

Business & Politics in the Muslim World
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Weekly Report
Central Asia
Uzma Siraj

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Azerbaijan

Political Front

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Talks on July 16-17 on the sidelines of the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty failed to galvanize the apparently deadlocked Karabakh peace process.

- Armenian Opposition Leader Warns Against Karabakh Concessions

YEREVAN -- An Armenian opposition official says any resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that includes an Armenian withdrawal from occupied districts of Azerbaijan would lead to President Serzh Sarkisian's resignation, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- Obama Pick For U.S. Ambassador To Azerbaijan On The Defensive At Senate Hearing

The pick of U.S. President Barack Obama to be the next U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan quickly found himself on the defensive as he appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on July 22.

- U.S. Senate will consider Matthew Bryza's nomination as ambassador to Azerbaijan

The U.S. Senate International Relations Committee will consider the nomination of Matthew Bryza as the U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan, the Senate reported.

Economic /Energy Front

- Azerbaijan, EU to continue trade talks

The trade deal as part of the Azerbaijan-EU association agreement can be signed after the country joins the World Trade Organization, Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Mahmud Mammadgulyev said.

Social Front

- Defendants Testify In Azerbaijan Mass Murder Trial

BAKU -- Baku's Serious Crimes Court has heard testimony from four men accused of abetting Farda Gadirov, the gunman who shot and killed 12 people at Baku's Oil Academy in April 2009, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Azerbaijan Appeals European Court Ruling On Jailed Journalist

BAKU -- Azerbaijani authorities have appealed the verdict handed down by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with regard to jailed journalist Eynulla Fatullayev, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Kazakastan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Almaty Meeting Fails To Break Deadlock In Karabakh Talks

Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian (left) and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Talks on July 16-17 on the sidelines of the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty failed to galvanize the apparently deadlocked Karabakh peace process.

Economic /Energy Front

- Kazakh leader says EU should do more on Nabucco

ASTANA, July 18 (Reuters) - Kazakhstan's leader said on Sunday the European Union was doing too little to bring to life the Nabucco pipeline, which aims to take Caspian Sea gas to Europe and reduce the bloc's independence on Russia. "In Europe there is a lot of talk on Nabucco ... but in reality little gets done," Nursultan Nazarbayev said at a joint news briefing with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Kazakh capital, adding that his comments were not criticism.

Social Front

- Kyrgyz Officials Accuse Kazakh Website Of Inciting Ethnic Hatred

A Kyrgyz Interior Ministry officer talks to refugees on a street in the town of Osh in mid-June, about a week after the worst of the interethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan.

- Kazakh Businessman To Help Independent Weekly Pay Fine

URALSK, Kazakhstan -- A Kazakh businessman says he will give \$70,000 to help an independent newspaper in the western city of Uralsk pay a court-ordered fine for libel, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Osh Mayor Says No International Police Force Needed In Kyrgyzstan

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov has denied that local law enforcement bodies have abused detainees following the outbreak of interethnic violence last month, and says the majority of the southern Kyrgyz city's citizens oppose the idea of sending an international police force to buttress security.

- Ousted Kyrgyz President's Brother Arrested In Jalal-Abad

Kyrgyz officials say the younger brother of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev, Akhmat Bakiev, has been detained in the southern city of Jalal-Abad.

Deputy Interior Minister Melis Turganbaev said that Ahmat Bakiev was arrested during a raid in Jalal-Abad by special forces late on July 21.

- **Kyrgyz Defense Minister Resigns To Take Part In Elections**

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov has officially resigned in order to be eligible for parliamentary elections scheduled for October, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Officials Open Nearly 1,300 Criminal Cases Related To Unrest**

Doctors removing stitches from man with gunshot wounds following the ethnic violence in Osh in June.

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- The Osh city prosecutor says that nearly 1,300 criminal cases have been opened in the southern Kyrgyz city in relation to last month's deadly ethnic unrest, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Activists Demand Ousted President, Relatives Be Punished**

BISHKEK -- About 50 Kyrgyz activists picketed parliament to demand that former President Kurmanbek Bakiev and members of his family be prosecuted, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Geo Strategic Front

- **OSCE Stalls On Police Mission To Kyrgyzstan**

The police mission is intended to help restore order after massive clashes in Kyrgyzstan's south last month.

Ministers of OSCE member countries have voiced support for sending an international police mission to Kyrgyzstan following last month's deadly ethnic clashes, but have failed to make solid plans for the deployment.

- **OSCE Votes To Deploy International Advisory Police In Southern Kyrgyzstan**

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has agreed to "deploy without delay" a police advisory group to southern Kyrgyzstan.

The police advisory group will assist the Central Asian country in reducing interethnic tensions and strengthening the capacities of Kyrgyzstan's regional police forces, according to OSCE spokeswoman Virginie Coulloudon.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- **Kyrgyzstan Restores Mandatory Military Duty For Young Men**

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz government has adopted a decree restoring the mandatory one-year military service for young men, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Officials Accuse Kazakh Website Of Inciting Ethnic Hatred**

A Kyrgyz Interior Ministry officer talks to refugees on a street in the town of Osh in mid-June, about a week after the worst of the interethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- **Jailed Tajik General's Brother Sentenced**

DUSHANBE -- A brother of Tajikistan's highly influential former presidential-guard commander has been sentenced to 30 years in prison after a closed trial, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports

Geo Strategic Front

- Tajik FM Hopeful Of OSCE Help In Disputes With Uzbekistan

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi says he is optimistic that meetings with 13 counterparts from other Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) members will help free the movement of people and goods across Central Asia, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- U.S. Blacklists Tajik Cotton Despite Child-Labor Ban

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan says a prohibition by President Emomali Rahmon on the use of child labor to pick cotton remains in force, but Tajik cotton has still been blacklisted by the United States, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- New ambassador of Turkmenistan to Armenia appointed

Ata Serdarov has been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkmenistan to the Republic of Armenia (Yerevan city). President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed yesterday a decree to this effect. According to another presidential decree, Ata Serdarov was granted the diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Economic /Energy Front

- United Nations Regional Centre to host high-level meeting on water resources in Ashgabat

The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia will host the high-level "Dialogue on Water Resources: Implementing the Decisions of IFAS Summit and the Outcomes of the Visit of the UN Secretary General to Central Asian Countries" in Ashgabat on July 20.

- Representatives of Central Asian countries discuss issues of water management in Ashgabat

A high level dialogue meeting entitled "Implementation of the IFAS Summit Conclusions and Outcomes of the UN Secretary-General's visit to Central Asia" took place in Ashgabat on 20 July 2010. The event was organized by the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia headquartered in the Turkmen capital.

Social Front

Uzbekistan

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Geo Strategic Front

- Tajik FM Hopeful Of OSCE Help In Disputes With Uzbekistan

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Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- HRW Slams Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan For Impeding Asylum Seekers

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan of preventing ethnic Uzbek refugees from seeking asylum from arrests and alleged torture at the hands of Kyrgyz police.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Almaty Meeting Fails To Break Deadlock In Karabakh Talks

Talks on July 16-17 on the sidelines of the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty failed to galvanize the apparently deadlocked Karabakh peace process.

While the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers, Eduard Nalbandian and Elmar Mammadyarov, blamed each other for the ongoing stalemate, the French and Russian foreign ministers and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg -- representing the three countries that co-chair the OSCE Minsk Group, which has been seeking to mediate a solution to the conflict since 1992 -- released a statement stressing that the "primary responsibility" for ending the conflict lies with the leaders of the two countries. Accordingly, they urged "a greater spirit of compromise" and "additional actions by the sides...to reinforce the cease-fire of 1994."

Both Nalbandian and Mammadyarov said the initial intention was to release a joint statement by all five officials. Each blamed the other for thwarting that planned statement. Nalbandian termed Mammadyarov's approach "destructive." Mammadyarov for his part told journalists he has the impression that "Armenia has no desire to reach an agreement."

Nalbandian and Mammadyarov met one-on-one on July 16 and then a second time the following day in the presence of their French and Russian counterparts, Bernard Kouchner and Sergei Lavrov, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg.

The co-chair countries issued a joint statement after those talks that condemned the "serious armed incident" last month in which one Azerbaijani and four Armenian servicemen were killed in an exchange of fire on the Line of Contact separating the two countries' forces. They likewise deplored "inflammatory public statements," a possible allusion to repeated warnings by senior officials that Azerbaijan has the military capacity to restore its control over the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh republic by force.

The joint statement went on to warn that "the use of force created the current situation, and its use again would only lead to suffering, devastation, and a legacy of conflict and hostility that would last for generations."

It also stressed that any "fair and lasting" settlement of the conflict must be based on the principles enumerated in the statement by the French, Russian, and U.S. presidents adopted one year ago on the sidelines of the G8 summit in L'Aquila and reaffirmed last month at the G8 meeting in Canada.

They are the return to Azerbaijani control of the territories bordering on Nagorno-Karabakh currently occupied by Armenian forces; interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that provides guarantees of security and self-governance; a land corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through "a legally binding expression of will"; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.

The statement stressed that "these proposed elements have been conceived as an integrated whole, and any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced position."

But the July 2009 statement failed to specify in what sequence those elements are to be implemented. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have availed themselves of the resulting ambiguity to promote as the sole acceptable variant the time frame they consider most advantageous.

In written remarks released by the Armenian Foreign Ministry on July 19, Nalbandian said that the insistence that the principle elements of the settlement constitute "an integrated whole," and the appeal to strengthen the cease-fire regime, were addressed primarily at Azerbaijan. He argued that Azerbaijani leaders emphasize the principle of territorial integrity and downplay the right of the Karabakh Armenians to self-determination.

The French/Russian/U.S. statement did not stress the necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of the peace talks, which both Armenia and Azerbaijan have done until quite recently. In recent weeks, however, both Mammadyarov and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have claimed publicly that Armenia has agreed in principle to withdraw its forces from all seven occupied districts of Azerbaijan, including Kelbacar and the strategic Lachin corridor that links Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Mammadyarov further claimed that the Almaty talks would focus on the timeframe for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Kelbacar and Lachin over a period of five years. Nalbandian and Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharian, however, both emphatically denied this.

- Armenian Opposition Leader Warns Against Karabakh Concessions

YEREVAN -- An Armenian opposition official says any resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that includes an Armenian withdrawal from occupied districts of Azerbaijan would lead to President Serzh Sarkisian's resignation, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Ruben Hakobian, the deputy chairman of the Zharangutyun (Heritage) Party, told RFE/RL that "even the slightest change in the status quo [in the conflict zone] would seriously escalate the situation in Armenia, which I think would result in regime change." He said "it is very possible that preterm elections will take place in Armenia and that would mainly be conditioned by the [Nagorno-Karabakh] conflict. The return of any

[Azerbaijani] district, any liberated territory, would be met with serious opposition in Armenia and Artsakh."

Unlike Sarkisian and his government, Zharangutyun is strongly opposed to the current peace proposals for Nagorno-Karabakh. Called the "Madrid principles," they call for an Armenian withdrawal from Azerbaijani districts bordering the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh republic, the breakaway Azerbaijani territory that has been ruled by Armenians since 1994.

Zharangutyun has also been highly critical of Sarkisian's policy of rapprochement with Turkey.

Hakobian, who left the nationalist Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) to join Zharangutyun earlier this year, said leadership change in Armenia is essential for a "radical change" of the country's current policies.

"Even if these authorities want to get out of the negotiating process, they can't do that. They can't radically change their position and reject the [international mediators'] Madrid principles," he said. "Only a new government can do that."

Hakobian told RFE/RL that ground-breaking developments in the Karabakh negotiating process are the only factor that could seriously threaten Sarkisian's hold on power. "Right now the opposition lacks the strength and necessary unity to trigger fresh elections," he said.

- Obama Pick For U.S. Ambassador To Azerbaijan On The Defensive At Senate Hearing

The pick of U.S. President Barack Obama to be the next U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan quickly found himself on the defensive as he appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on July 22.

Matthew Bryza was one of the most visible U.S. officials in the Caucasus region during the administration of former President George W. Bush, serving as deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. He was also the U.S. co-chair of the Minsk Group, which seeks to broker a settlement to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, which broke off from Azerbaijani rule after a war in the 1990s and is populated mainly by ethnic Armenians.

Announced in late May, Bryza's nomination to fill the vacant post of U.S. ambassador to Baku provoked an angry response from Armenian diaspora groups and a number of Armenian officials, who accuse Bryza of bias in the Azerbaijani-Armenian dispute.

Bryza told the Senate committee that criticism comes with his job description.

"Being criticized or being thought of as being closer to one side or the other is part of the game, and I have to just remain always objective and deliver the tough messages when necessary," he said.

Looking For Explanations

But a number of senators on the committee questioned Bryza's willingness to deliver those tough messages, especially when directed at Azerbaijan.

U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer (Democrat-California) and Robert Menendez (Democrat-New Jersey) pressed the nominee on why he waited three months to condemn the desecration of ancient Armenian gravesites in the town of Julfa in the Azerbaijani exclave of Naxcivan.

U.S. Senator Robert Menendez

Videos that emerged in late 2005, allegedly showing Azeri troops attacking the UNESCO-protected gravestones, elicited condemnation from the European Parliament and other bodies before Bryza, at the time overseeing the region as deputy assistant secretary of state, issued a public denunciation.

He said caution on his part led to the delay.

"[The] reason why I didn't more vigorously respond on the day when I learned of it, and in the immediate days thereafter, was because, again, reports were just coming in, the video footage is very foggy, it's grainy, it's difficult to see what happened," Bryza said. "So in a spirit of professionalism and fairness, it was important to gather information. I asked our embassy to investigate what had happened, and as that information came in and it became clear to me what had happened, then, absolutely, I publicly issued that condemnation."

Failure to "meaningfully respond" to the destruction of Julfa's cemetery was among the concerns issued in a statement by the Armenian National Committee Of America, one of the most influential Armenian diaspora organizations in the United States, ahead of Bryza's hearing.

Other allegations from the Armenian group against Bryza included "failure to fully implement U.S. congressional appropriations for Nagorno-Karabakh," "false prioritization of territorial integrity over self-determination" for the disputed territory, and playing a role in the dismissal of former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans. There have been allegations that Evans was fired for his use of the term "Armenian genocide" to describe the World War I-era mass killings of Armenians by Turkish forces.

Before the Senate committee, Bryza was asked to respond to each of these accusations.

He confirmed that only \$2 million of the \$8 million appropriated by the U.S. Congress last year for assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh had been spent. When asked for a reason by Senator Boxer, Bryza said his staff had assured him that humanitarian funds were being spent "in as efficient a way as possible." He consented to the request of Boxer to provide a "detailed accounting" of all U.S. assistance to the area before his confirmation moves forward.

Armenian soldiers on a frontline position east of Karabakh on May 14

Menendez expressed concern at comments made by Bryza to the BBC in October 2008, in which, according to the senator, Bryza said "Armenia must agree that Nagorno-Karabakh is legally part of Azerbaijan." Such statements, said Menendez, had indicated to some that Bryza prioritizes the concept of territorial integrity over that of self-determination. Both principles are accorded equal weight in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiating process.

Bryza said his statement had been incorrectly translated from Russian, and pledged to respect the concept of self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh's residents if he is confirmed as ambassador to Baku.

"My philosophy when it came to Nagorno-Karabakh was 'I'm not worth my weight in anything if I am not taking the hits publicly and trying to push the leaders out of their comfort zone and trying to encourage them to take the political risks required for a settlement,'" Bryza added. "To do that, it required me to say things that made one side or the other side a bit uncomfortable, in my estimation."

Bryza was responsible for the Caucasus as deputy assistant secretary of state when former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans was fired from his post, but insisted he had played "absolutely no role" in the dismissal, "as hard as it is to believe."

Bryza also pledged to not let his personal life affect his work. His wife, Zeyno Baran, is of Turkish origin, which some Armenian critics say leads to an anti-Armenian bias.

Baran, who was present at the hearing, has also been cited as a source of potential conflict of interest for Bryza in terms of energy politics. She works for the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think-tank which receives funding from ExxonMobile and other energy companies.

Azerbaijan is a key "southern corridor" country for planned increases in gas shipment from the Caspian region to Europe.

While on the defensive for most of the hearing, Bryza did enjoy the support of Senator Dick Lugar (Republican-Indiana), who called for his prompt confirmation as ambassador. "In my experience, Matt has skillfully advanced United States interests by taking a balanced approach to our relationships in this complex region, and he has not hesitated to point out the shortcomings of regional leaders in the areas of democratic development, human rights, and press freedom," said the senator.

The U.S. Azeris Network, a lobbying organization for the Azeri interests in the United States, also commended the nomination of Bryza.

In a statement, the group said that after a nearly year-long vacancy of the post of U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan, "There is now an expectation to see the relations between the two nations to expand and regain positive momentum."

Ambassadors must be confirmed by the full U.S. Senate. The vast majority of presidential nominations are approved.

- U.S. Senate will consider Matthew Bryza's nomination as ambassador to Azerbaijan

The U.S. Senate International Relations Committee will consider the nomination of Matthew Bryza as the U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan, the Senate reported.

Hearings will be held under chairmanship of Senator Shaheen at 10.00 on July 22.

In addition to Bryza's nomination, the committee will consider the candidacy of Francis J. Ricciardone to the post of the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, candidacy of Daniel Bennett Smith to the post of U.S. ambassador to Greece and the nominations of ambassadors to Iceland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Economic /Energy Front

- Azerbaijan, EU to continue trade talks

The trade deal as part of the Azerbaijan-EU association agreement can be signed after the country joins the World Trade Organization, Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Mahmud Mammadgulyev said.

According to the Minister, it cannot hamper commodity turnover between Azerbaijan and EU. Azerbaijan joined the EU's Generalized System of Preferences program (GSP +) last year. Azerbaijani businessmen can partly use this program.

Despite this fact, discussions will be held for the fourth group of agreement talks – in the field of trade.

The main aim of GSP project is to promote development of non-oil sector in Azerbaijan and enhance country's export capacity.

This program provides preferential access to the EU market to Azerbaijani businessmen in the form of reduced tariffs for their goods when entering the EU market.

Social Front

- Defendants Testify In Azerbaijan Mass Murder Trial

BAKU -- Baku's Serious Crimes Court has heard testimony from four men accused of abetting Farda Gadirov, the gunman who shot and killed 12 people at Baku's Oil Academy in April 2009, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

The defendants -- Javidan Amirov, Nadir Aliyev, Arif Qabulov, and Nacaf Suleymanov - - are charged with terrorism, preparing intentional murder, and illegal possession of arms and drugs.

They have retracted their earlier confessions of guilt, which they say were made under torture.

Aliyev told the court on July 15 that he was hung upside down naked and that electric shocks were applied to his genitals. But the court claimed that doctors who examined the four men found no evidence of torture.

Judge Ramella Allahverdiyeva told the court that Gadirov's father refuses to travel to Baku to give evidence. The Azerbaijani authorities have requested his extradition from Russia but have not received any response to that request.

Amirov's lawyer, Huseynkhan Mustafayev, demanded that the court launch a separate investigation into the role of Mardun Qumasyan, an Armenian identified during the pretrial investigation as having financed the multiple killings. Mustafayev said Interpol informed him that no warrant has been issued for Qumasyan.

Mustafayev also demanded the court interrogate the customs and border service officers who were on duty the day Gadirov transported guns across the Georgian-Azerbaijani border, including the weapon used in the killings.

State prosecutor Abdulla Yusifov described both of Mustafayev's requests as groundless. Gadirov, a Georgian citizen of Azerbaijani origin, killed himself when police attempted to arrest him.

- Azerbaijan Appeals European Court Ruling On Jailed Journalist

BAKU -- Azerbaijani authorities have appealed the verdict handed down by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with regard to jailed journalist Eynulla Fatullayev, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

The Strasbourg-based court ruled in April that Fatullayev should be immediately released and paid 25,000 euros (\$32,076) in compensation.

Chingiz Asgarov, Azerbaijan's representative at the ECHR, told journalists on July 16 that Azerbaijan has always implemented European court rulings but that Fatullayev's case is different.

"The European Court ruling on Eynulla Fatullayev is to be implemented by July 22," he said. "However it will not be implemented [by that date] because Azerbaijan has appealed the ruling to the Upper Chamber; in the event that the Upper Chamber rejects the appeal, the ruling will be implemented from that date."

Fatullayev, editor of the newspaper "Realni Azerbaijan," is an outspoken critic of the Azerbaijani leadership. He is currently serving an 11-year prison term on four charges: instigation of terror, defamation, tax evasion, and illegal possession of drugs. The most recent verdict, for possession of drugs in prison, was handed down on July 6.

Local and international human rights watchdogs say all the charges against Fatullayev were fabricated and they have demanded his immediate and unconditional release.

Kazakastan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Almaty Meeting Fails To Break Deadlock In Karabakh Talks

Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian (left) and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Talks on July 16-17 on the sidelines of the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty failed to galvanize the apparently deadlocked Karabakh peace process.

While the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers, Eduard Nalbandian and Elmar Mammadyarov, blamed each other for the ongoing stalemate, the French and Russian foreign ministers and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg -- representing the three countries that co-chair the OSCE Minsk Group, which has been seeking to mediate a solution to the conflict since 1992 -- released a statement stressing that the "primary responsibility" for ending the conflict lies with the leaders of the two countries. Accordingly, they urged "a greater spirit of compromise" and "additional actions by the sides...to reinforce the cease-fire of 1994."

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They are the return to Azerbaijani control of the territories bordering on Nagorno-Karabakh currently occupied by Armenian forces; interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that provides guarantees of security and self-governance; a land corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through "a legally binding expression of will"; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.

The statement stressed that "these proposed elements have been conceived as an integrated whole, and any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced position."

But the July 2009 statement failed to specify in what sequence those elements are to be implemented. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have availed themselves of the resulting ambiguity to promote as the sole acceptable variant the time frame they consider most advantageous.

In written remarks released by the Armenian Foreign Ministry on July 19, Nalbandian said that the insistence that the principle elements of the settlement constitute "an integrated whole," and the appeal to strengthen the cease-fire regime, were addressed primarily at Azerbaijan. He argued that Azerbaijani leaders emphasize the principle of territorial integrity and downplay the right of the Karabakh Armenians to self-determination.

The French/Russian/U.S. statement did not stress the necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of the peace talks, which both Armenia and Azerbaijan have done until quite recently. In recent weeks, however, both Mammadyarov and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have claimed publicly that Armenia has agreed in principle to withdraw its forces from all seven occupied districts of Azerbaijan, including Kelbacar and the strategic Lachin corridor that links Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Mammadyarov further claimed that the Almaty talks would focus on the timeframe for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Kelbacar and Lachin over a period of five years. Nalbandian and Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharian, however, both emphatically denied this.

Economic /Energy Front

- Kazakh leader says EU should do more on Nabucco

ASTANA, July 18 (Reuters) - Kazakhstan's leader said on Sunday the European Union was doing too little to bring to life the Nabucco pipeline, which aims to take Caspian Sea gas to Europe and reduce the bloc's independence on Russia. "In Europe there is a lot of talk on Nabucco ... but in reality little gets done," Nursultan Nazarbayev said at a joint news briefing with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Kazakh capital, adding that his comments were not criticism.

Kazakhstan remains close to Russia nearly two decades after the breakup of the Soviet Union, but energy has become a bone of contention. Its willingness to join Nabucco could hamper its relations with Russia, Europe's biggest gas supplier.

Nabucco shareholders have struggled to reach the gas supply deals they need to secure financing for around 70 percent of project costs for the 7.9 billion-euro (\$10.25 billion), 3,300-km (2,000-mile) pipeline.

Nazarbayev added that for Kazakhstan to supply the pipeline, expected to open by end-2014, the Nabucco consortium would have to either extend the link under the Caspian Sea or set up liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants. "But nothing is happening with either of those issues besides talk," he said.

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Iran are all viewed as potential suppliers for the pipeline, which is expected to carry 31 billion cubic metres a year.

Merkel, who was at the end of a five-day tour to Russia, China and Kazakhstan in the aim of boosting trade and energy supplies, said she welcomed trade with Astana.

"We'll support new business with state export guarantees," she said, referring to Germany's promise to refund exporting companies if the importing country dodges the bill.

Nazarbayev said he was disappointed so few German companies had invested in Kazakhstan and said he would welcome their involvement in the metals and chemicals sectors.

Nabucco's consortium includes Germany's RWE (RWE.GE), Austria's OMV (OMV.VI), Hungary's MOL (MOL.BU), Bulgarian Energy Holding, Romania's Transgaz (TGNM.BX) and Botas of Turkey.

Social Front

- **Kyrgyz Officials Accuse Kazakh Website Of Inciting Ethnic Hatred**

A Kyrgyz Interior Ministry officer talks to refugees on a street in the town of Osh in mid-June, about a week after the worst of the interethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan.

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz prosecutors have requested that Kazakhstan charge the owner of a Kazakh-based website and a journalist who writes for it with "inciting interethnic hatred" amid ethnic violence last month, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The centrasia.ru website carried the article at the heart of the controversy, titled "Kyrgyz Kill Uzbeks Even In Mosques."

Following up on previously reported suspicions, Kyrgyzstan's Prosecutor-General's Office now insists that the author of the article, Asror Muminov, and the owner of the website, Valery Khlyupin, should be "punished for distributing false information" that could foment ethnic violence.

Kyrgyz authorities said a special investigation has revealed that no one was killed either inside or near a mosque during the ethnic unrest in mid-June in the southern Kyrgyz cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad.

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor-General's Office told RFE/RL that Khlyupin has written to Kyrgyz authorities saying that 90 percent of the information used in Muminov's article was based on data provided by sources within the Kyrgyz government.

Khlyupin added in his letter that he is ready to apologize to the Kyrgyz government if any statement in Muminov's article is proved to be erroneous.

At least 300 people were killed and many tens of thousands fled their homes in violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-15.

- **Kazakh Businessman To Help Independent Weekly Pay Fine**

URALSK, Kazakhstan -- A Kazakh businessman says he will give \$70,000 to help an independent newspaper in the western city of Uralsk pay a court-ordered fine for libel, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

The Almaty-based media-rights foundation Adil Soz said today that businessman Barlyq Mendygaziev would donate the money to assist the weekly "Uralskaya nedelya" ("Uralsk Week").

The paper and journalist Lukpan Akhmedyarov were found guilty of libel by an Uralsk court earlier this month and fined \$138,000.

The newspaper printed an article by Akhmedyarov titled "Behind the Veil of the Tender" on August 6, 2009. The article suggested that a local company, Tengizneftestroi, knew

before a tender to build infrastructure for a local oil and gas company was held that it was going to win.

Tengizneftstroi's management sued the newspaper and Akhmedyarov for libeling the company and "damaging its business reputation."

"Uralskaya nedelya" chief editor Tamara Eslyamova had said the newspaper would not be able to pay the fine by itself.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Osh Mayor Says No International Police Force Needed In Kyrgyzstan

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov has denied that local law enforcement bodies have abused detainees following the outbreak of interethnic violence last month, and says the majority of the southern Kyrgyz city's citizens oppose the idea of sending an international police force to buttress security.

Myrzakmatov's comments come after UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay alleged on July 20 that "security forces in southern Kyrgyzstan have been responsible for repeated human rights violations against ethnic Uzbeks -- including arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment" in the aftermath of ethnic clashes in mid-June. The unrest that took place in the regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad left at least 316 people dead and some 400,000 displaced.

Myrzakmatov dismissed Pillay's comments during an exclusive interview in his office as "just another provocative statement, piece of information," before quickly adding that "at least I, as the mayor, don't have such information."

Before the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) approved on July 22 sending a 52-strong force to Osh and Jalal-Abad, Myrzakmatov said that "most of the people of this city are against" deploying such a police force.

Myrzakmatov would be inclined to agree with his constituents. He said the OSCE police personnel "don't understand our mentality, customs, or traditions. I should always give heed to the position of our citizens, and so I share their opinion."

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva agreed on July 16 to the OSCE's proposal to send the advisory force, which will be unarmed and focus mainly on training local police.

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva agreed to the OSCE force.

'Widespread Abuse' Of Uzbeks

While Mayor Myrzakmatov suggests that an international force is unneeded, many Uzbek inhabitants of the city asked by RFE/RL said they disagreed.

Forty days after the unrest left many of them without homes and just hours after a security operation in the neighborhood resulted in several young men being detained and several others beaten, residents of the Uzbek community of Kirpichny said on July 20 that the force could not arrive too soon and that the more of them that came, the better.

That sentiment was echoed in the Uzbek neighborhood of Sharq, where a security operation was conducted early on July 21.

Ilya, an Uzbek man in his late 20s who declined to give his full name out of concern for his safety, said as many as 100 soldiers "or at least people in [military] uniforms...came with dogs to search the neighborhood" just that morning.

In the last month, Ilya claimed, five young men from the neighborhood have been detained. "They weren't involved in anything," he said. "We haven't seen them since."

Similar claims have been made by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Pillay, and by Human Rights Watch (HRW), the international rights watchdog.

"Large numbers of people -- most of them young men, and virtually all of them Uzbek -- have been arbitrarily detained in ways that not only demonstrate flagrant ethnic bias, but also break many of the fundamental tenets of both Kyrgyz and international law," Pillay said in her July 20 statement.

An ethnic Uzbek woman holds a photo of a slain relative during peace rally in Osh last month.

In a July 14 statement in which it called on the OSCE to send an international police force, HRW warned that "continued arbitrary arrests and widespread abuse, including torture, might further destabilize the already tense situation in southern Kyrgyzstan."

Resisting International Pressure

Many local police and soldiers, however, have expressed opposition to the idea of foreigners coming to help restore order. And that prospect along with the allegations made by HRW have led to small protest rallies this week.

On July 19, several dozen demonstrators in Osh demanded that the government revise its approval for an international police force for Kyrgyzstan, according to RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service.

On July 21, a handful of protesters assembled in front of the OSCE's office in Bishkek to voice their opposition to HRW's claims.

"This is one-sided information. If HRW claims to be an international organization, why does it bring on one-sided facts?! We need the truth!," said Ondurush Toktonasyrov, the head of the April 7 movement.

Toktonasyrov also demanded that "no single HRW employee" be allowed on the international commission proposed by President Otunbaeva to look into the Osh violence. When asked to comment on the rally, Burul Osmonalieva, a representative of the OSCE center in Bishkek, said the protesters' demands do not pertain to the OSCE, because HRW is an independent, international, nongovernmental organization.

Osmonalieva added that the OSCE has no role in the commission proposed by Otunbaeva, which has yet to be created in any case.

- Ousted Kyrgyz President's Brother Arrested In Jalal-Abad

Kyrgyz officials say the younger brother of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev, Akhmat Bakiev, has been detained in the southern city of Jalal-Abad.

Deputy Interior Minister Melis Turganbaev said that Akhmat Bakiev was arrested during a raid in Jalal-Abad by special forces late on July 21.

Officials said Akhmat Bakiev was armed at the time of his arrest, but did not offer resistance. He is expected to be transferred to the capital Bishkek later on July 22.

Police said he confessed to being involved in riots involving ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south following President Bakiev's ouster.

The interethnic violence in the south left several hundred people dead and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes.

Police said Akhmat Bakiev was found with two pistols as well as a wig and paste-on moustache and beard. He did not offer any resistance during his arrest.

Another Bakiev brother, Zhanybek Bakiev, used to be the head of the state security guard and is accused by the authorities of giving the order to open fire on protesters during the popular uprising in April that led to Kurmanbek Bakiev's ouster.

Zhanybek Bakiev is on the run, while the former president is currently living in Belarus.

- Kyrgyz Defense Minister Resigns To Take Part In Elections

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov has officially resigned in order to be eligible for parliamentary elections scheduled for October, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Isakov wrote to President Roza Otunbaeva asking her to relieve him of his post and recommending his deputy, Kubanychbek Oruzbaev, to take his place.

Isakov said in Bishkek today that he will take part in parliamentary elections as head of the newly created Azattyk (Liberty) Democratic Party.

In addition to Isakov, Deputy Prime Ministers Almazbek Atambaev, Omurbek Tekebaev, and Temir Sariiev -- who also served as finance minister -- have resigned to be candidates in the elections scheduled for October 10. So, too, did Health Minister Damira Niyazalieva.

Otunbaeva said several weeks ago that anyone in her government wanting to run as a candidate in the parliamentary elections would have to resign his/her government post.

Isakov spent the last few months of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev's term in jail on corruption charges that his supporters and rights activists said were politically motivated.

- Kyrgyz Officials Open Nearly 1,300 Criminal Cases Related To Unrest

Doctors removing stitches from man with gunshot wounds following the ethnic violence in Osh in June.

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- The Osh city prosecutor says that nearly 1,300 criminal cases have been opened in the southern Kyrgyz city in relation to last month's deadly ethnic unrest, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Osh City Prosecutor Latip Jumabaev told RFE/RL 54 criminal suspects have been arrested since the ethnic clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in mid-June that left at least 316 dead and caused hundreds of thousands to flee their homes.

Jumabaev said dozens of suspects are still being sought by police in connection with the violence on charges such as kidnapping, murder, attempted murder, assaulting security officials, illegal possession of weapons, damaging private property, and arson.

He added that more than 30 people are still missing from the unrest.

International human rights groups and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay have reported physical abuse, torture, and the arbitrary detention of ethnic Uzbeks by Kyrgyz security forces in Osh.

Pillay said in a July 20 statement that her staff in Kyrgyzstan has received information from several sources suggesting that "local authorities are routinely turning a blind eye to illegal arrests, torture, and ill treatment of detainees leading to forced confessions."

Pillay's statement said more than 1,000 people had been detained in Osh and Jalal-Abad since the clashes.

The Kyrgyz Health Ministry released updated figures on July 19 regarding the unrest. It said of the 316 people confirmed killed during the violence from June 10-15, 247 were killed in the Osh region and 69 were killed in the Jalal-Abad region.

The ministry said 91 percent of those killed were men and that 52 percent of the deaths were caused by gunshot wounds, 18 percent by head wounds, and 16.5 percent from knife wounds.

Six percent of those killed died of burns or smoke inhalation.

It said that of the more than 2,300 people reported injured, 34 are still being treated in hospitals.

- **Kyrgyz Activists Demand Ousted President, Relatives Be Punished**

BISHKEK -- About 50 Kyrgyz activists picketed parliament to demand that former President Kurmanbek Bakiev and members of his family be prosecuted, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Arstanbek Sagyndykov is the head of the nongovernmental organization Fatherland's Victims, which organized the protest. He demanded that Bakiev, his brothers Janysh and Akhmat, and sons Maksim and Marat face justice in Kyrgyz courts.

Protesters also called for the people who died during the antigovernment demonstrations in the cities of Talas and Bishkek on April 6-7 be granted the distinguished "Hero of the Nation" honor.

The deadly clashes between protesters and security forces in April left 86 people dead and hundreds wounded.

They also forced Bakiev to flee Bishkek. He eventually settled in Belarus, where he currently lives at the invitation of Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

The Kyrgyz government that replaced Bakiev accuses him and government officials of having given the command for security forces to fire upon demonstrators. It has asked Belarus to extradite Bakiev, but Minsk has refused.

Bakiev's son, Maksim, has been charged in absentia with embezzlement. He currently lives in Great Britain where he is seeking political asylum.

The whereabouts of Marat, Akhmat, and Janysh -- who are also wanted by Kyrgyzstan's interim government for alleged corruption, embezzlement, and involvement in other unlawful activities -- are unknown.

Geo Strategic Front

- **OSCE Stalls On Police Mission To Kyrgyzstan**

The police mission is intended to help restore order after massive clashes in Kyrgyzstan's south last month.

Ministers of OSCE member countries have voiced support for sending an international police mission to Kyrgyzstan following last month's deadly ethnic clashes, but have failed to make solid plans for the deployment.

Diplomats of the 56-member Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe today wrapped up a second day of bilateral meetings at the Ak-Bulak resort near Almaty, Kazakhstan, without reaching a conclusion on the police mission.

They discussed sending international police forces to help restore stability in southern Kyrgyzstan, responding to a request from Kyrgyz leader Roza Otunbayeva, but did not name a date.

Earlier today, Kazakh State Secretary and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev said the OSCE expected to formally approve the decision before the gathering ended. "The difficult situation in Kyrgyzstan can have strong destabilizing effects not only on the Central Asian region but also far beyond its borders," he said.

Top officials from the United States, Germany, France, and many other countries have joined Kazakhstan, which chairs the OSCE, in supporting the planned mission. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg told reporters at the OSCE meeting that an international police mission "will help restore order, especially on the eve of elections, and will promote a swift reconciliation between the two sides in southern Kyrgyzstan."

The OSCE on July 16 said it had agreed with the Kyrgyz government on the principles for an unarmed 52-member police advisory group to train and assist Kyrgyz security agencies for four months.

Ahead of the OSCE meeting, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle and his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner visited Kyrgyzstan's second-largest city of Osh to assess the damage.

Kyrgyz officials estimate that some 2,500 homes, more than 100 commercial buildings, and 10 government buildings were destroyed or badly damaged during the unrest.

Westerwelle told reporters in Almaty that bringing stability to Kyrgyzstan was a strategic priority. He said the majority of participants at the OSCE gathering backed the proposal to send an international police force to the country's volatile south.

"I have the impression that a great number of colleagues see this exactly the same way. I cannot say whether we will have a final resolution today, but we assume that this police mission will take place," Westerwelle said. "We need it to stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan, and we all have a huge interest in this stabilization."

Also on the agenda of the OSCE meeting are issues ranging from European security to engagement with Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan, the first former Soviet country to hold the OSCE's rotating chairmanship, also used the gathering to promote its bid to hold a larger OSCE summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana later this year.

- OSCE Votes To Deploy International Advisory Police In Southern Kyrgyzstan

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has agreed to "deploy without delay" a police advisory group to southern Kyrgyzstan.

The police advisory group will assist the Central Asian country in reducing interethnic tensions and strengthening the capacities of Kyrgyzstan's regional police forces, according to OSCE spokeswoman Virginie Coulloudon.

The approximately 50-strong team of police officers will assist Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies' efforts in restoring public confidence among communities, Coulloudon added.

"These police officers will not be armed, they will not have an executive police mandate, [for instance] they will not arrest people," she said. "They are here to train and to help the Kyrgyz police forces."

The OSCE Permanent Council will ask its all 56 member states to present names and resumes of the candidates for recruitment for the police advisory group. All participating countries have agreed to cooperate, Coulloudon said.

The deployment of the team is expected to begin within weeks. The group will remain in southern Kyrgyzstan until the end of December, at which time the possible extension of their deployment would be decided by the Permanent Council.

Ethnic Tensions Remain

The decision comes as the mayor of the southern city of Osh, Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov told RFE/RL that "most of the people of this city are against" deploying such a police force.

Myrzakmatov denies that local law enforcement bodies have abused detainees following the outbreak of interethnic violence last month.

Demonstrators in Osh are demanding that the government revise its approval of the international police force.

On July 21, a handful of protesters assembled in front of the OSCE's office in Bishkek to voice their opposition to claims by international rights groups that police are abusing minority ethnic Uzbeks.

In mid-June the southern Kyrgyz regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad erupted in bloody interethnic violence that left more than 330 (335 according to the latest Health Ministry statistics) people dead and displaced some 400,000. Kyrgyz officials have indicated the death toll could be much higher.

Following the violence, tens of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks sought refuge in neighboring Uzbekistan and near the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. Many of the displaced and refugees have since returned to southern Kyrgyzstan.

Police Accused Of Abuses

Rights groups, notably Human Rights Watch (HRW), accuse Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies of arbitrary arrests and torture that primarily involves ethnic Uzbeks. In a report issued on July 14, the HRW said it has documented about 30 such cases.

At least one ethnic Uzbek has died in custody after being tortured, the HRW report said. The group has warned that "continued arbitrary arrests and widespread abuse, including torture, might further destabilize the already tense situation in southern Kyrgyzstan."

HRW had urged the OSCE to deploy an international police force to prevent further destabilization in the region.

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva earlier agreed to the OSCE proposal to send the advisory police team to southern Kyrgyzstan. The plan was initially announced on July 16 at the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- **Kyrgyzstan Restores Mandatory Military Duty For Young Men**

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz government has adopted a decree restoring the mandatory one-year military service for young men, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The decree issued on July 20 annuls a previous one by former President Kurmanbek Bakiev in 2008. That decree allowed men between 19 and 27 years of age to pay 12,000 soms (\$255) to the government in exchange for serving only one month in the military instead of the standard 12 months.

Kyrgyzstan analysts said the practice of young men bribing military officials in order to avoid military duty had become widespread. Bakiev's decree legalized the practice and allowed the government to benefit financially.

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has complained in recent weeks about the monoethnic character of the Kyrgyz army and the problems it creates. She said all young men, including large minorities in Kyrgyzstan such as Uzbeks and Russians, need to serve in the military.

- **Kyrgyz Officials Accuse Kazakh Website Of Inciting Ethnic Hatred**

A Kyrgyz Interior Ministry officer talks to refugees on a street in the town of Osh in mid-June, about a week after the worst of the interethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan.

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz prosecutors have requested that Kazakhstan charge the owner of a Kazakh-based website and a journalist who writes for it with "inciting interethnic hatred" amid ethnic violence last month, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The centrasia.ru website carried the article at the heart of the controversy, titled "Kyrgyz Kill Uzbeks Even In Mosques."

Following up on previously reported suspicions, Kyrgyzstan's Prosecutor-General's Office now insists that the author of the article, Asror Muminov, and the owner of the website, Valery Khlyupin, should be "punished for distributing false information" that could foment ethnic violence.

Kyrgyz authorities said a special investigation has revealed that no one was killed either inside or near a mosque during the ethnic unrest in mid-June in the southern Kyrgyz cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad.

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor-General's Office told RFE/RL that Khlyupin has written to Kyrgyz authorities saying that 90 percent of the information used in Muminov's article was based on data provided by sources within the Kyrgyz government.

Khlyupin added in his letter that he is ready to apologize to the Kyrgyz government if any statement in Muminov's article is proved to be erroneous.

At least 300 people were killed and many tens of thousands fled their homes in violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-15.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- **Jailed Tajik General's Brother Sentenced**

DUSHANBE -- A brother of Tajikistan's highly influential former presidential-guard commander has been sentenced to 30 years in prison after a closed trial, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The Tajik Supreme Court confirmed the sentence against Abdurasul Mirzoev on July 20. It declined to disclose details of the trial, saying that some testimony would compromise state secrets.

Mirzoev is the brother of General Ghaffor Mirzoev, who also headed the Tajik Drug Control Agency. Ghaffor Mirzoev was once a close ally of President Emomali Rahmon and one of the most influential members of the government.

Ghaffor Mirzoev was arrested in August 2004 and sentenced in 2006 to life imprisonment on charges of planning an uprising against the government, murder, and other serious crimes. The government also confiscated nearly all of the businesses and property belonging to Ghaffor and Abdurasul Mirzoev.

At the request of Tajik authorities, Abdurasul Mirzoev was extradited to Tajikistan in January from the United Arab Emirates, where he had lived since before Ghaffor Mirzoev's arrest in 2004.

Abdurasul Mirzoev's lawyer, Saidjon Odinaev, said that when Ghaffor Mirzoev was sentenced in 2006, Abdurasul was named as an accomplice in almost all his alleged

crimes. Odinaev said that the guilty verdict on those charges now applies also to Abdurasul Mirzoev.

Odinaev added that at the request of the defense three charges -- including robbery and kidnapping -- were dropped from the final verdict.

Odinaev said the sentence on Abdurasul Mirzoev is harsh and they will appeal it as soon as possible.

Geo Strategic Front

- Tajik FM Hopeful Of OSCE Help In Disputes With Uzbekistan

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi says he is optimistic that meetings with 13 counterparts from other Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) members will help free the movement of people and goods across Central Asia, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Zarifi met with the other foreign ministers on the sidelines of the weekend's OSCE ministerial meeting in Almaty on July 18.

He told RFE/RL on July 19 that talks were held on the more than 1,000 freight cars -- mostly carrying construction material bound for Tajikistan -- that have been held up in Uzbekistan since the beginning of the year.

Framing the freight-train delay are broader tensions between the two countries, namely the dispute over Tajikistan's construction of a hydroelectric dam in the Roghun region.

Zarifi said he hoped the OSCE would support Tajikistan's pursuit of greater control over the rivers on its territory.

He added that the OSCE had sought unsuccessfully for several years to persuade Uzbekistan to remove mine fields on its eastern border with Tajikistan's Sughd province. Dozens of Tajik farm workers have been killed and hundreds injured by exploding mines along the border.

Zarifi said the agenda of the Almaty meeting included the conflict in Afghanistan, Tajikistan's southern neighbor, and the recent ethnic clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan.

He said those conflicts have contributed to rising tensions in southern and northeastern Tajikistan, respectively.

Finally, Zarifi said Tajikistan fully supported the proposal by Kazakhstan, the current OSCE chairman, to convene a formal OSCE summit later this year.

However, other countries in the region -- which Zarifi did not identify -- "are not yet ready" to express their support, he said.

The last OSCE summit took place in Istanbul in 1999.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- U.S. Blacklists Tajik Cotton Despite Child-Labor Ban

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan says a prohibition by President Emomali Rahmon on the use of child labor to pick cotton remains in force, but Tajik cotton has still been blacklisted by the United States, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Tajik Labor Minister Mahmamin Mahmaminov told RFE/RL on July 20 that his ministry is against child labor and that the Education Ministry last year banned schools from sending children to pick cotton.

Mahmadaminov made his comments after the U.S. Labor Department's decision on July 19 to include cotton from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the list of commodities produced using indentured or child labor.

Damian Wampler, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, said that "there were credible reports that some officials in the Sughd and Khatlon oblasts used threats and coercion to force children to work in the cotton fields during the 2009 harvest."

Cotton is cash-strapped Tajikistan's second-largest export product after aluminum. During the last years of the Soviet era, Tajikistan produced up to 1 million tons of cotton annually.

But in the last two decades the cotton industry has been in a deep crisis and Tajikistan currently produces only one-third of the top levels in the Soviet Union.

Manzura Sultonova, a human rights activist from Tajikistan's northern Sughd Province, confirms that officially the use of child labor in the cotton industry is prohibited.

She says that although schools are no longer closed during the cotton-picking campaign, as was the case in the Soviet Union and remains the case in neighboring Uzbekistan, teachers still send children to "help farmers" during the harvest under pressure from local authorities.

The extent to which the U.S. decision will actually affect Tajikistan's cotton industry is questionable.

Vahhob Vohidov, who served as an agriculture minister during the Soviet era, said Tajikistan had never exported cotton to the United States. He said the main purchasers of Tajik cotton were European countries, Russia, Iran, and Uzbekistan.

But Shodi Shabdolov, a Communist Party deputy in the lower house of the Tajik parliament, said that although the U.S. administration's decision to blacklist Tajik cotton was politically motivated, it should nevertheless have a positive effect.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- New ambassador of Turkmenistan to Armenia appointed

Ata Serdarov has been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkmenistan to the Republic of Armenia (Yerevan city). President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed yesterday a decree to this effect. According to another presidential decree, Ata Serdarov was granted the diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

It should be recalled that the post of the head of diplomatic mission of Turkmenistan to Armenia was occupied by Shokhrat Dzhumaev, who was appointed ambassador to Romania in May this year.

Economic /Energy Front

- United Nations Regional Centre to host high-level meeting on water resources in Ashgabat

The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia will host the high-level "Dialogue on Water Resources: Implementing the Decisions of IFAS Summit and the Outcomes of the Visit of the UN Secretary General to Central Asian Countries" in Ashgabat on July 20.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent learned from the UN Regional Centre, in the course of a one-day meeting the sides will consider the results of exchange of views on issues of water management in the region that took place during the recent meetings of the UN Secretary General with the leaders of Central Asian countries; to discuss the program of action for 2011-2015 (ASBP-3) to assist countries in the Aral Sea basin and related issues of donor support; to explore ways to facilitate the development of a mutually acceptable mechanism for the integrated management of water resources and environmental protection in Central Asia; and to get acquainted with the concept of a seminar scheduled for the upcoming fall 2010 on possible mechanisms for resolving disputes in trans-boundary rivers, which is being organized by the United Nations Regional Centre.

The meeting will be attended by high-level representatives from the countries of Central Asia, as well as officials of the Government of Afghanistan as observers. The high-level representatives from the UN agencies, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Eurasian Economic Community and other regional and international organizations will also participate in this meeting.

- Representatives of Central Asian countries discuss issues of water management in Ashgabat

A high level dialogue meeting entitled "Implementation of the IFAS Summit Conclusions and Outcomes of the UN Secretary-General's visit to Central Asia" took place in Ashgabat on 20 July 2010. The event was organized by the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia headquartered in the Turkmen capital.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the UN Regional Centre, senior officials from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in the event. Representatives of the Afghan Government and UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan took part as observers. High level officials from the UN, EU, OSCE, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Eurasian Economic Community and other regional and international organizations also attended.

The high-level guests exchanged views on the progress made in strengthening institutions and legal frameworks for water resources management in Central Asia and took part in the preparation of the Aral Sea Basin Programme-3 (ASBP-3) to assist countries of the Aral Sea Basin. They also familiarized themselves with the concept of trans-boundary water dispute resolution methods taking into account the specifics of the Central Asian region.

Social Front

Uzbekistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Tajik FM Hopeful Of OSCE Help In Disputes With Uzbekistan

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi says he is optimistic that meetings with 13 counterparts from other Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe (OSCE) members will help free the movement of people and goods across Central Asia, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Zarifi met with the other foreign ministers on the sidelines of the weekend's OSCE ministerial meeting in Almaty on July 18.

He told RFE/RL on July 19 that talks were held on the more than 1,000 freight cars -- mostly carrying construction material bound for Tajikistan -- that have been held up in Uzbekistan since the beginning of the year.

Framing the freight-train delay are broader tensions between the two countries, namely the dispute over Tajikistan's construction of a hydroelectric dam in the Roghun region.

Zarifi said he hoped the OSCE would support Tajikistan's pursuit of greater control over the rivers on its territory.

He added that the OSCE had sought unsuccessfully for several years to persuade Uzbekistan to remove mine fields on its eastern border with Tajikistan's Sughd province.

Dozens of Tajik farm workers have been killed and hundreds injured by exploding mines along the border.

Zarifi said the agenda of the Almaty meeting included the conflict in Afghanistan, Tajikistan's southern neighbor, and the recent ethnic clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan. He said those conflicts have contributed to rising tensions in southern and northeastern Tajikistan, respectively.

Finally, Zarifi said Tajikistan fully supported the proposal by Kazakhstan, the current OSCE chairman, to convene a formal OSCE summit later this year.

However, other countries in the region -- which Zarifi did not identify -- "are not yet ready" to express their support, he said.

The last OSCE summit took place in Istanbul in 1999.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- HRW Slams Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan For Impeding Asylum Seekers

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan of preventing ethnic Uzbek refugees from seeking asylum from arrests and alleged torture at the hands of Kyrgyz police.

HRW's Gerry Simpson said the many asylum seekers told the rights group they would seek shelter in Uzbekistan if the border was open.

Simpson was speaking from the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, where deadly ethnic clashes erupted last month.

HRW said Uzbek and Kyrgyz officials had used "fearmongering tactics" to force the refugees' swift return and were now impeding people from fleeing renewed violence.

It said Kyrgyz official had threatened to strip refugees of their property and citizenship if they failed to return and vote in a national referendum on June 27.

Earlier today, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said she had information that Kyrgyz security forces committed abuses such as torture and arbitrary detention in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Sources

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