

Report # 132
Business & Politics in the Muslim World
News Monitoring
August 14 to 20, 2010
Weekly Report
Central Asia
Uzma Siraj

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Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijan's ruling party develops list of candidates for parliamentary elections

The ruling New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) has prepared a list of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections."The party's list of candidates for the parliamentary elections is ready. Candidates will be presented to the public after the official start of the elections," NAP Deputy Executive Secretary, MP Siyavush Novruzov told Trend today.

- CIS observation mission to monitor parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan

The observation mission of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will monitor upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. Press office of the CIS Executive Committee said that the decision had been passed at the meeting of the Council of the Permanent Representatives of CIS.

Geo strategic Front

- Russian-Armenian Defense Pact 'Will Prevent New War In Karabakh'

YEREVAN -- Armenia's ruling party says the deepening of Yerevan's military cooperation with Russia will strengthen the balance of forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and discourage any attempt to resolve it by force, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- Turkish President Making Visit To Azerbaijan

Turkey's President Abdullah Gul has been making an official visit to Azerbaijan, where he has discussed Turkish cooperation with Azerbaijan and efforts to bring peace to the Southern Caucasus region.

- Turkish, Azerbaijani leaders discuss Karabakh immigrants

Turkish President Abdullah Gul said Monday, as two states of one single nation, Turkey and Azerbaijan needed to act in solidarity, cooperation and brotherhood. Speaking at a joint press conference with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev following a meeting between the delegations of Turkey and Azerbaijan, President Gul said that he was thankful to brotherly Azerbaijan for the hospitality displayed to him and the members of the Turkish delegation.

- Former U.S. official wants Matthew Bryza as next U.S. ambassador in Azerbaijan
Former U.S. Deputy Secretary Of State, German Marshall Fund Senior Expert David Kramer expressed hope this week that the U.S. Foreign Affairs Committee will approve Matthew Bryza's appointment as U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Azerbaijan Supreme Court Upholds Bloggers' Sentences
BAKU -- Azerbaijan's Supreme Court has upheld the November 2009 sentences given to jailed bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Hajizada and Milli were arrested in July 2009 and sentenced to 2 and 2 1/2 years in prison, respectively, on hooliganism charges. Human rights organizations and Western governments have said the charges are politically motivated.

Kazakhstan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Kazakh, British, U.S. Troops Open Drills
Kazakh, British and U.S. troops are teaming up for 10 days of joint military exercises. The Kazakh Defense Ministry said in a statement that more than 1,000 military personnel, including a large contingent from the air mobile force of Kazakhstan's military, are expected to take part in the eighth annual "Steppe Eagle" exercises at the Iliysky military range around Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty.

- President Nazarbayev holds a meeting to get ready for OSCE summit in Astana
Astana. August 16. Interfax-Kazakhstan – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met Monday in Astana with a working group to discuss preparations for the OSCE summit in Astana.

Economic/Energy Front

- Well-Known Kazakh Businessman Missing
Edgar Salduzi, 34, is a co-owner of the Smmarket trade network in Kazakhstan and an investment agency. He has not been seen since leaving his home in Almaty on August 14. His car was found later near a restaurant.

- Kazakhstan's oil export duty in force
(SRI) - Kazakhstan has officially introduced its new export duties on oil and oil products on Monday, local newswire services reported.

The Kazakh government has adopted the decree on July 13. Kazakhstan's official newspaper Kazakhstanskaya Pravda published the decree on July 16, saying it would come into force thirty days after the official publication.

Social Front

- Relatives Of Kazakh Convicts At Problem Prison Promised Visits

ASTANA -- Dozens of relatives of inmates at a Kazakh prison hit by a riot last week have been promised they will be allowed to visit the facility, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Smoke from Russian wildfires reaches Kazakhstan

(Reuters) - Smoke from Russia's deadly wildfires has spread into northern regions of Kazakhstan but poses no immediate danger to residents, the Kazakh Emergencies Ministry said on Friday.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Kyrgyz Mayor Challenges Interim Government

Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov has left confusion in his wake after his recent trip to the capital, and returned home more defiant than ever.

Myrzakmatov had been in the capital Bishkek since August 18 to attend a conference on rebuilding southern Kyrgyzstan following interethnic violence in June that left hundreds dead and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

- Former U.S. Senator Backs Kyrgyz Democracy-Building Efforts

BISHKEK -- Former U.S. Senator Tom Daschle says he believes the international community should do more to shore up democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

- Aziza Abdrasulova, the leader of the NGO Kylum Shamy

BISHKEK -- A well-known Kyrgyz human rights activist says she will sue Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun for endangering her security, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Geo strategic Front

- Kyrgyz Officials Seek Release Of People Detained In Uzbekistan

BATKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry officials met with Uzbek authorities today in an effort to secure the release of 11 Kyrgyz citizens detained in Uzbekistan while transporting explosives used for mining work, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The talks between officials of the two countries are taking place in the Kadamjay district of southern Kyrgyzstan's Batken region.

- Ex-Soviet Leaders Gather In Yerevan To Discuss 'Crisis Response'

YEREVAN -- An informal summit of a Russia-dominated military alliance of seven ex-Soviet states has kicked off in Yerevan, with its participants discussing ways of providing a "more effective response" to emergencies, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- HRW: Kyrgyz Government Partly Responsible For June Violence

Following a lengthy investigation, the New York-based group Human Rights Watch says the government of Kyrgyzstan played a role in facilitating the violent attacks against ethnic Uzbeks this past June.

- Kyrgyz State Commission Challenges HRW Report

BISHKEK -- Members of a Kyrgyz National Commission investigating the deadly ethnic clashes in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad in June have challenged the findings of a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the unrest between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Rights Group Concerned About Jailed Ethnic Uzbek Journalists

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern over two ethnic Uzbek journalists held in detention since the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Jalal-Abad in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyz Group To Rally Against HRW Report

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz group says it will hold a protest against a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Ondurush Toktonasyrov, the leader of the April 7 movement, told RFE/RL that the protest would be held on August 20 in front of the United Nations office in Bishkek.

Tajikistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Tajik Official Dismisses Fears Of Militant Attacks On Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE -- A senior Tajik security official says Kyrgyzstan's concerns about the infiltration of Islamic militants from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan are unfounded, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Rahmon, Medvedev discuss bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia

DUSHANBE, August 19, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon held a bilateral meeting with his Russian counterpart, President Medvedev, on sidelines of a quadrilateral summit in Sochi involving the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamid Karzai and Asif Ali Zardari.

Economic/Energy Front

- Tajik Province Bans Grain, Potatoes As Prices Increase

QURGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajik authorities in the southern Khatlon Province have banned the export of grain and potatoes to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan until spring 2011, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- ADB to provide US\$252 mln to Tajikistan for 2010-2012

DUSHANBE, August 20, Asia-Plus -- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide 252 million U.S. dollars to Tajikistan for 2010-2012, outgoing ADB Country Director, Mr. Makoto Ojira, announced at a news conference in Dushanbe on August 20.

- Tajikistan's population may be left without natural gas

DUSHANBE, August 19, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Most likely natural gas will not be supplied to residential customers any more until the end of this year, Shavkat Shoimov, the deputy director of Tajik natural-gas distributor, Tajiktransgaz, told Asia-Plus today.

Tajik finance minister, Chinese envoy discuss financial cooperation issues

- Tajik finance minister, Chinese envoy discuss financial cooperation issues

DUSHANBE, August 18, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Cooperation between Tajikistan and China in the sphere of banking and finance was a major topic of a meeting of Finance Minister Safarali Najmiddinov with Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong that took place here yesterday, according to the Ministry of Finance's Secretariat.

- Inflation for Jan-Jul 2010 stands at 3.7 percent

DUSHANBE, August 17, 2010, Asia-Plus -- In Tajikistan, inflation for July 2010 stood at 0.9 percent, according to the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan. A 1.3 percent rise in prices of products of food industry was reported last month and non-foodstuffs rose in cost by 0.3 percent in July. Prices and rates for services rendered to the population rose by 0.4 percent last month.

Social Front

- **Tajikistan Opens Police Stations Dealing With Domestic Violence**

DUSHANBE -- Five special police stations that will assist victims of domestic violence have opened in Dushanbe and other Tajik towns, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. The facilities are the first of their kind in post-Soviet Central Asia.

- **Age Restriction On Tajik Pilgrimage To Mecca**

DUSHANBE --- Tajikistan's Religious Affairs Committee says it has introduced age restrictions on those wishing to make the pilgrimage to Islam's holy city of Mecca, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- **Western Concern At Fate Of Sole Private Tajik University**

DUSHANBE -- Western diplomats in Tajikistan have expressed concern over the fate of the country's only private university, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. In a letter to the Tajik government on August 17, the U.S., British, French, and German ambassadors and the head of the EU representation expressed concern at the Ministry of Education's move to revoke the academic license of the Institute of Technical Innovations and Communication (ITIC), a private higher education institution, for reasons that remain unclear.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- **Turkmenistan invites neighbors to regular political consultations under UN auspices**

Considering the Central Asian and Caspian Basin area an integral historical and geographical space that is now emerging as a strategic center of global significance, which includes important energy, transportation and communication hubs, Turkmenistan proposes to create a system of regular high-level political consultations between the Central Asian and Caspian countries under the auspices of the United Nations in order to strengthen peace and security in the region.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- **Uzbekistan: The government continues persecuting journalists**

Vladimir Berezovskiy, the personal correspondent of Parlamentskaya gazeta in Central Asia and the editor of Vesti.uz website, is brought to trial in Uzbekistan for "insult" and "slander". The alleged reason of arrest is the news of Russian information agencies Interfax, ITAR-TASS, RIA Novosti, Regnum, Rosbalt and Ferghana.Ru, reprinted by Vesti.uz during the period of August 1 – November 24, 2009.

- **Some Turkmen Students Allowed To Resume Studies In Kyrgyzstan**

ASHGABAT -- Turkmen authorities are reportedly allowing some university students to return to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports.

Uzbekistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

Features

- IMU Announces Longtime Leader Dead, Names Successor

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) says its charismatic leader, Tahir Yuldash, is dead. The IMU announced on its website, furqon.com, that Yuldash was slain exactly one year ago, according to the Islamic calendar (on the sixth day of Ramadan 1430) or on August 27, 2009, by the Western calendar.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Rights Group Concerned About Jailed Ethnic Uzbek Journalists

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern over two ethnic Uzbek journalists held in detention since the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Jalal-Abad in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijan's ruling party develops list of candidates for parliamentary elections

The ruling New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) has prepared a list of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections. "The party's list of candidates for the parliamentary elections is ready. Candidates will be presented to the public after the official start of the elections," NAP Deputy Executive Secretary, MP Siyavush Novruzov told Trend today.

The parliamentary elections will be held on November 7, 2010. Previous legislative elections were held in November 2005. Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan are held by the majority system in 125 constituencies. Novruzov said the party's ranks consist of more than 500,000 members.

"All of them are decent people. Unfortunately, only 125 MPs will be elected to the parliament. In this regard, we have carefully reviewed the candidacies by the NAP," Novruzov added.

The NAP is represented in by 64 deputies the parliament. "We will put forward candidates in all constituencies and will try to get more seats," he said.

NAP was established by the chairman of the Supreme Majlis of Nakhchivan Heydar Aliyev in 1992. The current President Ilham Aliyev is the chairman of the Party which has been ruling for 17 years already.

- CIS observation mission to monitor parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan

The observation mission of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will monitor upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. Press office of the CIS Executive Committee said that the decision had been passed at the meeting of the Council of the Permanent Representatives of CIS.

CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev will head the mission.

Geo strategic Front

- Russian-Armenian Defense Pact 'Will Prevent New War In Karabakh'

YEREVAN -- Armenia's ruling party says the deepening of Yerevan's military cooperation with Russia will strengthen the balance of forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and discourage any attempt to resolve it by force, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, are expected to sign significant amendments to a 1995 treaty regulating the presence of the Russian military base in Armenia after talks in Yerevan later this week.

Eduard Sharmazanov, the spokesman of Sarkisian's Republican Party (HHK), confirmed on August 17 that Armenia is reinforcing its military alliance with Russia in response to Azerbaijan's ongoing military buildup and threats of war.

"If we want to have adequate national security, especially considering statements made by our eastern and western neighbors, we need to be able to develop counterbalancing mechanisms," he said at a news conference. "And I think that the agreement to extend the deployment of that base is also aimed at ensuring the balance of forces."

The amendments to be signed will extend Russia's basing rights in the city of Gyumri by 24 years, to 2044, and redefine the mission of its troops. They stipulate that the troops' mission is not only to protect "the interests of the Russian Federation" but also "to ensure the security of the Republic of Armenia" with the Armenian Army.

They also commit Russia to supplying Armenia with "modern and compatible weaponry and special military hardware."

Sharmazanov claimed that the new defense pact will "practically rule out a military solution to the Karabakh problem." He said "that is important not only for the Republic of Armenia, but also long-term peace and stability in the region." HHK Deputy Chairman Razmik Zohrabian told RFE/RL on August 13 that the amended treaty will oblige Moscow to support the Armenian side in the event of renewed fighting in Karabakh.

Armenian critics of the amendments, among them some opposition politicians, dismiss such claims. They point out that a new Armenian-Azerbaijani war would be confined to Karabakh and surrounding territories that are not an internationally recognized part of Armenia. They are worried that Armenia will become even more dependent on Russia.

Sharmazanov rejected such criticism as "inappropriate and populist." He insisted that the treaty amendments will be beneficial for Armenia

The breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been controlled by ethnic Armenians since the end of a six-year war between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in 1994.

- Turkish President Making Visit To Azerbaijan

Turkey's President Abdullah Gul has been making an official visit to Azerbaijan, where he has discussed Turkish cooperation with Azerbaijan and efforts to bring peace to the Southern Caucasus region.

Gul arrived in Baku on August 16 and held talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

The two presidents signed a treaty of "strategic partnership and mutual cooperation" between their countries.

At a joint news conference, Aliyev described the accord as having "historical importance" and said it covers future cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

For his part, the Turkish president said Turkey will continue to support Azerbaijan in the conflict with neighboring Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory.

But Gul also said Turkey backs the peaceful resolution of problems in the South Caucasus region and the development of crossborder economic cooperation.

"In order to bring peace to the Southern Caucasus and develop cooperation in this region, we need to resolve the existing problems through peaceful means," Gul said. "This will result in crossborder cooperation, construction of new roads, new global economic projects. And we are working together in order to achieve this goal.

"Sometimes you see this work being done, sometimes you don't see when it's being done. This is politics, and work sometimes is being done quietly, without attracting attention, but many serious problems are resolved this way."

In Baku, the Turkish president also met with Azerbaijan's Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, parliament speaker Ogtay Asadov, and Grand Mufti of the Muslims of the Caucasus Allahshukur Pashazade.

- Turkish, Azerbaijani leaders discuss Karabakh immigrants

Turkish President Abdullah Gul said Monday, as two states of one single nation, Turkey and Azerbaijan needed to act in solidarity, cooperation and brotherhood. Speaking at a joint press conference with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev following a meeting between the delegations of Turkey and Azerbaijan, President Gul said that he was thankful to brotherly Azerbaijan for the hospitality displayed to him and the members of the Turkish delegation.

We feel at home. Whenever we come to Azerbaijan, we experience this feeling and are pleased to note the development of this country, Gul stressed. We are one nation with separate states. We come together frequently based on such an understanding. We will continue our solidarity and cooperation, Gul underlined.

Our bilateral relations continue to develop, including in the political, security, economic and cultural fields. We discussed today ways to promote our relations. We are encouraging our companies to increase mutual investments. We are pleased with the investments of Azeri companies in Turkey. We are proud of Turkish companies doing business in Azerbaijan, Gul said.

Relations in the political sphere are crucial. The Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement signed on Monday are a clear proof of the importance of political relations, Gul said.

Karabakh issue

We discussed today what must be done to make Caucasia a region of stability and security, Gul said.

"We talked on the solution of the Upper Karabakh problem and the end of occupation in Azerbaijani territory. Millions of immigrants live in difficult conditions. For the past 18 years, the world has not displayed the essential attention to the region," he said.

We will continue to hold consultations on the region. It is not right to leave aside frozen issue. Frozen matters may one day become greater problems, he also added.

International organizations, including the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), have made calls to find a solution in this region, Gul said.

Turkey will continue to make efforts so that the issue of occupied Azeri territory gets solved. I want all of my Azeri brothers and sisters to know that Turkey is and will always be on the side of Azerbaijan, Gul also said.

- Former U.S. official wants Matthew Bryza as next U.S. ambassador in Azerbaijan
Former U.S. Deputy Secretary Of State, German Marshall Fund Senior Expert David Kramer expressed hope this week that the U.S. Foreign Affairs Committee will approve Matthew Bryza's appointment as U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan.

In an interview with Mediamax, Kramer admitted that he is old friends with Bryza. According to the official, "Bryza is very well prepared for this work and will be an excellent ambassador."

"He knows all of the key players inside and outside the Azerbaijan government," Kramer said. "He will vigorously and ably represent the interests of the United States and will not shy away from difficult issues, including the development of democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan."

"The very strenuous U.S. ambassador, Mary Jovanovich, works in Yerevan," Kramer said. "Having the full presence of the United States in Azerbaijan is very important for Azerbaijan, Armenia and the entire region. I hope Bryza will be approved as soon as possible."

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Azerbaijan Supreme Court Upholds Bloggers' Sentences

BAKU -- Azerbaijan's Supreme Court has upheld the November 2009 sentences given to jailed bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Hajizada and Milli were arrested in July 2009 and sentenced to 2 and 2 1/2 years in prison, respectively, on hooliganism charges. Human rights organizations and Western governments have said the charges are politically motivated.

The sentences had previously been upheld by an appeals court.

Lawyers for the two men demanded that the Supreme Court annul the appeals court ruling and bring charges against the police and the Sabail district court judge for "illegal arrest" and "violation of judiciary procedures" during the bloggers' trial.

Prosecutor Mehbali Qurbanov criticized the defense for allegedly politicizing the case.

Hajizada's father, Hikmet Hajizada, told RFE/RL the case was fabricated from the start for political reasons. The two bloggers had often criticized and satirized government policies.

"It is a political case," Hikmet Hajizada said. "Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada are political prisoners."

"We did not expect any other decision from the Supreme Court," lawyer Elton Guliyev told RFE/RL. "It issued another shameful decision." He said the bloggers' lawyers will take the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Kazakh, British, U.S. Troops Open Drills

Kazakh, British and U.S. troops are teaming up for 10 days of joint military exercises.

The Kazakh Defense Ministry said in a statement that more than 1,000 military personnel, including a large contingent from the air mobile force of Kazakhstan's

military, are expected to take part in the eighth annual "Steppe Eagle" exercises at the Iliysky military range around Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty.

The Defense Ministry said the annual drills, being held as part of NATO's Partnership For Peace program, are expected to be attended by military observers from a number of countries.

Kazakhstan's "Kazbrig" peacekeeping brigade and "Kazbat" air mobile forces infantry battalion are expected to participate.

British Defense Attache Simon Fitzgibbon told the Reuters news agency that this year's exercises are intended to help Kazakhstan develop forces capable of joining NATO forces in possible United Nations-backed peace support missions.

- President Nazarbayev holds a meeting to get ready for OSCE summit in Astana
Astana, August 16. Interfax-Kazakhstan – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met Monday in Astana with a working group to discuss preparations for the OSCE summit in Astana.

According to the president's press office, the meeting was attended by the chairmen of the Senate and Majilis Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev and Ural Mukhamedzhanov, Prime Minister Karim Masimov, Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, and the head of the president's administration Aslan Musin.

The president noted that a lot has to be done to organize and hold this historic meeting and keep up with the highest standards in terms of organization and contents, according to the press office.

"It is a great honor and a huge responsibility for us to hold this high level summit, to show the country and to have the opportunity to welcome such forums in our young capital", Nursultan Nazarbayev was quoted as saying. The OSCE summit is scheduled to be held in Astana on December 1-2, 2010.

Economic/Energy Front

- Well-Known Kazakh Businessman Missing

Edgar Salduzi, 34, is a co-owner of the Smmarket trade network in Kazakhstan and an investment agency. He has not been seen since leaving his home in Almaty on August 14. His car was found later near a restaurant.

Salduzi's business dispute with Maira Nazarbaeva, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev's sister-in-law, has been widely reported in several leading newspapers.

Salduzi's wife, Anastasiya Salduzi, told journalists she has visited all hospitals and morgues in the city but has failed to locate her husband. She said her husband's disappearance is likely connected with his business activities.

Almaty's Medeu District police, to whom Anastasiya Salduzi reported her husband's disappearance, have begun a search for him.

- Kazakhstan's oil export duty in force

(SRI) - Kazakhstan has officially introduced its new export duties on oil and oil products on Monday, local newswire services reported.

The Kazakh government has adopted the decree on July 13. Kazakhstan's official newspaper Kazakhstanskaya Pravda published the decree on July 16, saying it would come into force thirty days after the official publication.

The government has set the export duty at \$20 per ton of crude oil, \$99.71 per ton of light oil products, and \$66.47 per ton of dark oil products.

Kazakhstan reportedly hopes to collect \$406 million in additional revenue from the new duty by the end of this year. The Chevron-led Tengizchevroil (TCO) venture and the Karachaganak Petroleum Operating (KPO) group, led by ENI and BG, both of which operate under production sharing agreements (PSAs) signed with the Kazakh government, will no longer be exempt from the duty, the government said in July.

- Kazakhstan reasserts control over big energy projects

(bne) - On the heels of news that KazMunaiGas has signed off on the deal to increase its stake in the Kashagan project come reports Kazakhstan is close to striking a deal over the Karachaganak venture, under which the international consortium developing it would avoid export duties in return for handing over a stake.

By Clare Nuttall (business new europe)

On August 12, KazMunaiGas' chairman, Kaingeldy Kabyldin, announced the company had finally signed a deal to increase its stake in the operating company for the offshore Kashagan oilfield. Kabyldin also said that KazMunaiGas would invest \$8 billion in Kashagan by 2014, but there would be further delays to the second phase of the project, which is now due to start in 2018 or 2019.

A few days later, unconfirmed newswire reports were saying the international oil companies developing the Karachaganak gas condensate field in northwestern Kazakhstan are willing to hand over a 10% stake in the Karachaganak Petroleum Operating (KPO) consortium to the Kazakh government. The four KPO members - Eni, BG Group, Chevron and Lukoil - will transfer a 5% stake in the consortium to the Kazakh government provided it either gives up plans to levy export duties from Karachaganak or drops a \$1 billion lawsuit against the consortium, Reuters quoted a source close to the negotiations as saying. The Kazakh government plans to pay cash for an additional 5% stake in Karachaganak, which currently is the only mega field being developed without KazMunaiGas' participation.

After a hiatus during the crisis, when oil prices fell below \$40 in 2009, the Kazakh government formally re-introduced export duties on August 16. The Kazakh government has set the duty at \$20 per tonne of crude oil, also announcing that the Tengizchevroil and KPO consortia would no longer be exempt.

Negotiations between the Kazakh government and KPO, which believes it should not be subject to the duty, took place in mid-July, but no final agreement was reached, and further discussions are due to take place in the autumn. KPO members have declined to comment on the negotiations.

If a deal is reached, it could spell the end of an ongoing dispute between the consortium and the government over the country's second-largest energy project. At present, KPO faces a series of claims from the Kazakh government worth around \$2.5 billion. In addition to the \$1 billion lawsuit, which concerns an alleged overstating of costs, they also include tax claims, environmental claims, and claims relating to alleged violations of environmental regulations. From its side, KPO has an outstanding case against Kazakh government to recover over \$1 billion in export duties.

KPO members say they should not have to pay export duties. On an investor call on July 28, Ashley Almanza, CFO of BG Group, which holds a 32.5% stake in KPO, said the consortium and government were meeting regularly and that discussions were "constructive". "All parties, all the partners and the Republic continue to look for and

prefer an amicable negotiated resolution of our disputes outside of the arbitration process,” he told investors.

Strained relations

The re-introduction of oil export duties is one of a series of events recently that have impacted on oil and gas companies operating in Kazakhstan, and strained their relations with the government.

There are also problems at Tengizchevroil. Kazakhstan’s financial police said on July 17 - four days after the government’s announcement on export duties - that it had launched criminal proceedings against the consortium. The financial police claims that Tengizchevroil over-produced oil at the field, resulting in illegal earnings of \$1.4 billion. “There have been a number of changes recently,” says Dominic Lewenz, director of oil and gas research at Visor Capital. “The main elements include a new tax code that was introduced at the start of 2009, affecting all companies except Tengizchevroil and those operating under PSAs [production sharing agreements]. More recently, we saw the reintroduction of Customs Export Duty, whilst also broadening the taxpayer base. At the same time, the government is questioning the status of PSAs, albeit insisting that any changes will be made through negotiations.”

Lewenz says that despite the recent changes, Kazakhstan remains a good place for oil companies to do business given the scale of its reserves. However, he stresses that the ability of the government to commit to rules and stick to its word is especially important for oil and gas companies, given the long time horizons and huge investments typical of the industry. “The government spent many years building up its international reputation. Kazakhstan’s desire to increase its share of profits from the industry need to be offset against this risk to its reputation.”

For the oil and gas industry, uncertainty over taxes makes economic planning and investment much more difficult, Lewenz says. A similar situation is arising in the mining sector, where the government has indicated it is likely to introduce an export duty in 2011, but without saying where the burden will fall.

Historically, the Kazakh government has encouraged international oil companies to operate in the country, which has allowed the exploitation of technically difficult fields such as Tengiz. Kazakhstan is acknowledged by international companies to be a much investor-friendlier place than, for example, Russia.

Although KazMunaiGas has increased its stake in Kashagan, the other five participants in the North Caspian Operating Company (NCOC) are all international oil majors. KazMunaiGas will operate on equal terms with Royal Dutch Shell during the second phase of the project, gradually taking on a greater share of responsibility for the operations.

When the Kashagan field was discovered in 2000, it was the largest discovery for some 30 years. Kashagan is estimated to contain between 9 billion and 14 billion barrels of oil. The tough operating environment has meant that getting to a stage where production can begin has been no easy task. Kashagan is located offshore in the north Caspian Sea where temperatures range from 40°C in summer to -35°C in winter, and rigs are at risk from ice floes and sudden storms. The field is high pressure and contains high levels of toxic hydrogen sulphide.

According to Kabyldin, KazMunaiGas plans to invest \$8 billion in Kashagan by 2014. Visor Capital estimates that the entire consortium - which also comprises Shell, Eni, Total, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips and Inpex - will invest a total of \$47.5 billion. Production is due to start in 2012 or 2013, with an initial 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) being extracted. This is set to rise to around 1 million bpd in the second phase, which has now been delayed until 2018 or 2019. Within around a decade, Kazakhstan's oil production is due to approximately double, when the third phase of production of 1.5 million bpd begins.

This is expected to herald the start of a "Golden Age" for Kazakhstan's oil and gas industry, when Kashagan output is at its peak alongside continued production from the other mega fields of Tengiz and Karachaganak.

Social Front

- **Relatives Of Kazakh Convicts At Problem Prison Promised Visits**

ASTANA -- Dozens of relatives of inmates at a Kazakh prison hit by a riot last week have been promised they will be allowed to visit the facility, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

The relatives gathered in front of the building of the Interior Ministry's Committee to Control the Penitentiary System (KIUS) today. Three former inmates of the prison in the town of Granitny in Aqmola Oblast were also present.

On August 11, special Interior Ministry troops were sent into the Granitny prison to quell a riot by prisoners. One prisoner was killed during the operation and a second died later in the hospital. More than 80 prisoners were injured.

The prisoners' relatives held a demonstration outside the prison on August 11-12 to demand a meeting with the prisoners. When they were not allowed to see them, they traveled to Astana, where they began picketing the KIUS building.

Vadim Kuramshin, a prominent Kazakh rights activist and himself a former prisoner, told RFE/RL that all participants in last week's protest in Astana had been allowed to see their jailed relatives this week.

But he said more people wanted to see their relatives in Granitny prison to ensure they are alive and safe.

KIUS officials promised the relatives today they would be allowed to visit the prison.

On August 9, two days before the riot, six Granitny inmates were hospitalized. KIUS spokesman Ghalymzhan Khasenov told RFE/RL the following day that the six had maimed themselves following a fight with another group of prisoners.

In the last several weeks, many prisoners at different Kazakh prisons have injured themselves to protest conditions and alleged beatings and other abuse by prison guards.

- **Smoke from Russian wildfires reaches Kazakhstan**

(Reuters) - Smoke from Russia's deadly wildfires has spread into northern regions of Kazakhstan but poses no immediate danger to residents, the Kazakh Emergencies Ministry said on Friday.

Smoke from Russian wildfires reaches Kazakhstan

ALMATY (Reuters) - Smoke from Russia's deadly wildfires has spread into northern regions of Kazakhstan but poses no immediate danger to residents, the Kazakh Emergencies Ministry said on Friday.

Black smoke had reached the city of Kostanai, about 100 km (63 miles) from the border with Russia's Chelyabinsk region, said a ministry spokesman, Eldor Raimbekov.

"The smoke has entered some border areas," Raimbekov said. "There is no threat to the population. The smoke could clear again today, depending on the prevailing winds."

Russia's deadly summer heat wave, the worst on record, could wipe \$14 billion off its economic growth this year, economists said this week. Weather forecasters say the heat has lasted for an uninterrupted 50 days in Moscow and central Russia.

Smoke from Russian peat fires have enveloped Moscow in thick smog.

Drought has also destroyed about one-quarter of Russia's grain crop this year, President Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday, pushing some farmers to the brink of bankruptcy and hurting Russia's effort to expand food exports.

Western regions of Kazakhstan have also been affected by drought, with temperatures rising above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and crops destroyed on more than half of the sown area in some provinces.

However, Kazakhstan's main grain-growing regions in the north of the country have escaped the worst of the drought.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- **Kyrgyz Mayor Challenges Interim Government**

Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov has left confusion in his wake after his recent trip to the capital, and returned home more defiant than ever.

Myrzakmatov had been in the capital Bishkek since August 18 to attend a conference on rebuilding southern Kyrgyzstan following interethnic violence in June that left hundreds dead and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

While away from Osh, rumors spread that Myrzakmatov -- one of the last allies of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev, who was ousted in April, to remain in government -- had been arrested and dismissed from his presidentially appointed post.

As the news spread, a crowd that swelled to some 2,000 people assembled in front of the mayor's office in Osh, calling for Myrzakmatov's reinstatement and the resignation of President Roza Otunbaeva and her government. Today, the crowd enthusiastically greeted the man they have been calling a "hero."

Addressing the crowd, Myrzakmatov gave assurances that he had no intention of leaving, but did claim the government had forcibly detained him in Bishkek and offered him several positions in the interim government. "They kept me in Bishkek for three days, saying that [Uzbek President Islam] Karimov wants me to resign," Myrzakmatov said.

Supporters of Myrzakmatov rally in central Osh. He described Karimov as "a leader of the whole Muslim world and of Central Asia. He will never say that I should resign. He would never go along with the current powerless [Kyrgyz] government."

According to Myrzakmatov, when ethnic Uzbeks fled southern Kyrgyzstan during the June violence for Uzbekistan Karimov told them: "'No, you are one nation with Kyrgyz, you are living in their land and therefore you have to go back.' I would never believe that Karimov has said that I should resign." Earlier, protesters attacked Labor Minister Aigul Ryskulova, who had been sent to calm the crowd. The minister was whisked away in a car by security. Myrzakmatov, a member of Bakiev's Ak-Jol party, also addressed his former ties to the ousted Kyrgyz president. Saying the government in Bishkek called "people who worked with Bakiev bad," he asked the crowd, "Are they any better?"

Myrzakmatov said many people in the new government also worked with Bakiev, a thinly veiled reference to President Otunbaeva, who was acting foreign minister under Bakiev for about half a year.

Myrzakmatov appeared in Osh with Deputy Prime Minister Azimbek Beknazarov, who told the crowd he supported Myrzakmatov and had "several times" told Otunbaeva that during June's riots in the south, "when all the generals hid, only Myrzakmatov addressed the situation."

How Firm Is Support?

At the protests' peak, thousands of people assembled on the square outside the Osh mayor's office in recent days, but it is difficult to gauge just how deep their support for Myrzakmatov really is.

Reports on state television have claimed that Myrzakmatov was paying people to come out and rally on his behalf, a claim that one unidentified speaker at the August 20 rally dismissed as a "lie."

Since the parliamentary elections of 2005, there have been reports -- and even admissions from some protesters -- that they received money to attend rallies. As recently as April this year, for example, ousted President Bakiev's people were offering 7,000 soms (about \$167) to every carload of people who traveled to a planned Osh rally of support for Bakiev. But the speaker at the August 20 rally explained simply that many had assembled to show their support for the mayor because they had lost loved ones or property in the June violence. Myrzakmatov has gained support for his frequent pledges to determine the whereabouts of Kyrgyz who remain missing after the June violence, and through his resistance to the authorities in Bishkek. On August 19, the Russian newspaper "Kommersant" published an interview with Myrzakmatov in which the Osh mayor said, "directives of the temporary government have no judicial force in the south of the country."

Government Toothless In South?

Former Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Alik Orozov was quoted by the Kyrgyz online news agency 24.kg as saying Myrzakmatov promised in the evening of August 19 to return to Osh and tell the crowd he was voluntarily stepping down from his post.

A woman with a portrait of the mayor takes part in the rally. Orozov, who officially was relieved of his post today, said that "as far as I knew, the government did not plan to dismiss Melis Myrzakmatov in the near future," adding that a decision about him would probably only come after the October 10 parliamentary elections. "He unexpectedly stated the wish to leave his post, on his own initiative," Orozov was quoted as saying.

If Myrzakmatov did, in fact, make such an offer, it now appears to have been disingenuous.

Today's events follow what appears to have been a tense meeting between Myrzakmatov and officials in Bishkek. Osh Deputy Mayor Taalai Sabirov told the crowd outside Myrzakmatov's office on August 19 that when in Bishkek, Myrzakmatov told the government to "sign your decree [dismissing him], if you are able to do so."

Paul Quinn-Judge, Bishkek-based Central Asia director for the International Crisis Group, says that Myrzakmatov's ability to fend off the government in Bishkek and return to Osh poses "another setback for the provisional government, more humiliating than other setbacks" it has suffered already.

Quinn-Judge also believes the inability of the authorities in Bishkek to dismiss Myrzakmatov "confirms the fact that the government does not control the situation in the south."

New Front For Discord

The new Kyrgyz government faces a challenge from the north as well.

Supporters of Urmat Baryktabasov, a politician from the northeastern Issyk-Kul province who was arrested after he led a protest march to the capital earlier this month, gathered outside the National Security Service in Bishkek today to demand his release.

Baryktabasov was arrested as he and several hundred of his supporters marched from Issyk-Kul to Bishkek in early August to voice a number of demands, including that Baryktabasov be named prime minister. Scores of his supporters held a similar demonstration in the capital itself.

Issyk-Kul has been a hotbed of protest since 2005, causing major problems for previous governments.

- Former U.S. Senator Backs Kyrgyz Democracy-Building Efforts

BISHKEK -- Former U.S. Senator Tom Daschle says he believes the international community should do more to shore up democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

Daschle, a former Democratic Senate majority leader, was visiting Bishkek as vice chairman of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute.

Daschle told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service in Bishkek today that a more democratic Kyrgyzstan would help stabilize the region.

"I think we have to reestablish security throughout the country, making sure that there is adequate police protection and making sure that the investigation into past abuse takes place," Daschle added. "I think a very comprehensive, full-fledged international investigation into past abuse is also something that can help us as we look to the future."

Kyrgyzstan was rocked by riots and interethnic violence in June, following the April ousting of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev. The country is set to hold parliamentary elections in October.

Prominent Kyrgyz Rights Activist To Sue Ombudsman

- Aziza Abdrasulova, the leader of the NGO Kylym Shamy

BISHKEK -- A well-known Kyrgyz human rights activist says she will sue Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun for endangering her security, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Aziza Abdrasulova, chairwoman of the Kylym Shamy (Torch of the Century) human rights organization, told RFE/RL that Akun "endangered her safety by spreading false information about her." She alleges that Akun said on Kyrgyz state television that she had personally met representatives of Human Rights Watch (HRW) at the Bishkek airport earlier this month and provided them with "unproven information" regarding the deadly clashes in June between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions.

On August 16, HRW said in its report about the unrest that Kyrgyz government forces were partly responsible for the clashes.

Abdrasulova said some 50 relatives of Kyrgyz who have been missing since the clashes in mid-June attacked her near the Osh mayoral building this week. She said they forced her inside the building and insulted her.

They then forced her to go to the Prosecutor-General's Office, she said, where they asked that she be "punished for spreading lies." But the officials at the prosecutor's office

refused to launch a criminal case against Abdrasulova because they said there was no evidence against her.

Abdrasulova told RFE/RL that "this sort of provocation made my colleague, rights activist Tolekan Ismailova, leave the country, and now it looks like it's my turn."

Akun said on state TV this week that the critical HRW report on the situation in Osh and Jalal-Abad during the unrest was based on some one-sided and distorted information from some Kyrgyz rights activists.

Akun told RFE/RL that he did not intend to create any problems for anyone. "I just criticized those who presented the Kyrgyz as predators, that's all," he said.

Geo strategic Front

- **Kyrgyz Officials Seek Release Of People Detained In Uzbekistan**

BATKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry officials met with Uzbek authorities today in an effort to secure the release of 11 Kyrgyz citizens detained in Uzbekistan while transporting explosives used for mining work, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The talks between officials of the two countries are taking place in the Kadamjay district of southern Kyrgyzstan's Batken region.

The 11 Kyrgyz were detained by Uzbek border guards at the Javaghy border crossing on July 23 while transporting 40 tons of explosives from a chemical plant in Tajikistan.

The Kyrgyz were kept for 10 days at the checkpoint and later transferred to an unknown location in Uzbekistan.

The explosives belong to the KyrgyzGeoloTekhKomplekt geological corporation, which uses them for mining operations. The Uzbek government says explosives may be transported across Uzbek territory only with special permission, which must be applied for 10 days in advance. KyrgyzGeoloTekhKomplekt officials say varying quantities of the same explosive have been transported regularly from Tajikistan via Uzbekistan for several years without any problems.

- **Ex-Soviet Leaders Gather In Yerevan To Discuss 'Crisis Response'**

YEREVAN -- An informal summit of a Russia-dominated military alliance of seven ex-Soviet states has kicked off in Yerevan, with its participants discussing ways of providing a "more effective response" to emergencies, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) gathering is focused on issues of emergency response to crises similar to the one in Kyrgyzstan earlier this year, when the Central Asian state was plunged into chaos and ethnic violence after its president was deposed by the opposition.

The organization then effectively refused to step in with its military power to resolve the crisis, despite appeals made by the country's provisional government.

Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian, as the leader of the host nation, and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, as the leader of the country that currently holds the organization's rotating presidency, made opening remarks, welcoming their counterparts from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan at a closed-door opening session today.

The president of Uzbekistan, the other CSTO member, is not attending the summit.

The CSTO has grown out of a Collective Security Treaty that was signed by Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan back in 1992. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Belarus joined the treaty in 1993, but the two South Caucasus states, as well as Uzbekistan, withdrew from it six years later. Uzbekistan rejoined the treaty in 2006, four

years after it had turned into an organization that has its own charter and legal status. Meetings and discussions among the former Soviet leaders will proceed at a lakeside resort in Sevan on August 21. One such bilateral meeting is due to feature Medvedev and Kyrgyzstan's leader Roza Otunbaeva. Summits of this kind are largely viewed as an additional forum for former Soviet leaders to sort out their bilateral problems.

It is not yet clear whether Medvedev, who completed his two-day state visit to Armenia today and stayed on for the event, will hold a separate meeting with his Belarusian counterpart, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, on the margins of the unofficial gathering. Lukashenka's participation in the summit was originally in doubt because of his worsening relations with the Kremlin. Once considered Moscow's most loyal ex-Soviet ally, Belarus was locked earlier this year in a major row with Russia over gas prices and debts, which led to a cut in Russia's Europe-bound supplies flowing via Belarusian territory. Tensions between the two states rose further late last week when the Kremlin accused Lukashenka of dishonorable and inconsistent behavior following the Belarusian strongman's claims that he had never promised to recognize Georgia's Russian-backed breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In remarks that might indicate some thaw in the strained relations between the two leaders, Medvedev welcomed Lukashenka's readiness for Belarus to assume the CSTO's rotating presidency in 2011.

The statement was made at a press conference not attended by Lukashenka. But both leaders are scheduled to attend the August 21 events.

The CSTO leaders' informal summit is due to end on August 22.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- HRW: Kyrgyz Government Partly Responsible For June Violence

Following a lengthy investigation, the New York-based group Human Rights Watch says the government of Kyrgyzstan played a role in facilitating the violent attacks against ethnic Uzbeks this past June.

In a new report titled "Where Is The Justice? Interethnic Violence In Southern Kyrgyzstan And Its Aftermath," the group also says the government's own investigation into the violence -- which left many hundreds dead, thousands injured, and hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks displaced -- has been marred by abuses.

The report is based on weeks of research and more than 200 interviews with Kyrgyz and Uzbek victims and witnesses, lawyers, human rights defenders, government officials, and law enforcement personnel. Satellite imagery and photographic, video, documentary, and forensic evidence was also analyzed. Ethnic Uzbek refugees wait at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border outside the village of Suratash on June 14. 'Part Of The Problem' Ole Solvang, HRW's emergencies researcher and one of the authors of the report, says that although "the massive ethnic violence posed colossal challenges for Kyrgyz security forces," the group's own investigation found "that some of the security forces became part of the problem rather than the solution." And he tells RFERL's Kyrgyz Service that the group hopes the Kyrgyz government will take the report's findings into consideration as it conducts its own investigation. "But more than that," he says, "I think we hope that both the international investigation and the national commission will conduct an objective investigation on their own. And if they do, then I think they will come to many of the same conclusions that we do."

The violence began on June 10 in the southern city of Osh, when a large crowd of ethnic Uzbeks gathered in response to a fight between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. That night, several attacks targeting ethnic Kyrgyz inflamed the region and prompted thousands of Kyrgyz from surrounding villages to pour into Osh. From June 11 to June 14, Uzbek neighborhoods were attacked and Uzbek homes and businesses were set alight. Several neighborhoods were burned to the ground. "Witnesses in various parts of [Osh] told us more or less the same story," HRW researcher Anna Neistat told reporters in Moscow on August 16. "During the violent riots, armored personnel carriers and other armored vehicles moved into the neighborhoods first. They removed makeshift barricades erected by ethnic Uzbeks to protect themselves. "The APCs were followed by armed men in camouflage who were shooting the residents still on the streets, and then crowds of ethnic Kyrgyz civilians followed, torching and looting homes." The report acknowledged the government's claim that Kyrgyz mobs stole some weapons and vehicles used in the attacks but says that can't completely account for the use of military vehicles in the attacks.

Not Shown The 'Will'

The report says evidence was found that in at least some neighborhoods, government forces were in control of the vehicles and that in some instances government forces who went into the neighborhoods to disarm residents living there either intentionally or unintentionally gave cover to violent mobs carrying out attacks.

At least 371 people -- and that estimate is thought to be low -- were killed and property damaged throughout several neighborhoods. A massive refugee crisis ensued as ethnic Uzbeks fled across the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. The report also deals with the aftermath of the June violence and contains claims that ethnic Uzbeks have been arbitrarily detained and ill-treated in custody. That's despite personal assurances from President Roza Otunbaeva, who told the group she has personally instructed local prosecutors, police, and investigators to comply fully with the law.

"At the moment, I have no doubt that the investigation is being carried out with huge violations," Neistat says. "First of all, I'm talking about large-scale illegal arrests. When we were [in southern Kyrgyzstan], we were overwhelmed by telephone calls, coming in literally every minute, about detentions in Uzbek districts."

'Incredible Tension'

The report contains information that Human Right Watch workers say they received about the torture and ill-treatment of more than 60 detainees, at least one of whom died as a result of injuries suffered in custody. HRW reports that the Prosecutor-General's Office recently released statistics showing that out of 243 people who have been imprisoned since the violence, only 29 are Kyrgyz, while 213 are Uzbek. Neistat said that the way the Kyrgyz government handles the investigations will have a powerful effect on the communities. "Incredible tension and distrust still remain between the two ethnic groups," she says, "and it is clear that the methods currently used by the investigators only add to this tension." Alik Orozov, the secretary of the Kyrgyz government's Security Council, told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service that the government could have done more to keep the calm. "We agree with some critics that the government forces did not make enough effort to keep the situation under control," Orozov said. "The government forces were not able to take full control over the situation. I can say that during the first days -- June 10 through 12 -- security forces did not act appropriately."

'Must Be Checked'

But he doesn't accept some of the accusations in the report -- including that Kyrgyz forces took part in the violence against ethnic Uzbeks -- and said the information that Human Rights Watch gathered "must be checked."

"The information that Kyrgyz military forces opened fire [on ethnic Uzbeks], that armored personnel carriers came [into Uzbek communities], has to be checked," he said. "So many people who started the clash -- bandits -- dressed in camouflage. So, everything should be accurately clarified."

"[It should be checked] whether Kyrgyz forces were involved or there were others dressed as military personnel. There were several such cases. Perhaps people saw guys in camouflage and thought they were Kyrgyz Army soldiers."

Human Rights Watch has called on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to speed up the deployment of the small advisory police group its members have agreed to send to southern Kyrgyzstan to assist the Kyrgyz authorities in reducing ethnic tensions.

In Osh and elsewhere, people have voiced concerns that an outside force might only complicate matters and further escalate tensions.

Orozov said Bishkek is talking to the OSCE about letting its police group train Kyrgyz police forces from the south in civil rights protection.

- Kyrgyz State Commission Challenges HRW Report

BISHKEK -- Members of a Kyrgyz National Commission investigating the deadly ethnic clashes in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad in June have challenged the findings of a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the unrest between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The report released on August 16 stated that Kyrgyz government forces were partially responsible for the unrest, saying some had helped facilitate attacks on ethnic Uzbek neighborhoods. But Commission Chairman Abdygany Erkebaev said at a press conference in Bishkek today that not everything in the HRW report is accurate. "One of the commission's major tasks was to find why and how some arms and ammunition appeared in civilians' hands," Erkebaev said. "Here we have to say openly that some military units, their commanders, and Interior Affairs officers are accountable for that." "The arms were distributed [among civilians]. As the crowds found arms in their hands, the situation worsened. They climbed on to armored personnel carriers and drove them around the city, which was certainly illegal. However, there was no organized call to attack ethnic Uzbeks only," Erkebaev said.

Erkebaev said Uzbek community leaders in southern Kyrgyzstan and local Kyrgyz leaders are equally responsible for the clashes, which left at least 356 dead and hundreds wounded. He also said the clashes were planned, while HRW said they began rather spontaneously following a fight between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks at a casino.

Commission member Jypar Jeksheev said the HRW report was one-sided. He said ethnic Uzbeks used arms that they had stored at home. "The preparations [for the unrest] seem to have gone on for a long time. So many [Uzbek] people had weapons at home," Jeksheev said. "Also, the fact that the inscriptions indentifying houses of ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Kyrgyz and the letters S-O-S were painted on the roofs shows that [the inscriptions] were for planes. We found out that at least 1.5 million soms (\$32,300) worth

of paint, which is about 15 tons, was used for these inscriptions. That was some sort of preparation for something.”

“Therefore we consider the human rights organizations' report one-sided and based upon unproven information provided by some of our law enforcement officials,” Jeksheev said. Erkebaev added that 15,000-20,000 people from the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, left Kyrgyzstan for Russia after the clashes.

- **Rights Group Concerned About Jailed Ethnic Uzbek Journalists**

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern over two ethnic Uzbek journalists held in detention since the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Jalal-Abad in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

RSF said in a press release that Ulugbek Abdusalomov, editor of the independent newspaper "Diydo," faces charges of extremism, inciting interethnic hatred, organizing and participating in mass unrest, and separatism.

He has been transferred to a prison hospital with heart problems, where he is under constant police surveillance. Azimzhan Askarov, a reporter for the website "Rights For All," has been charged with inciting demonstrators to violence. He has allegedly been beaten in detention. Amnesty International has designated both men prisoners of conscience.

At least 379 people were killed and hundreds of thousands fled their homes during clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-14.

- **Kyrgyz Group To Rally Against HRW Report**

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz group says it will hold a protest against a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Ondurush Toktonasyrov, the leader of the April 7 movement, told RFE/RL that the protest would be held on August 20 in front of the United Nations office in Bishkek.

HRW issued a report on August 16 on the causes and aftermath of the violent ethnic clashes in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad in June. The report criticized the Kyrgyz government for its inability to stop the clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

It stated that in some cases Kyrgyz police and security forces sided with the Kyrgyz against the Uzbeks. Some Kyrgyz activists and officials, such as Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun and the state commission that is investigating the bloodshed in the south, have criticized the HRW report as one-sided and based on unsubstantiated reports.

The April 7 movement -- which is named after the day on which President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted -- protested the HRW report on August 17 at the UN Office in Bishkek.

The group has previously held demonstrations against the deployment in southern Kyrgyzstan of police by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Tajikistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- **Tajik Official Dismisses Fears Of Militant Attacks On Kyrgyzstan**

DUSHANBE -- A senior Tajik security official says Kyrgyzstan's concerns about the infiltration of Islamic militants from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan are unfounded, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Tajik General Abdullo Nazarov, the head of the National Security Ministry's office in the southeastern region of Badakhshan, which borders northern Afghanistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, told RFE/RL by phone from Khorugh that such worries by Bishkek are baseless. Sultonbek Ayjigitov, the head of Kyrgyzstan's Batken region, warned last week about the possible infiltration of militants from Tajikistan and proposed additional security measures be taken along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.

And last month, several other top Kyrgyz officials noted the presence of Islamic militants in northern Afghanistan and warned they might stage cross-border attacks on Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan.

Additionally, Afghan security forces have recently killed or detained several suspected members of the banned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in districts close to the Tajik border.

But Nazarov said he had the impression that Kyrgyz security officials have no idea what is happening in the region, and when they see a report about possible extremist attacks they "hit the panic button." Mohammad Roziq Yaqubi, the security chief in Afghanistan's Konduz Province, confirmed the presence of suspected IMU militants in that region.

He said Islamic militants from Central Asia have no bases in the town of Konduz, but about 20 IMU fighters may be hiding in villages around the province.

Yaqubi said that when the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, the IMU had its headquarters in Konduz and some IMU members might still have friends there who could provide a "safe haven." Tajik analyst Qosim Bekmuhammad believes that fake reports about "possible cross-border attacks" are published for political purposes.

He says Russia wants to validate and expand its military presence in the strategically important Ferghana Valley, and that "by spreading warnings about attacks, some Kyrgyz officials are playing into Russia's hands."

- Rahmon, Medvedev discuss bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia
DUSHANBE, August 19, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon held a bilateral meeting with his Russian counterpart, President Medvedev, on sidelines of a quadrilateral summit in Sochi involving the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamid Karzai and Asif Ali Zardari.

According to Russia's Itar Tass, Emomali Rahmon said he was generally satisfied with the dynamics of bilateral relations and the steady tendencies in trade between the two countries.

"I'm really glad at an opportunity to meet with you, as this meeting will give us a chance to discuss the things that have been done already, as well as our plans for the future," Rahmon said. Tajik leader noted that relations between Russia and Tajikistan were free of any serious unresolved problems. As regards the absence of any major problems in the Tajikistani-Russian relations, Rahmon said: "I think this is how it should be between strategic partners and allies." President Medvedev, for his part, said that Tajikistan had put forth a very good initiative. "These contacts appear to be very important in the regional dimension," he said.

Russian president proposed that Moscow and Dushanbe work to improve joint responses to natural disasters, such as the wildfires in Russia and January's quakes in Tajikistan, Russia's RIA Novosti reported. Medvedev said this year has brought severe natural disasters to Russia, Tajikistan and Pakistan, where millions have been affected by severe flooding. "On these issues, I believe it makes sense to discuss measures for joint support and assistance," he noted. Medvedev suggested talking one to one first and then with key ministers.

Economic/Energy Front

- Tajik Province Bans Grain, Potatoes As Prices Increase

QURGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajik authorities in the southern Khatlon Province have banned the export of grain and potatoes to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan until spring 2011, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

They say the decision was taken after Russia placed a ban on grain exports, which affects Tajikistan's grain stocks. Tajik exports of grain and potatoes to neighboring Afghanistan and Uzbekistan are routed primarily through the Khatlon region. Tojiddin Sodiqov, who heads Khatlon's agricultural department, told RFE/RL that Tajik farmers last year produced 1 million tons of grain, which is 60 percent of the country's annual needs.

He said this year Tajikistan will harvest less grain than last year, which is why exports need to be restricted in order to prevent a rise in prices. But Tajik-based analyst Davlat Shoetibor said prices will go up despite the export restrictions. Shoetibor pointed out that the price of grain has already risen sharply both at local bazaars and on the world market. One kilo of wheat currently costs 1.3 somonis (31 U.S. cents) in Qurghonteppa, compared with 0.60 somonis one year ago.

- ADB to provide US\$252 mln to Tajikistan for 2010-2012

DUSHANBE, August 20, Asia-Plus -- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide 252 million U.S. dollars to Tajikistan for 2010-2012, outgoing ADB Country Director, Mr. Makoto Ojiro, announced at a news conference in Dushanbe on August 20.

According to him, the funds will go to supporting enhancement of the country's energy system, international transportation communication, and improvement of work of the private sector in the country.

We will recall that funding will include two energy projects totaling \$142 million, two reform projects of \$59 million, and one transport project of \$51 million. Technical assistance of around \$5.1 million is planned for the same period. Financing is currently confined to grants, but an improvement in debt sustainability would allow the country to access loans, according to ADB.

Mr. Ojiro noted that during his tenure the Bank had endorsed 240 million U.S. dollars in grants for Tajikistan. He added that the overall amount of assistance provided by ADB to Tajikistan is expected to reach some 720 million U.S. dollars by the end of 2010.

The ADB country director also reminded that Tajikistan and the Asian Development Bank on a new five-year Country Partnership Strategy in May this year.

The Country Partnership Strategy for 2010 to 2014 is dedicated to advance Tajikistan's drive to strengthen energy supplies and transport links, and to develop a vibrant private sector to help the economy diversify. The new partnership strategy will aid the government's drive to expand energy supplies, particularly to underserved rural areas. Currently the country suffers from electricity shortages in winter and surpluses in the

summer, with just 10% of its considerable hydropower resources in use. ADB, as the largest multilateral development partner in the sector, will focus on rehabilitating existing infrastructure, as well as developing clean, sustainable energy which supports both internal and regional connectivity. The strategy will also target further road improvements. In the private sector, ADB will support public management reforms and measures to improve the business and investment climate for private businesses, including the use of public private investment partnerships.

- Tajikistan's population may be left without natural gas

DUSHANBE, August 19, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Most likely natural gas will not be supplied to residential customers any more until the end of this year, Shavkat Shoimov, the deputy director of Tajik natural-gas distributor, Tajiktransgaz, told Asia-Plus today.

According to him, Uzbekistan has raised natural-gas rates for Tajikistan from 239.00 U.S. dollars per 1,000 cubic meters in the second quarter of this year to 251.00 U.S. dollars in the third quarter. "In the first quarter of 2010, the price of 1,000 cubic meters of Uzbek natural gas was 209.00 U.S. dollars," Shoimov said.

He added that population had refused natural-gas supplies. "Many districts have officially refused natural-gas supplies, noting that using electric power is more acceptable for them."

As far as industrial enterprises are concerned, they are continuing to receive natural gas from Uzbekistan, though Uztransgaz has reduced gas shipments to Tajikistan to 15,000 cubic meters per day. "Uzbekistan has cut gas shipments to Tajikistan due to debts," said Shoimov, "Tajiktransgaz now owes not more than 500,000 U.S. dollars to Uzbekistan."

We will recall that Tajikistan was supposed to buy 250 million cubic meters of natural gas from Uzbekistan this year. The gas prices vary quarterly depending on the world trends and Tajikistan must make prepayments every ten days.

- Tajik finance minister, Chinese envoy discuss financial cooperation issues

DUSHANBE, August 18, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Cooperation between Tajikistan and China in the sphere of banking and finance was a major topic of a meeting of Finance Minister Safarali Najmiddinov with Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong that took place here yesterday, according to the Ministry of Finance's Secretariat.

Najmiddinov and Fan exchanged views on state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral financial cooperation between Tajikistan and China as well as bilateral cooperation in the energy, agrarian and social sectors.

A special attention was paid to implementation of joint transportation and road-building projects and the sides underlined the significance of construction of roads connecting Tajikistan and China, the source said.

- Inflation for Jan-Jul 2010 stands at 3.7 percent

DUSHANBE, August 17, 2010, Asia-Plus -- In Tajikistan, inflation for July 2010 stood at 0.9 percent, according to the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan.

A 1.3 percent rise in prices of products of food industry was reported last month and non-foodstuffs rose in cost by 0.3 percent in July. Prices and rates for services rendered to the population rose by 0.4 percent last month.

Inflation for the first seven months of this year stood at 3.7 percent. An average monthly inflation rate in the consumer sector is estimated at 0.54 percent. 3.6 percent increase in prices of products of food industry was reported in January-July this year and non-

foodstuffs have risen in cost by 3.2 percent over the report period. Prices and rates for services rendered to the population have increased by 5.2 percent over the same seven-month period.

In the meantime, the cost of the set of food products included in the consumer basket for actual consumption in prices as of the end of July 2010 was 101.31 somoni (equivalent to some US\$23.00) per one family member per month, and with the norm for a balanced diet it was 200.87 somoni (equivalent to some US\$46.00), the Agency for Statistics reported.

Social Front

- **Tajikistan Opens Police Stations Dealing With Domestic Violence**

DUSHANBE -- Five special police stations that will assist victims of domestic violence have opened in Dushanbe and other Tajik towns, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The facilities are the first of their kind in post-Soviet Central Asia.

Interior Minister General Abdurahim Qahhorov, who took part in the August 19 opening ceremony in Dushanbe, said Tajiks traditionally do not report family disputes to police.

He said that was why special police stations for working with victims of domestic violence were being opened. Qahhorov said victims, especially women, were encouraged to report instances of violence.

Each special unit is staffed by officers, including at least one female inspector, who attended a June course organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) office in Dushanbe on investigating and responding to cases of domestic violence. Ivar Vikki, who heads that office, said that opening the stations showed Tajikistan's commitment to treat domestic violence as a crime and to support victims. He noted that the OSCE, which sponsored the opening of the stations, encouraged the authorities to support law enforcement further by passing a law on domestic violence, which has been pending since 2007. According to official statistics, during the first six months of 2010 Tajik police registered at least 400 crimes related to domestic violence. The Interior Ministry monitors some 2,000 families with a record of domestic violence.

- **Age Restriction On Tajik Pilgrimage To Mecca**

DUSHANBE --- Tajikistan's Religious Affairs Committee says it has introduced age restrictions on those wishing to make the pilgrimage to Islam's holy city of Mecca, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Abdughaffor Yusupov, head of the committee's Hajj Department, told RFE/RL that this year only citizens between the ages of 18 and 80 would be able to take part in the annual hajj pilgrimage, or the "umrah," the lesser pilgrimage that can be completed at any time of the year,

Yusupov said an additional column would also be added to the pilgrim registration book - - which lists all applicants -- to show each participant's source of income. The committee says the changes were prompted by the growing number of applications from those intending to carry out the hajj, or holy pilgrimage. This year Tajikistan's hajj quota set by Saudi authorities is 5,500 -- 500 more than in 2009. Tajik pilgrims will have to pay some \$3,200 -- about \$150 less than last year -- to take part in this year's hajj, which will take place in November.

- **Western Concern At Fate Of Sole Private Tajik University**

DUSHANBE -- Western diplomats in Tajikistan have expressed concern over the fate of the country's only private university, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

In a letter to the Tajik government on August 17, the U.S., British, French, and German ambassadors and the head of the EU representation expressed concern at the Ministry of Education's move to revoke the academic license of the Institute of Technical Innovations and Communication (ITIC), a private higher education institution, for reasons that remain unclear.

U.S. Embassy spokesperson Rachel Cooke told RFE/RL that the signatories to the letter hope that the government will handle the case based on a transparent investigation and the rule of law, and allow ITIC students to continue their studies. But Education Minister Abdujabbor Rahmonov responded on August 17 that the decision to revoke the ITIC's license was taken not by his ministry but by the Economic Court. ITIC head Sadriddin Akramov told RFE/RL last week that the institute filed a lawsuit against Rahmonov on July 31 in a Dushanbe district court. In a letter to Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, the education minister described the ITIC as a hotbed of antigovernment propaganda and political opposition. The ITIC is known as the "American" university because it was founded by a Tajik-born U.S. citizen and is funded by grants from the United States and other Western countries. It has been under pressure from the Education Ministry to change its name since 2003 and has done so several times. In September 2009, the Education Ministry demanded the closure of the institute for three months for "technical reasons" to enable the ministry to check its documents and activities. But Akramov appealed to the district court last year and chose to keep the university open pending a court ruling.

Rahmonov said at a press conference last month that the Economic Court upheld all the ministry's complaints. He said the court ruled that the ITIC should be closed and that its students continue their studies at other universities. Akramov told RFE/RL he is convinced that the real reason the Education Ministry revoked the ITIC's license is because its teaching staff includes some prominent opposition leaders and outspoken critics of the government. Despite the ongoing dispute, 300 would-be students submitted applications to the ITIC this year.

Turkmenistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Turkmenistan invites neighbors to regular political consultations under UN auspices

Considering the Central Asian and Caspian Basin area an integral historical and geographical space that is now emerging as a strategic center of global significance, which includes important energy, transportation and communication hubs, Turkmenistan proposes to create a system of regular high-level political consultations between the Central Asian and Caspian countries under the auspices of the United Nations in order to strengthen peace and security in the region.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, this statement was made by the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan on 16 August at a special briefing on the upcoming 65th session of the UN General Assembly. Other than establishing a multilateral mechanism for cooperation of Central Asian and Caspian countries, at the upcoming forum Turkmenistan intends to offer its neighbors creating a

permanent platform for a policy dialogue on disarmament issues in the Central Asian and Caspian Basin area.

Turkmenistan considers it timely to also think of establishing a UN regional counter-terrorism information-coordination center, a UN educational information center to combat crime, as well as forming in cooperation with the UN an international task force to prepare a comprehensive program to save the Aral Sea.

According to the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Turkmenistan considers cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) the most important component of environmental work in Central Asia and Caspian Basin. "In this regard, Turkmenistan proposes to specifically discuss the issue of opening a UNEP center for the countries of Central Asia and the Caspian region. For its part, Turkmenistan could provide all conditions to headquarter this centre in Ashgabat," he said.

With regard to food issues, at the 65th session of the UNGA Turkmenistan will propose to consider the possibility of creating a cluster office of FAO for the countries of the Middle East.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Uzbekistan: The government continues persecuting journalists

Vladimir Berezovskiy, the personal correspondent of *Parlamentskaya gazeta* in Central Asia and the editor of *Vesti.uz* website, is brought to trial in Uzbekistan for "insult" and "slander". The alleged reason of arrest is the news of Russian information agencies Interfax, ITAR-TASS, RIA Novosti, Regnum, Rosbalt and Ferghana.Ru, reprinted by *Vesti.uz* during the period of August 1 – November 24, 2009.

As well as in the case with photographer Umida Akhmedova, accused of insulting Uzbek people through her pictures and documentaries, the indictment is based on the report of Center for monitoring mass communications under Uzbek agency of communications and information (UACI). Among several thousands of *Vesti.uz* publications UACI identified 16 conspiratory news that "may spark interethnic and interstate hatred and make people panic".

As a result, the journalist is incriminated two articles of the Republic of Uzbekistan Criminal Code – "Slander" and "Insult". If he is found guilty, the journalist may be arrested to 6 months and sent to 3 years of correctional tasks, or pay penalty of 400 minimum salaries (about \$12 000). The decision of Tashkent Public Prosecutor's office says that during the period of August 2009 – January 2010 *Vesti.uz* published "386 articles with slander and false information, targeted against the constitutional system and state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan".

At the end of 2009 the website placed several articles of Russian media with indirect criticism of Uzbek government. Obviously, these articles produced discontent among Uzbek government that viewed it as systematic hostile activity.

The official reason of filing the criminal case became the report, produced by the Center of monitoring under UACI and saying that within 6 months (August 2009 – January 2010) *Vesti.uz*, owned by Inform-Form and managed by Berezovskiy, placed 1815 articles, 16 of which "contains slander and anti-popular information, the spread of which may produce the incitement of interethnic and interstate hatred".

The comments from lawyers

V. Berezovskiy does not admit his guilt in the incriminated charges. According to him, the case was framed up by Uzbek authorities against him as the editor of the website with political focus. "I pay attention to the fact that Uzbek Criminal Code does not list the articles on insult and slander against constitutional system and state policy", said Berezovskiy on August 12.

He says that in accordance with Uzbek legislation only the individual person may be insulted. "However, the accusation text does not indicate the person, who suffered from insult on my side. There are no statements from the sufferers in the criminal case. There are no evidences of insult and slander. I am incriminated the insult of Uzbek people, incitement of interethnic and interstate hatred for publication of news of ITAR-TASS, Interfax, Regnum, Rosbalt, Stoleite and others. The sources of information and, therefore, the insult of Uzbek people, are the officials of Russian Federation – Yuriy Luzhkov, Victor Ivanov, Semen Bagdasarov and others", the journalist notes.

The negative response on detention of Vladimir Berezovskiy was already shown Russian Foreign Ministry, RF Public Chamber and the Center of extreme journalism, highlighting the ineligibility of criminal case.

"This is a clear case of law violation. The defendant should not have been brought to trial even if there is a sufferer" says Boris Panteleev, the PhD in Law and expert of RF Public Chamber.

Mikhail Fedotov, the Director of Center of extreme journalism, founded by Russian journalists, also sees no elements of crime in the news, published by Vesti.uz. "The Center of extreme journalists did not find any slandering or insulting elements against certain parties. The information bears news character only, covering socio-political life in CIS. The main point is that Berezovskiy was not the author of these publications; they were copied from other Russian media", he wrote.

Vladimir Berezovskiy was born in 1952 in Semipalatinsk (Kazakhstan). He graduated from Kuibishev college of education, majoring in Russian philology. Holding the citizenship of Russian Federation, since 1978 he has been permanently residing in Uzbekistan.

Mr. Berezovskiy has 35-year work experience in journalism. He used to work for Pravda Vostoka, the Uzbek governmental newspaper. The journalist was also attracted as personal correspondent of Rossiyskaya gazeta and ITAR-TASS in Uzbekistan.

At the moment, he is the director of Inform-Form news agency, personal correspondent of Parlamentskaya gazeta (the body of State Duma and Federal Assembly of Russian Federation) for Central Asian countries as well as the editor of Vesti.uz website, launched under the support of Russian embassy in January of 2005.

The stated goal of website is "wide and systematic coverage of Russian-Uzbek cooperation, life of Russian community in Uzbekistan". The web source is dedicated to domestic and foreign policy of Russia, labor migration and problems of fellow countrymen.

The judicial process in the apartment of the defendant

On August 10, the first session, conducted by Tashkent district criminal court, took place in the apartment of the journalist. Although the lawyer Sergey Mayorov (he was also the lawyer of Umida Akhmedova) presented the medical statements, confirming the decease

of the defendant, Judge Nodir Akbarov assumed that the journalist wanted to avoid the session.

Perhaps, for the first time in history of Uzbekistan the court session took place in the apartment of the defendant. The representative of Yakkasaray district prosecutor's office informed the journalist about the incriminated charges. It turned out that Vladimir Berezovskiy was not fully informed with the case because many documents had not been translated from Uzbek language yet.

The second session was scheduled to August 13, but Berezovskiy missed it because he was not able to make it to the court due to decease. Judge Akbarov said he will assign medical expertise that will decide whether the defendant is able to attend court sessions.

The general context

In the last year the pressure on journalists, human rights advocates and socially active people has intensified in Uzbekistan: it is just worth mentioning the cases of Umida Akhmedova, Maxim Isaev and authors of "Sister talks to sister" book, the inoffensive articles, earlier published in Uzbek press. These days, the human rights advocate Surat Ikramov also goes through trial. The cases against human rights activists Dmitry Tikhonov, Tatiana Dovlatova and Anatoly Volkov were filed recently. Dilmurod Sayid and Solizhon Abdrakhmanov were sentenced to jail on framed up charges over a year ago. Obviously, we are facing the new wave of persecution of civil activists and the case of Vladimir Berezovskiy must be considered in this context.

Apparently, the possible reasons of all this became the article, named "What Yuriy Ivlev fought for", published by Vesti.uz on February 15, 2010. The article mentioned the nationalistic background of renaming the Soviet hero Yuriy Ivlev's street in Tashkent. The Uzbek authorities did not like the article while the above-mentioned UACI report was prepared on March 1.

- Some Turkmen Students Allowed To Resume Studies In Kyrgyzstan

ASHGABAT -- Turkmen authorities are reportedly allowing some university students to return to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports.

Some 650 Turkmen students left Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh in the wake of the deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in mid-June. Turkmen authorities have since pressured the students not to return to Osh to resume their studies.

But the parents of some students have told RFE/RL that Turkmen authorities have agreed to let their children leave for Kyrgyzstan on the condition that the parents sign a statement assuming responsibility for their child's well being while in Kyrgyzstan.

The students' parents added that they were told that any Turkmen students studying in Kyrgyzstan will not be registered with Turkmenistan's Education Ministry, meaning that diplomas earned in Kyrgyzstan will not be recognized in Turkmenistan.

An anonymous official at the Turkmen Education Ministry told RFE/RL on August 18 that there are more than 4,000 Turkmen students from recent years who have been studying in Kyrgyz universities currently stuck in Turkmenistan.

Last week, students in Turkmenistan intending to continue their studies in Kyrgyzstan were summoned to local education departments where they were asked to sign a statement saying they would refuse to return to Kyrgyzstan for their studies.

Many of the parents sent a letter to President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov last week asking him to intervene on their behalf.

Last year Turkmen officials prevented students from boarding planes taking them to Kyrgyzstan to resume their studies after the summer holiday. No explanation for the ban was given. Dozens of students were later allowed to attend a university in Bulgaria instead.

Uzbekistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

Features

- IMU Announces Longtime Leader Dead, Names Successor

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) says its charismatic leader, Tahir Yuldash, is dead. The IMU announced on its website, furqon.com, that Yuldash was slain exactly one year ago, according to the Islamic calendar (on the sixth day of Ramadan 1430) or on August 27, 2009, by the Western calendar.

He is believed to have been killed in a predator drone strike in Pakistan's tribal area near the Afghan border. The website said Yuldash died along with several of his supporters and published what it said were photographs of him both alive and dead.

But as is the case with many militant leaders who have connections to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, reports of their deaths are difficult, if not impossible, to verify.

The IMU's new emir, Usmon Odil, described Yuldash's death in a recording posted on the website, saying he was killed "after the midday Friday Prayers" on August 27, 2009, in Pakistan's South Waziristan region.

Early Years As Islamist

A close ally of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, Yuldash was the key figure in the Islamic insurgencies that roiled Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and much of Central Asia in the 1990s. He also fought in Afghanistan and survived U.S. bombing raids there following the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington.

What is said to be a photo of Yuldash after his death
Shortly after Uzbekistan won its independence following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Yuldash and childhood friend Jumaboi Khojaev helped found the Islamic organization "Tovba," (Generation) in their native city of Namangan.

Tovba tried to implement a form of Shari'a law in Namangan in the early 1990s. But during a visit to the town by President Islam Karimov in December 1991, Yuldash attempted to lecture the Uzbek leader on good governance during a meeting with citizens. As a result, Yuldash and Khojaev found themselves on a government list of potential troublemakers.

Both then fled the country for neighboring Tajikistan in 1992, where a civil war was starting. They joined an Islamist group, the Islamic Renaissance Party, which was fighting a government comprised mainly of former Soviet officials.

Yuldash's story becomes vague at that point. Some accounts say he traveled to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, improving his knowledge of Islam. Khojaev, who served with the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, remained in Tajikistan and became a formidable field commander.

Yuldash returned to Tajikistan as the civil war there came to a close in 1997.

Taking War To Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan

There, Yuldash reunited with Khojaev -- who had taken the alias Juma Namangani -- and the two set their sights on overthrowing the Uzbek government. They are widely believed to have funded their efforts by controlling a drug-trafficking route out of northern Afghanistan into southern Kyrgyzstan.

They hid in a base in the remote mountains of eastern Tajikistan, protected by allies from the civil war, and planned their return to Uzbekistan. Uzbek officials blamed them for a series of bombings targeting government buildings in Tashkent in February 1999.

In August 1999, some of their followers came down from the mountains into southern Kyrgyzstan and captured a small village, taking scores of people, including four Japanese geologists, hostage.

Shortly thereafter, Yuldash and Namangani issued a statement announcing that they were the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and were seeking to overthrow the Uzbek government.

Tahir Yuldash fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. During the summers of 1999 and 2000, the IMU reached the peak of its influence. The group failed to overthrow the Uzbek government, but with Yuldash as spiritual leader and Namangani as military commander, the IMU insurgency caused a great deal of concern throughout Central Asia, particularly in the Ferghana Valley.

Fighting With Taliban

The IMU kept close ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, with both Yuldash and Namangani moving freely between Afghanistan and Tajikistan's Taval-Dara region. They formally joined forces with the Taliban in the second half of 2001 for the final push against the troops of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, the last resistance to Taliban rule in Afghanistan at that time. When the United States attacked militants in Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks, the IMU was in the northern Konduz Province. Namangani was killed and the group's ranks were decimated by U.S. bombing raids in November 2001.

Yuldash then gathered the remnants of the IMU and fled with them to the tribal areas of Pakistan near the Afghan border, where they were able to find safe haven due to their ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Even though the IMU split into several factions and its numbers dwindled, Yuldash managed to keep a small core of the group together.

He was reported wounded in the tribal area in 2004. And in the years that followed, his death was reported several times -- including once last year. But as was the case with Namangani, there was never any physical evidence to prove once and for all that Yuldash was dead, just testimony from people in the area.

Today's web posting announcing Yuldash' death is the strongest indication yet that he has indeed been killed.

New Leader To Continue 'Jihad'

Little is known about the man announced as the new IMU leader, Usman Odil. His picture is posted on furqon.com, but there is no biographical information available.

In an audio recording posted on the website, Odil blames the recent ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks as "a type of disgusting plot orchestrated by infidel governments against Muslims. And the victims are again ordinary

Muslims -- women, old people, and children. May Allah give the Muslims a way to make the right conclusions and take the path of jihad."

Odil also indicates his path is the same as his predecessor, saying the group's "mujahedin" will "drive out the enemies of Islam from our shrines and lands that they occupied, to bring the oppressed Muslims to Islam's joyful life, Insha'Allah."

Odil says the IMU waited to confirm Yuldash's death because the group was busy fighting "in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan against the enemies of Islam."

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Rights Group Concerned About Jailed Ethnic Uzbek Journalists

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern over two ethnic Uzbek journalists held in detention since the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Jalal-Abad in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

RSF said in a press release that Ulugbek Abdusalomov, editor of the independent newspaper "Diydo," faces charges of extremism, inciting interethnic hatred, organizing and participating in mass unrest, and separatism.

He has been transferred to a prison hospital with heart problems, where he is under constant police surveillance. Azimzhan Askarov, a reporter for the website "Rights For All," has been charged with inciting demonstrators to violence. He has allegedly been beaten in detention. Amnesty International has designated both men prisoners of conscience. At least 379 people were killed and hundreds of thousands fled their homes during clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-14.

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