fifth stake in a major housing development outside the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, according to "The Wall Street Journal." He was also a shareholder in Kabul Bank, which was Afghanistan's largest privately held bank until authorities took it over amid a run on the bank after reports that it had been gutted by corruption and risky investments. Another presidential brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, is a prominent politician in the Kandahar area who has been targeted by persistent allegations of corruption and purported involvement in the drug trade. He has denied any wrongdoing and said such charges are the result of politically motivated grudges.

Afghan anticorruption authorities' detention of presidential aide Mohammad Zia Salehi this summer reportedly sparked ill will between Karzai and U.S. officials, who have pushed hard for greater accountability by Kabul with billions of dollars in aid pouring into Afghanistan. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKHSTAN PROPOSES DECLARATION OF DENUCLEARIZED WORLD

27 September

Kazakhstan has suggested creating Universal Declaration of a Denuclearized World and the new currency. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Kanat Saudabaev, informed the delegates of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly on September 25, the agency reports citing the United Nations Radio. Creation of the new denuclearized zones, including in the Near East, will become one more step towards a world free from nuclear weapons, K. Saudabaev said. This initiative would promote achievement of trust between neighbors in this region and has laid the foundation for fundamental change of the situation in the Near East. "I confirm from a high tribune of the United Nations the urgency and necessity of the initiatives of the President of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev, regarding creation of Universal Declaration of a Denuclearized World, which would embody determination of all states to move towards a denuclearized world," K. Saudabaev said. (Kazakhstan Today)

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL TO VISIT GEORGIA THIS WEEK

27 September

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen will pay an official visit to Georgia on Thursday to discuss cooperation issues, Georgian deputy foreign minister Nino Kalandadze said on Monday. Rasmussen is due to meet with President Mikheil Saakashvili, Prime Minister Nikoloz Gilauri, Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze and parliamentary speaker David Bakradze. Talks will focus on issues of bilateral interest which emerged during the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) held in June, Kalandadze said. NATO and Georgia established the commission in September 2008, to oversee the organization's assistance to Georgia following the August conflict between Tbilisi and Moscow over South Ossetia, and to oversee Georgia's drive to join the military alliance. "It is important that... we will have an opportunity to formalize all those tricky and important issues with the secretary general," she said, adding that accession to NATO remains a priority in her country's foreign policy. Georgia has long been pursuing NATO membership, but its bid was turned down due to pressure from Germany and France at a 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest. However, NATO has stated that the country will

join at an unspecified date in the future. (RIA Novosti)

NATO AIR STRIKES KILL 'AT LAST 30 MILITANTS' IN PAKISTAN

27 September

NATO officials today said alliance air strikes had killed at least 30 militants in Pakistan. U.S. Captian Ryan Donald, a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, justified the attack as an act of "self-defense" after insurgents reportedly attacked an Afghan security outpost on September 25 in Khost Province, which borders Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal area. ISAF helicopters were dispatched to chase the insurgents, who allegedly crossed the border into Pakistan. Officials say the helicopters were attacked while returning from Pakistan, prompted another air strike near the Afghan border that NATO says killed several militants. (RFE/RL)

PAKISTAN PROTESTS NATO AIR STRIKES ON ITS TERRITORY

28 September

Pakistan has criticized a pair of NATO air strikes on its territory, saying they were a violation of its sovereignty. NATO helicopters in eastern Afghanistan launched air strikes into Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal area on September 25, reportedly killing more than 50 militants after an outpost near the border came under attack from insurgents. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said the mandate of foreign troops in Afghanistan ends at the Afghan border. It said that unless corrective measures are implemented, Islamabad would have to "consider response options." The complaints come as the "New York Times" reports that U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan this month have been higher than any previous month, with 20 strikes so far in September. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION ACCREDITED 91 INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

28 September

Central Election Commission of Kyrgyzstan accredited 91 international observers for the parliamentary elections will be held on October, 2010, news agency "24.kg" reported. Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr. Frederico S. Duque Estrada Meyer will also

monitor upcoming elections, Central Election Commission reports. Central Election Commission specifies that they have accredited international observers sent by Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Eurasian Economic Community, International Association "Election&Democracy", mission ODIHR. Note: besides international observers over 1 thousand 500 local observers will monitor the parliamentary elections. (Trend)

AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT THANKS UZBEKISTAN FOR ITS POSITION ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

28 September

Uzbekistan's position on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is very important for Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said at a briefing after an intergovernmental meeting during an official visit to Tashkent. "I have already spoken about it and once again I want to emphasize that we are very grateful for the principled, consistent and firm position of Uzbekistan to restore the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and solve all conflicts within the norms and principles of international law," the Azerbaijani president said. Uzbek President Islam Karimov once again confirmed the unchanged position of Tashkent on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue during the negotiations. Uzbekistan has consistently advocated and continues to advocate for a peaceful, political settlement of the long-standing conflict. The main condition for the settlement is the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, he said. He recalled that the vote on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict held in the UN General Assembly in 2008 had strengthened the international position of Azerbaijan and was a moment of truth. "As a person who treats Uzbekistan and the fraternal Uzbek people with great sympathy and love, I was pleased that Uzbekistan was among those countries that were close to us," Aliyev said. "Our countries were formed as independent self-sufficient countries that determine their own destiny and seek regional cooperation. Our countries provided internal stability for economic development and social benefits, and seek to establish peace around us. It is impossible to feel safe if a flame burns around you," Aliyev said. He said that a disaster in Central Asia had been avoided thanks to Karimov's personal efforts. "It demonstrates once again Uzbekistan's important role not only regionally but also globally. Today everything is so interconnected that the

security of a region becomes a matter of global security," Aliyev said.

Returning to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity was recognized by the world. "Nagorno-Karabakh was recognized by the entire world and the United Nations an integral part of Azerbaijan. The restoration of territorial integrity is essential to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," he said. People's right to self-determination as promoted by Armenia can be successfully implemented within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Aliyev said. The Helsinki Final Act states that people's right to self-determination must not violate the territorial integrity of countries. Moreover, the Armenian people gained independence in Azerbaijani historical lands. A second Armenian state in Azerbaijani historical lands is absolutely unacceptable. "We will make every effort to restore the territorial integrity of our country. We are in the negotiation process. We have a constructive approach and expect the same constructivism from the Armenian side to achieve settlement. Nobody will gain by stalling the conflict. I think that all countries are interested in its settlement, which would fully comply with the norms and principles of international law," Aliyev said. (Trend)

VILLAGE HEAD, 3 POLICE KILLED IN SOUTHERN RUSSIA

28 September

The Interior Ministry says a regional administrator and three police officers have been killed by gunmen in a restive province in southern Russia. The ministry's branch in the province of Dagestan said the local administrator in the village of Kakamakhi was shot dead in his office Tuesday. Local police spokesman Magomed Tagirov said that, in another attack later Tuesday, three gunmen drove to a cafe in the town of Izberbash where several local police officers were sitting and sprayed them with automatic gunfire. He said three policemen were killed and two others were hospitalized with grave wounds. Dagestan and other southern provinces have been plagued by attacks and bombings by Islamic militants who have spread across the region after two separatist wars in neighbouring Chechnya. (AP)

FORMER KYRGYZ PRESIDENT'S NEPHEW TO STAND TRIAL

29 September

Authorities in Kyrgyzstan say the nephew of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev is to stand trial in connection with deadly interethnic violence there in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Prosecutor-General's Office spokesman Kubanych Sabyrov told RFE/RL the investigation of Sanjar Bakiev -- who is a son of the former president's eldest brother, Jusup Bakiev -- has been completed and he will face trial. Sanjar Bakiev and five associates were arrested earlier this summer. They were charged with organizing an armed group, illegally seizing state buildings, instigating ethnic clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Jalal-Abad in June, and the illegal purchase and possession of weapons and ammunition. A group formed after the president fled into exile, the Bishkek-based Committee to Protect Kurmanbek Bakiev, has rejected all the charges against Sanjar Bakiev and his associates as groundless. Kurmanbek Bakiev has been living in Belarus since he was ousted in the wake of deadly clashes between antigovernment demonstrators and security forces on April 7. He, several of his brothers, and two sons are wanted by Kyrgyz officials for abuse of power, financial crimes, and giving the order to open fire on unarmed demonstrators. (RFE/RL)

U.S. UNVEILS 'RIGHTS SANCTIONS' AGAINST IRAN

29 September

The United States has announced unprecedented economic sanctions aimed at punishing eight Iranian officials for human rights abuses since last year's disputed elections. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner announced the measures, saying the goal was "acute" and "severe" economic consequences for actions by those officials during the postelection crackdown. President Barack Obama's executive order represents the first time Washington has targeted Iran with sanctions over perceived rights violations against its own citizens. Geithner said that the narrow scope of the move makes it "much harder...to get around this." The sanctions ban Americans from doing business with Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and the current minister of intelligence, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, among others. The new order also freezes any U.S. assets held by the eight

officials, all of them either current or former members of the government or its security forces. The U.S. Treasury Department issued a statement saying the officials in question "share responsibility" for excessive violence used against protesters -- some of which resulted in death -- during mass demonstrations against the June 2009 election results. The White House called human rights "a matter of moral and pragmatic necessity for the United States" and said the United States "will always stand with those in Iran who aspire to have their voices heard." Iranian authorities responded to huge street protests after Mahmud Ahmadinejad was declared the winner in the June 2009 presidential election with brutal sweeps, thousands of detentions, and mass televised trials. Opposition leaders and rights groups have alleged that detainees have been subjected to abuses that include physical and psychological torture and rape. In addition to Jafari and Najjar, the individuals singled out in the executive order are: Minister of Welfare and Security and former Minister of the Interior Sadeq Mahsouli; Prosecutor-General and former Minister of Intelligence Qolam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei; former Prosecutor-General of Tehran Said Mortazavi; Minister of Intelligence Heydar Moslehi; the deputy chief of Iran's National Police, Ahmad-Reza Radan; and Hossein Taeb, deputy IRGC Commander for Intelligence and former Commander of IRGC's Basij Forces. (RFE/RL)

IRAN UNVEILS FIRST HYBRID VEHICLE

29 September

Auto-making giant Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) has unveiled its first hybrid vehicle, in a move aimed at reducing dependency on fossil fuels. "In line with the nation's Automotive Policy Council Bill, IKCO has decided to develop hybrid technology," a press release quoted the company's deputy CEO Mir Javad Soleimani as saying on Wednesday. IKCO's hybrid Samand LX will hit the market in March. Soleimani added that Iran Khodro Powertrain Co. (IPCO) experts have played a significant role in achieving this goal. "Hybrid vehicles receive a part of their required power from electric engines and the rest from internal combustion," he noted adding, "hybrid vehicles are produced in three categories: micro-hybrid, mild hybrid and macro-hybrid. IKCO products are categorized under micro ones." "Fuel-saving degree in hybrid cars varies depending on traffic situation, but normally it is between 12 and 30 percent," Soleimani explained. "IKCO hybrid cars with EF7

engines meet Euro IV standard requirements." IKCO was founded in 1962 and is currently regarded as the biggest carmaker in the Middle East. The automaker made 688,000 passenger cars in 2009. (presstv.ir)

TBILISI SAYS RUSSIAN TROOPS SEIZE FARMLANDS ADJACENT TO SOUTH OSSETIA WHILE RUSSIAN TROOPS BASED IN TSKHINVALI DENY ALLEGATIONS

29 September

Russian troops in breakaway South Ossetia are conducting, what they call, "border demarcation" and in the process grabbing plots of land on the Georgian-controlled territories, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) said in a statement on September 29. "Russian occupational forces started to seize additional territory and move forward the line of occupation in Shida Kartli region," it said. "Russian FSB [Federal Security Service] troops are conducting illegal 'border demarcation works' by putting steel poles in villages [of] Kvemo Nikozi, Zemo Nikozi, Ditsi, Arbo and Kordi." The Interior Ministry said that 25 hectares of farmland was occupied by the Russian troops in Kvemo Nikozi, south from Tskhinvali. It also said that houses of three local families, as well as pastures, irrigation canal and a water well "have been placed on the other side of the illegal 'demarcation line'" in the village of Ditsi; 5 hectares of farmland in the village of Arbo and half hectare of land in the village of Kordi have also been grabbed, according to the Interior Ministry. A spokesperson of EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) told Civil.ge that situation on the ground was "calm and quiet". The spokesperson also said the mission was not able at this stage to report on details as EUMM monitors were currently "looking into the situation". Tskhinvali-based border guard forces of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) have denied Tbilisi's allegation of seizing plots of land on the Georgian-controlled territories adjacent to breakaway South Ossetia. "The Russian forces are not conducting any demarcation works on the South Ossetian border with Georgia," a brief statement, posted on a website of the breakaway region's authorities, said. (Civil Georgia)

AZERBAIJAN REJECTS VERSIONS OF MADRID DOCUMENT ON KARABAKH - ARMENIAN OFFICIAL

29 September

Azerbaijan has rejected both versions of the Madrid document on the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said. "After intensive negotiations conducted over the past few months, the latest version of the Madrid principles was proposed to the parties in St. Petersburg in June. Armenia said it accepts the proposal as the foundation for negotiations as it was done in connection with the first version in November 2007. However, Azerbaijan rejected both versions," Nalbandian said in a speech given in the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. The minister said the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group had presented the Madrid document to Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2007, and over two dozen working proposals were later based on it, the Armenian Foreign Ministry told Interfax. Nalbandian said Azerbaijan had said it accepted one of the working versions of the document with certain exemptions. "However, it turned out that there are more exceptions than there are rules. What does Azerbaijan expect? Does it expect Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh to approve the exceptions approved by Baku? I'm getting the impression that Azerbaijan is not willing to hear what the international community is saying to them through the co-chairmen," Nalbandian said. Nalbandian also said Azerbaijan has violated its duties to observe a ceasefire agreement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict area for 15 years. "On May 12, 1994, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh signed a truce agreement, and an agreement on the strengthening of the truce regime was signed on February 4, 1995, which required Baku to refrain from provocations and statements. Azerbaijan continues to reject calls from the OSCE co-chairmen and the UN secretary-general to strengthen the truce regime and remove spinners from the contact line," Nalbandian said. The Armenian foreign minister also said "such a stance cannot promote the formation of a favorable atmosphere for peaceful settlement." (Interfax)