

Central Asia

Caucasus

ANALYST

BIWEEKLY BRIEFING

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

VISIT THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST HOMEPAGE AT

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/>

**UPDATED FORTNIGHTLY
OVER 500 ARTICLES AND FIELD REPORTS IN ARCHIVES**

THE CENTRAL ASIA CAUCASUS INSTITUTE



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY



BIWEEKLY BRIEFING

Wednesday/October 8, 2003

ANALYTIC ARTICLES:**WHAT HIGH OPIUM PRICES MEAN FOR AFGHANISTAN.....3***R. Grant Smith*

Farmgate prices for opium in Afghanistan have remained at record high levels despite enormous crops in 2002 and 2003. Alternative crop and employment schemes have no attraction for farmers when prices are so high, and the Afghan government has no means to enforce its ban on growing opium. Efforts to reduce production will need to focus on programs to drive down the price, to make alternatives attractive on other than strictly economic grounds, and to increase the government's enforcement capability – all of which will take time.

THE FORGOTTEN PILLAR OF THE RULE OF LAW IN ARMENIA.....5*Claude Zullo*

Armenia's government managed to stave off sanctions by the Council of Europe (COE) by unconditionally banning capital punishment. However, the international body is now looking for more advances in democratization. This highlights the importance of an independent cadre of lawyers in establishing an effective rule-of-law system. A new draft Law on Advocates is scheduled for consideration by parliament in fall 2003. Steps should be taken to ensure the law provides the framework for an ethical, effective, and independent legal profession of lawyers.

PAKISTAN ARMY VENTURES INTO TRIBAL AREAS7*Rahimullah Yusufzai*

Twice in the last two months, the Pakistan Army conducted military operations in the rugged Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) bordering Afghanistan to nab al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects. While the first operation in early September yielded nothing, the subsequent October 2 action, Pakistan's largest-ever offensive against al-Qaeda, led to the killing of eight suspects and the capture of another 18. The army's decision to enter deep in the semi-autonomous tribal areas won praise from Washington and Kabul, but it was strongly criticized by the religious alliance ruling the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan.

CORRUPTION SCANDALS DOG CENTRAL ASIAN LEADERS9*Stephen Blank*

In recent months, an increasing flow of specific corruption allegations, mostly backed by evidence in U.S. court cases, have begun to appear involving Central Asian and Caucasian leaders. While accusations of corruption at the highest level is common in the abstract in all former Soviet countries, the actual evidence to that affect has been scarce. These cases are likely to lead to loss of legitimacy for the leadership of a number of countries, but more significantly, these cases may also contribute to destabilization as it may spur public unrest or elite competition for power and control over resources.

FIELD REPORTS:**HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AS A WAY TO ERADICATE VIOLENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN.....4***Anna Kirey***KAZAKHSTAN UNDER PRESSURE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING.....6***Marat Yermukanov***MASS PROTESTS AGAINST REGULATION OF BISHKEK BAZAARS.....8***Aziz Soltobaev***KAZAKHSTAN INITIATES DIALOGUE BETWEEN RELIGIONS10***Gulnara Ismailova***NEWS BITES.....11**

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

The Analyst is an English language global Web journal devoted to analysis of the current issues facing the Central Asia-Caucasus region. It serves to link the business, governmental, journalistic and scholarly communities and is the global voice of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. The Editor of the Analyst solicits most articles and field reports however authors may suggest topics for future issues or submit articles and field reports for consideration. Such articles and field reports cannot have been previously published in any form, must be written in English, and must correspond precisely to the format and style of articles and field reports published in *The Analyst* (www.cacianalyst.org) and described below.

The Analyst aims to provide our industrious and engaged audience with a singular and reliable assessment of events and trends in the region written in an analytical tone rather than a polemical one. *Analyst* articles reflect the fact that we have a diverse international audience. While this should not affect what author's write about or their conclusions, this does affect the tone of articles. Analyst articles focus on a newsworthy topic, engage central issues of the latest breaking news from the region and are backed by solid evidence. Each 700-900 word analytical article must offer a concise and authoritative statement of the event or issue in question. An article must provide relevant, precise and authoritative background information. It also must offer a sober and analytical judgment of the issue as well as a clinical evaluation of the importance of the event. Authors must cite facts of controversial nature to the Editor who may contact other experts to confirm claims. Since *Analyst* articles are based on solid evidence, rather than rumors or conjecture, they prove to be reliable sources of information on the region. By offering balanced and objective analysis while keeping clear of inflammatory rhetoric, The Analyst does more to inform our international readership on all sides of the issues.

The Editor reserves the right to edit the article to conform to the editorial policy and specifications of *The Analyst* and to reject the article should it not be acceptable to our editorial committee for publication. On acceptance and publication of the edited version of the article, The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies will issue the honorarium to the author. The copyright for the article or field report will reside with the Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. However, the author may use all or part of the contracted article in any book or article in any media subsequently written by the author, provided that a copyright notice appears giving reference to the contracted article's first publication by the "Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies."

Analytical Articles:

Analytical articles require a three to four sentence introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples.

Analytical article structure:

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

BACKGROUND: 200-300 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 200-300 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

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

Specifications for Field Reports:

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 500-700 words.

Those interested in joining *The Analyst's* pool of authors to contribute articles, field reports, or contacts of potential writers, please send your CV to: svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

Svante E. Cornell, Editor
 Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst
 Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
 The Johns Hopkins University
 Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
 1619 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20036
 Tel. +1-202-663-7712; 1-202-663-7721
 Fax. +1-202-663-7785; 1-253-550-4390

WHAT HIGH OPIUM PRICES MEAN FOR AFGHANISTAN

R. Grant Smith

Farmgate prices for opium in Afghanistan have remained at record high levels despite enormous crops in 2002 and 2003. Alternative crop and employment schemes have no attraction for farmers when prices are so high, and the Afghan government has no means to enforce its ban on growing opium. Efforts to reduce production will need to focus on programs to drive down the price, to make alternatives attractive on other than strictly economic grounds, and to increase the government's enforcement capability – all of which will take time.

BACKGROUND: The Taliban ban on opium growing in 2000 followed several years of record production that had resulted in large unsold stocks. Farmgate prices before the ban were \$35-50 per kilo. The ban effectively eliminated the 2001 crop in areas controlled by the Taliban, with country-wide production dropping to 185 tons of opium (UN estimate) from an estimated 3,300 tons in 2000 and 4,600 tons in 1999. Prices rose to as high as \$700 per kilo just prior to September 11, 2001. Although they dipped with the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom later that year, they subsequently stabilized in the range of \$300-\$500 per kilo – roughly 10 times what had been the going rate in the previous decade. Prices have remained at this level despite bumper crops in 2002 and 2003. The laws of supply and demand would argue that such large crops should drive the prices down towards their average levels in the past. However, this has not happened, apparently because traders anticipate strong international pressure on growers to shift to other crops.

IMPLICATIONS: Whatever the reason for the continued high price, its impact is substantial. On a short-term economic basis, no other crop can compete with opium. Crops that earlier pilot projects had shown to be as profitable or more profitable than opium when the price was \$50 per kilo are no longer in the same league. Wheat, which was still attractive for survival reasons even if less profitable than opium in the past, has become even less of a viable alternative. The combination of high opium prices and low wheat prices after the bumper wheat crop of 2003 has resulted in some farmers saying they will shift from wheat to opium in the next growing season.

For farmers who are sharecroppers, who must borrow from money lenders against their crop or who rely on outside labor, the situation is even worse, since all of these rates are pegged to opium production, forcing the farmer to grow opium if he wants access to these inputs. In areas of Afghanistan today the rate for labor in the opium fields is \$10 per day. Paying such rates for other harvests makes those crops even less competitive. Moreover, it threatens to drive up the cost of all labor-intensive work, including internationally funded reconstruction work.

Income to Afghanistan as a whole from the higher opium prices has certainly risen, with the UN estimating that the

total is now on the order of \$1.2 billion a year. This has undoubtedly contributed to the visible signs of economic recovery in parts of the country. However, as in other narcotics-drive economies, the overall effect is negative, as domestic production of all types is driven down by imports funded by growing and trafficking.

For narcotics control programs, the implications are even more serious. Alternative development or employment schemes which made sense at \$50 per kilo for opium have no appeal to farmers or opium workers when the rate is upwards of \$500 per kilo. While some “stick” or enforcement is usually necessary in connection with the “carrot” of alternative development, high prices mean that the “stick” has to be a proportionately larger part of the program. This is not possible in an Afghanistan where a national army and police force are only beginning to be built and power remains largely in the hands of local militias, at least some of whom are connected to traffickers.

In the period until either the price drops or a larger “stick” is available, the only programs which may work will have to be based on appeals other than strictly short-term economic considerations. If growers can be convinced of the impermanence of high opium prices, perhaps they can be persuaded, with incentives, to re-establish Afghanistan's orchard crops, which will take time to mature but will provide long-term income. Where communities or tribes are strong, it may be possible to provide infrastructure support in return for a guarantee not to grow opium.

Of course, the simplest solution would be to find a way to drive prices down. The traditional economic process of high prices reducing demand and thus affecting prices does not operate in this case because the enormous profits involved in trafficking mean that intermediaries can absorb higher raw material prices without raising the street price of the finished product; even then, narcotics demand is inelastic. If traffickers could be convinced of the reality of a glut of raw opium, perhaps they would lower their purchase price, but it is not clear how such market manipulation might be accomplished.

CONCLUSIONS: As long as opium prices remain high, traditional alternative development programs will not reduce production. If no way can be found to drive the price down, through psychological operations for example, the only

alternative is long-term program allowing time for the national government to build its enforcement capability and for the market to adjust to continued high production levels.

AUTHOR BIO: R. Grant Smith is a former U.S. State Department official who served as Ambassador to Tajikistan. He is now a Senior Fellow at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. He spent a month in Afghanistan this summer.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AS A WAY TO ERADICATE VIOLENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz human rights protection groups are having a busy time, as awareness of the legal rights of women are slowly growing. In particular, domestic violence is being criminalized, while the practice of bride kidnapping remains problematic especially in Kyrgyzstan's rural areas.

The hotline phone rings every five minutes at Women Crisis Center "Sezim" (which means "feeling" in Kyrgyz). Each woman who calls has a story to tell – either kidnapped, beaten, pregnant for the fifth time trying to give birth to a baby boy pressured by the family of the her husband or just upset – they all are listened to by the psychologists working in the center. There are only seven women working full-time in the Center and they are proud that the hotline works 24 hours a day without holidays. "Most of the calls happen to occur on weekends and at night time when women have no other place to turn to", says Natalia Pavlova, Center's psychotherapist. "Sezim" also provides free legal aid for the victims of violence and women in trouble, participates in international campaigns against violence and promotes violence-free society through various activities.

Women's organizations like "Sezim" started to emerge in Kyrgyzstan in 1995 when Kyrgyzstan presented its report on CEDAW and President Akaev started a new national program for gender equality. Since then the country has over 500 officially registered women's NGOs. Most of them state "gender equality" as an ultimate goal and "provide assistance to women in need". Human rights organizations in Kyrgyzstan are mostly pre-occupied with political and civil freedoms which are constantly violated by the government authorities. Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan has inherited many of the Soviet policies and human rights activists are still those who stand up in opposition to the government. Soviet Union encouraged women's participation in politics (there were quotas for women in the legislative bodies) and punished the exercise of the Kyrgyz traditional practices – such as polygamy, bride-kidnapping and customary inheritance laws. However, after the collapse of Soviet

Union, the new government was not able to keep up with the restrictions and allowed re-emergence of most of the traditions. Along with a major political crisis, an economic crisis followed. Many men lost jobs and turned to alcohol for refuge and women were the ones to start selling different goods at bazaars, which helped to sustain large families.

Present-day Kyrgyzstan has improved its legal framework by adopting a law "On domestic violence" which allows police to issue a warrant which could keep an abuser away from the family for a certain time. The implementation phase of this law has not started yet, therefore, it is difficult to evaluate how effective it is, but at least an effort was made. This bill was initiated by women's organization and is the only one time in the history of independent Kyrgyzstan that over 30,000 citizens supported a bill and made it applicable for the Parliament. However, there are traditional practices that are violence-based. Bride-kidnapping is a tradition which allows the groom not to pay the dowry. When a man wishes to marry a certain girl, he has to pay *kalym* (either money or cattle stock) to the parents of the girl. Very few men pay *kalym*, but kidnap the girl instead. The kidnapped girl does not usually know the man to whose house she was brought, while his whole family is waiting for the new bride to stay with them. If the girl wants to leave, the mother of the man lays down on the doorstep and the girl has to step over her which traditionally means committing a sin. If a girl stayed in the house overnight, she is considered to be "impure" and has to either marry or be a shame for her family for the rest of her life. Rapes in bride kidnapping happen occasionally. There is an article in the Criminal Code which gives over 2 years of imprisonment for bride kidnapping but there are very few cases when women have turned to courts.

"Sezim" helped some of the kidnapped women to file cases at courts but most cases were withdrawn under the pressure of the families from both sides, victims and the abusers. Bride kidnapping is common for rural areas and in Kyrgyzstan "to be

kidnapped" is one of the best wishes for girls over 15 years old. While "Sezim" deals with the consequences of violence, the problem is addressed by a student group of Amnesty International based in Bishkek. This group educates rural teenagers about human rights, gender issues and sexual health through its "Youth Empowerment Project". The project is aimed at encouraging gender-sensitive attitudes in teenagers and promoting activism. The gender issues class uses a role-play method for teaching about kidnapping. The scenario is common and most of the participants are familiar with it. But instead of a girl, a boy is kidnapped. He is faced with all the pressures of the large girl family when his mother-in-law scolds him to stay and his own mom is crying that he would be a sin for the family if he does not. Then the situation is discussed and all the feelings analyzed by each party involved. Many boys who participate in the exercise are very touched by what happened to them and say that they will not want to put any girl through such a procedure. As they are also taught human rights, they analyze which rights of the girl bride-kidnapping violates. The group has been very successful in implementing the project. So far 9 schools and 250 rural teenagers have been educated in Kyrgyzstan by 30 youth trainers. The summer camps for 250 more teenagers are now planned and implemented. Children learn to conduct campaigns on human rights issues and maintain Amnesty International groups in their schools.

People do not speak of human rights during the discussions; they talk about peace in their families and simple human feelings. Neither is human rights directly addressed in the court when a kidnapped or raped woman wants to file a case. Despite the fact that Kyrgyz Constitution puts international law and UN conventions over the laws of the country, they are not observed and neither referred to. Human rights education seems to be the only way to make people familiar with the concept.

Anna Kirey

THE FORGOTTEN PILLAR OF THE RULE OF LAW IN ARMENIA

Claude Zullo

Armenia's government managed to stave off sanctions by the Council of Europe (COE) by unconditionally banning capital punishment. However, the international body is now looking for more advances in democratization. This highlights the importance of an independent cadre of lawyers in establishing an effective rule-of-law system. A new draft Law on Advocates is scheduled for consideration by parliament in fall 2003. Steps should be taken to ensure the law provides the framework for an ethical, effective, and independent legal profession of lawyers.

BACKGROUND: With the threat of sanctions from the Council of Europe (COE) looming after its controversial elections, Armenia's government managed to stave off action by the international body by ratifying Protocol Six of the European Convention on Human Rights, which unconditionally bans capital punishment in peacetime. The COE called the move an "important step," but also called on the government to implement other measures, including strengthening its judiciary. Without question, an independent judiciary is a cornerstone of democracy and the rule of law; however, in mature democracies, lawyers play an equally important role by defending fundamental rights and freedoms of clients vis-à-vis the state. It is yet to be seen if Armenia's soon-to-be-introduced Draft Law on Advocacy and Advocate Activity will include provisions to strengthen the country's advocates (those lawyers who are able to represent clients in criminal cases) independence and effectiveness.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Armenia has attempted to reform the profession of advocates several times. In 1998, the current Law on Advocate Activity was passed, which brought the profession in line with internationally recognized standards, but which left it fragmented, with lax professional standards, and to some degree beholden to the Ministry of Justice. For example, no licensing exams for advocates have taken place since January 2002. Moreover, because criminal investigators approve the number of hours an advocate can bill for a client's defense in government-funded legal aid cases, the incentives for the latter is to act as a less-than-forceful representative for the client. Finally, Armenia's legal culture, particularly in the field of criminal law, is still heavily influenced by Soviet-era thinking that puts lawyers at the bottom of a legal hierarchy that remains dominated by the procuracy.

In order to increase public confidence in and the independence of the legal profession, the then three existing advocates unions drafted a new law in September 2001. Among other things, the draft law would have required advocates to be licensed in order to practice in both civil and criminal courts, would have mandated the creation of a unified bar association, and would have moved licensing authority from the Ministry of Justice to a proposed unified advocate association.

IMPLICATIONS: Although the COE found the draft law to be in compliance with the Council's standards, it was never introduced into parliament. Instead, in late 2002, the Ministry of Justice began developing a new draft law that may be introduced into parliament in fall 2003. While the latest draft contains a number of improvements over prior MOJ drafts, this latest draft still contains some questionable provisions. For example, under Article 7, the Union of Advocates of the Republic of Armenia (UARA), which is closely linked to the government, would hold a monopoly on state-funded legal aid. This could provide a back-door mechanism for the government to exert influence in the legal system and for continued corruption in criminal cases, which are viewed as the most lucrative cases (many observers report that defendants are often asked to buy their freedom or a lesser sentence).

Article 14 of the proposed law calls for qualification exams to have both a written component and an oral interview. The latter aspect is the most troubling, in that, as with judicial examinations, non-transparent interviews are seen as an opportunity for corruption. A "passing" grade could be given to the highest bidder. In a similar vein, representatives from the UARA would dominate a proposed qualification commission. Again, given this union's links to the government, this may present an opportunity for more government control and corruption. Article 30 vaguely refers to types of encouragement for advocates that include a one-time monetary award or dismissal of disciplinary action. While this provision harkens back to the Soviet *gramata* for meritorious service, the vague language used in the law could provide yet another opportunity for corruption.

On a final note, Article 33 enables advocates to form unions if 50 or more members join. On the face of it, this seems like a reasonable provision. In fact, the Armenian government has argued that by creating multiple unions, competition is created, which benefits consumers of legal services. However, this presumes that advocate unions would function as quasi-law firms, but this may not be desirable. Advocate unions, and more generally bar associations, have three main functions. First, they should advocate on behalf of the profession's interests. The creation of multiple advocate unions dilutes their ability to do this. Second, professional associations of lawyers should provide continuing legal education opportunities, should establish professional

standards, should engage in legal public awareness activities, and should participate in law reform. These are not necessarily activities that are best regulated by market principles.

If the current draft of the Law on Advocates is passed, it could have two serious implications for the rule of law in Armenia. First, it could undermine the burgeoning independence that may exist among advocates. In fact, some might argue that the government may be using this opportunity to punish the other of the two advocate unions, the International Bar Union, because of its attempts to defend opposition supporters who were detained or arrested during the 2003 presidential elections. Second, the law, if it is adopted, may serve to entrench corrupt practices further within the legal system. Specifically, it is likely that lawyers would continue to constitute a part of a corrupt justice

system, channeling bribes from parties in a case to court officials. This can only serve to undermine public confidence in the legal system and delay the establishment of the rule of law.

CONCLUSIONS: It is clear that revisions to the current draft law are necessary for key provisions of any future law to conform to international standards for the legal profession. Other identified provisions, such as Article 30, need greater clarity if they are to remain as part of the law. This is likely to be successful if international organizations like the COE continue to work with the Armenian government to insert appropriate provisions, using the threat of sanctions but also incentives such as tied funding.

AUTHOR BIO: Claude Zullo is Associate Country Director for the Caucasus at the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative.

KAZAKHSTAN UNDER PRESSURE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking, long obvious to outside observers, is still something of a taboo in Kazakhstan. Even ubiquitous non-government organizations and human rights campaigners limit their rhetoric to hushed murmurs. Not surprisingly in this environment of ignorance, modern slavery is assuming proportions that demand the attention of international organizations.

Until recently, problems related to human trafficking have been considered to be a byproduct of a transitional economy and impoverishment of the population, which can be partly solved, if not uprooted entirely, by raising the living standards of people. Economic reality denies this theory. With only 2.3% inflation rate and relatively high per capita income, Kazakhstan is faring much better than other CIS countries. Nevertheless, human trafficking did not diminish in its dimensions.

Evidently, healthier economy should be paired with a comprehensive national strategy which takes into consideration social and legal factors. A round-table conference in Astana, held on September 26 under the aegis of the International Migration Organization and the Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan was a significant event. Representatives from the OSCE, European Union, Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan and the Interior Ministry discussed at great length the three-year program of Kazakhstan for combating human trafficking.

Perhaps the most positive side of the meeting was that the Justice Minister Zhakyn Asanov admitted for the first time that Kazakhstan "has turned into a place of origin, destination and transit point for human trafficking". Actually, these words signaled the readiness of Kazakhstan to cooperate with international bodies. Interestingly, earlier a Justice Ministry spokesman had disclosed that Kazakhstan was removed by International Migration

Organization from the list of the countries which are not willing to tackle the problem of human trafficking.

According to Justice Ministry sources, human trafficking ranks third after the firearms sale and drug trafficking among the most lucrative illegal businesses. Available figures confirm this report. On average, transnational criminal gangs involved in human trafficking, earn a net income of \$80 billion annually. Some reports indicate that annually up to 7000 women are smuggled out of Kazakhstan by criminal groups. The most favored destinations are United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Greece, Israel and South Korea, were women, more often than not, are forced to into prostitution.

The existence of a well organized network of illegally operating "travel agencies" which airlift young women to Gulf countries providing them with forged papers is open secret to anyone. Reportedly, there are more than 70 unlicensed travel agencies in Kazakhstan, not counting illegal ones operating underground. As many employment agencies lure young people with promises of overseas job opportunities. For many these offers are too great a temptation to resist. It is almost impossible to curb their activities of illegal agencies under the present law.

The Penal Code adopted in 1997 is so inapplicable for its imperfectness that over the last four years only one person be found guilty under the Article 128 of the Code and sentenced to prison terms. The problem is that the existing Penal Code leaves many loopholes for human traffickers and makes it impossible to apply the law in particular cases. In practice, a person can be sent to prison for raping, swindling, pimping and trafficking in underage persons, but not for human trafficking as such. Last year, according the Justice Ministry, 330 cases

were brought against pimps and pones, but none of them were qualified as human trafficking.

Flaws in the Penal Code and in criminal statistics help authorities to create a false impression that human trafficking is almost non-existent in Kazakhstan. That illusion fetters innumerable human rights activists in the country. Media provides only patchy stories of victims of human traffickers. All this diverts the public from the problem.

Human trafficking and enslavement of socially unprotected people in Kazakhstan takes many-faceted forms. In South Kazakhstan, for example, people toiling in the cotton fields under the scorching sun for a miserable payment are usually Uzbek and Kirghiz illegal migrants. They are entirely dependent on the whims of their masters who provide shelter and food. Although the Interior Ministry reported that the number of illegal migrants has been halved since the beginning of the year that brings little solace.

Many law experts in Kazakhstan think that Kazakhstan will remain powerless in the face of human trafficking unless it joins relevant international conventions and makes necessary amendments to its law. However, that may be the easiest part of the job. For Kazakhstan at the moment it is far more difficult to synchronize its laws with that of its close neighbors -Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. This relationship reminds of the case of Siamese twins: trying to find common legal basis to curb human trafficking for these countries is painful, creating separate laws for solving the same problem is fatally dangerous.

Marat Yermukanov

PAKISTAN ARMY VENTURES INTO TRIBAL AREAS

Rahimullah Yusufzai

Twice in the last two months, the Pakistan Army conducted military operations in the rugged Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) bordering Afghanistan to nab al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects. While the first operation in early September yielded nothing, the subsequent October 2 action, Pakistan's largest-ever offensive against al-Qaeda, led to the killing of eight suspects and the capture of another 18. The army's decision to enter deep in the semi-autonomous tribal areas won praise from Washington and Kabul, but it was strongly criticized by the religious alliance ruling the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan.

BACKGROUND: The Pakistan Army has achieved mixed results in its operations in the tribal areas since October 2001 when the U.S. military intervened in neighboring Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime and dismantle Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. In June 2002, the army lost 10 soldiers when it mounted a massive air and ground assault lasting several days in South Waziristan to hunt down suspected al-Qaeda fighters. A couple of Uzbeks that fled to Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban regime, were killed and one captured during that operation. Prior to that, some al-Qaeda suspects were captured in Pakistan's Kurram tribal district while trying to escape from the Tora Bora mountain range during the U.S. aerial bombing campaign in eastern Afghanistan in December 2001. Many others were able to avoid arrest due to help from sympathetic Pakistani tribesmen.

The latest army operations in the tribal areas came in the wake of repeated allegations by U.S. and Afghan government officials that remnants of al-Qaeda and Taliban were regrouping in Pakistan's border districts and launching raids against U.S.-led coalition troops in Afghanistan. The recent increase in the number of Taliban attacks which led to the killing of more than 300 people, including U.S. and Afghan soldiers and aid workers, put tremendous pressure on Pakistan to hunt down al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects hiding in the tribal borderlands. The military exercises that the army's Rapid Reaction Force conducted with the help of 24 helicopters in the first week of September were apparently organized to test the skills of the newly raised force. The soldiers did move into the remote North Waziristan tribal agency after landing at the Bannu airport but no suspect was arrested and there were no clashes with militants.

North Waziristan and South Waziristan have been termed likely sanctuaries for al-Qaeda and

Taliban operatives for over two years. Their Pashtun population is largely sympathetic to the

Mainly Pashtun Taliban. The majority of Wazir, Mahsud and Dawar tribes that inhabit the two mountainous agencies consider bin Laden a hero of Islam. All this convinced the U.S. military authorities and Western media that one place

where bin Laden and his lieutenants would be most welcome was the two Waziristans.

Across the border from North and South Waziristan are three flashpoint Afghan provinces that have offered the most resolute resistance to the U.S. Army and its allies. Paktia, Paktika and Khost, inhabited by Pashtun tribes, are probably the most dangerous places in present-day Afghanistan for the American and Italian soldiers deployed there along with Afghan militias loyal to President Karzai's government. There are daily missile attacks on U.S.-led coalition bases, ambushes of their convoys and explosions caused by improvised explosive devices.

IMPLICATIONS: Islamabad's decision to send troops to the tribal areas betrayed an anxiety on its part to not only address the concerns of the U.S. government but also to prepare its soldiers for any eventuality on its Western border with Afghanistan. The fact that the Pakistan Army's elite commandoes conducted a major military operation on the eve of the second anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. also showed that the effort was intended to tell the Americans in particular and the international community in general that Islamabad was committed to the so-called war on terror. The recent border dispute with Afghanistan has rendered Pakistan's western borders insecure and created a nightmare for its armed forces already confronted with a hostile India on the eastern border. This was a situation that Pakistan had sought to avoid all these years by seeking "strategic depth" in a friendly Afghanistan.

The military raids in the tribal areas also stirred opposition among the fiercely independent tribal Pashtuns. There were protests against the raids in and outside the tribal areas and criticism was also recorded in the Parliament and the provincial assembly of the NWFP. The pro-Islamic MMA government in the NWFP complained that it wasn't consulted before sending troops to the area. Some of the religious leaders went to the extent to term the killed al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects as martyrs. By the same yardstick, they urged the faithful not to offer funeral prayers for the Pakistani soldiers killed in the operation because they took up arms against fellow Muslims. They said deployment of troops that served the interest of the U.S. and

compromised Pakistan's sovereignty was unacceptable. The military operations in the tribal areas hence contributed to the political polarization in the country.

Lukewarm U.S. support for Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir dispute and its below-expectation economic assistance to Islamabad made it difficult for President General Pervez Musharraf to justify his pro-Washington policies. Growing U.S. ties with India and the emergence of the so-called India-Israel-U.S. axis also weakened Musharraf's hand and provided ammunition to his opponents at home to criticize him. The U.S. is seen as having little time for the concerns and needs of smaller countries like Pakistan. Moreover, an increasingly strong constituency points out that no amount of cooperation by Islamabad in netting al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects will satisfy the U.S.. Rather, it would whet America's appetite to demand tougher action by Pakistan to kill or capture anyone remotely connected to al-Qaeda.

CONCLUSIONS: In the wake of the army's operations in North and South Waziristan, many questions concerning the

hunt for bin Laden and his lieutenants in the tribal areas remain unanswered. The U.S. failure to capture or kill bin Laden has led to frustration in Washington and prompted calls on Pakistan to do more in the search for the world's most wanted man. America's war on terror will be deemed a failure until bin Laden is caught or eliminated. Having captured and delivered about 500 suspected al-Qaeda members to the U.S. during the past two years, Islamabad is being asked to net all those who might still be hiding in Pakistan. The biggest catch of them no doubt is going to be bin Laden. But his capture or death would also have political repercussions with Bush benefiting the most, and Musharraf possibly facing a backlash if bin Laden is killed or captured by Pakistani troops. This is a catch-22 situation with nerve-shattering outcomes.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Rahimullah Yusufzai is an executive editor of The News International, Pakistan. He is based in Peshawar, North-West Frontier Province, and is also a correspondent for the BBC, ABC News and Time magazine.

MASS PROTESTS AGAINST REGULATION OF BISHKEK BAZAARS

Mass protests have taken place in the beginning of October on the markets of Bishkek. About 15,000-20,000 entrepreneurs did not open their trading containers and went to protest demonstrations on the markets instead. They opposed the installment of cash registers both as a way of reporting their sales and running their business. Trading life in Bishkek city has practically stopped these days.

The introduction of the decree that prescribed to entrepreneurs to purchase and operate cash registers was motivated with concerns for consumer rights and the opportunity to increase tax collection. However, entrepreneurs and their lobby groups think differently. They believe the realization of this decree will have negative consequences for the economy of Kyrgyzstan and will expand corruption within controlling authorities.

Prime Minister Nikolay Tanaev stated that it is time to transition to the "civilized way" of trading, reasoning that with Kyrgyzstan's entry into the WTO, the protection of consumer rights is necessary. He considered the protests a sign of the unwillingness of entrepreneurs to pay taxes. Later he justified himself with the argument that subordinate authorities misinterpreted the assigned task and failed to accomplish it. Mr. Tanaev implied that he wanted to check whether the introduction of such system was possible and to make an experiment on one of the markets of Kyrgyzstan.

Almaz, a local manufacturer and seller of men's suits, said "it is ultimately the choice of customers where to buy products. Anybody has a

right to purchase goods in places where cash registers are installed and checks are provided. I think protecting consumer rights does not mean the installation of cash registers in every stall on the markets".

It is important to mention that entrepreneurs had been paying fixed sums of money to the state budget as taxes and there were no protests on the "patent" system of taxation previously, which was introduced with the approval of the first Tax Code in 1996 and gradually improved to the present day. The system is simple, effective and excluded any inspections by fiscal authorities. Anatoliy Novikov, chief of the Dordoi trade union organization and lobby group, thinks that state authorities had not even managed to consolidate the patent system before trying to transfer to a radically new system. "If the decree will be executed, then fiscal authorities will regularly visit their stalls, and because they know the legislation better, find violations, and get bribes not to close the stalls for detailed inspection. Certainly, all the expenses related to the registration and service of cash registers and bribes to officials will be shown on the prices for goods, which will increase".

Bazaars represent a major trading form, where both customers and sellers can bargain over prices and the terms of selling commodities. Bazaars represent places where most of the service enterprises of Kyrgyzstan purchase initial goods and then sell or resell finished products. "The installment of cash registers implies that we have to sell goods only to a set price and could not sell it lower than our costs", Mr. Novikov

claims. "But the market rules are different. We sometimes forced to sell it at very low prices just to get rid of these products and go to other countries to purchase new goods and return back".

On October 3, Finance Minister Bolotbek Abdylbaev stated that protests had been conducted by "shadowy oligarchs – the stall owners and wholesale – who actively resist the introduction of civilized mechanisms of trading".

Further Mr. Abdylbaev claimed that Bishkek city markets had previously providing the state budget with 3 million soms as taxes. After the increase of tax collection on bazaars, tax collections reached 8 million soms. However, by their calculations, these figures should be at least ten times higher, which is why the government wants to introduce cash registers.

Entrepreneurs do not share such an optimistic prognosis and recall the case of the gambling taxation decree approved in 1997 and its negative consequences. All casinos had just transferred to the Kazakhstan area with better taxation system, where they continued to develop their business. State authorities did not receive even a cent of taxes after this decree. Dordoi rumors told that a group of Kazakh entrepreneurs after start of the protests had proposed to them transfer their businesses to their area, where Kazakh government had not yet decided to transfer bazaar transactions to a "civilized level".

Aziz Soltobaev

TOWARDS COOPERATIVE ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CASPIAN?

Stephen Blank

Lukoil head Vagit Alekperov recently floated a proposal for the U.S. and Russia to jointly patrol oil fields, especially in Iraq. This proposal may have relevance for Caspian energy, at a time when Russia is increasingly vigorously pursuing its monopolistic ambitions in CIS energy affairs. If Russia is serious about its partnership with the U.S., joint patrolling of Caspian pipelines with direct American participation should be an option. Such joint patrolling would prevent unilateral domination by anyone of Caspian oil development, and also likely reduce Russian-inspired sabotage.

BACKGROUND: Shortly before the recent Putin-Bush summit, Vagit Alekperov, head of Lukoil, one of Russia's premier oil firms, floated an interesting trial balloon. He proposed a joint U.S.-Russian force to patrol oil fields in order to assure energy security. Inasmuch as bilateral energy relations between the United States and Moscow were a major item on the summit agenda this trial balloon probably represented a Russian effort to float a proposal that could be shot down without embarrassment to it but which clearly represented a major Russian policy objective. Specifically it appears that the deal Alekperov was proposing entailed a joint force to patrol Iraqi oil fields, which means Russian support for the U.S.-supported UN resolution on Iraq. The price to be paid by Washington would be an American agreement to guarantee Baghdad's preexisting \$9 Billion debt to Moscow and a sizable Russian share in prospective oil contracts from Iraq's oil fields. However, Alekperov's idea, which apparently failed to materialize for the moment, has possibilities insofar as Caspian energy fields are concerned.

For some time before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Russian emissaries unofficially told Americans that Moscow would be prepared to look the other way or even support an invasion of Iraq if Iraqi debts were guaranteed and Russia received contracts for future development of some of Iraq's oil fields. At the same time, after September 11 there was a decided expansion of the rhetoric concerning U.S.-Russian energy partnership to counter OPEC. To date little has come from either initiative. Nonetheless it appears that Russia is still pursuing these ideas as part of a broader strategic partnership with America and foreign investment in Russian energy has definitely greatly expanded since September 11. However, the place where such joint security guarantees or patrols to ensure energy security would be useful is the Transcaspian area. Unfortunately the prospects for this look rather dim now. Nevertheless the idea ought to be put on the agenda.

IMPLICATIONS: Russia's efforts to dominate the Transcaspian energy producers' economies are unremitting and public knowledge. The political consequence of such domination would be those states' continued backwardness and a neo-colonialist structure for their economics and politics, precisely the conditions that will sooner or later ensure failed states, violent political explosions, and renewed

terrorism. It is also highly likely that Russian efforts to undermine these states' actual economic independence has included attacks by forces susceptible to Russian influence or payments upon pipelines in Azerbaijan and Georgia. These attacks would aim not only to weaken those economies, but to demonstrate their continuing inability to provide the West with energy thereby eliminating a rival to Russian-dominated energy transfers. Third, such attacks would demonstrate that nobody could protect pipelines besides Russia. Thus in many respects, these attacks bear all the hallmarks of a classic protection racket where the intended victim either pays for protection or sees his business ruined.

A fourth reason for such attacks is likely connected to Azerbaijan's and Georgia's numerous calls for membership in NATO, or for NATO protection of those pipelines. These overtures to NATO clearly arouse Russia's ire, but since Russia can do little overtly about this, it must resort to such subterfuges to punish these states and accomplish the objectives listed above.

However, as the strategic role of these states increases, the temptation or need for NATO and/or the United States to assume a greater role in protecting energy holdings and pipelines may well grow. Therefore, if Russia is seriously interested in a partnership with America, it would be useful to call Moscow's bluff and put the issue of joint patrols squarely on the agenda. Joint patrols would prevent unilateral domination by anyone of those pipelines, but would also suspend attacks by Russian influence forces because it would be too counter-productive for Moscow to employ that tactic under the changed situation. That would also make it harder for Russia to impose its economic and other preferences upon these states. Further restraint of Russia's deep-rooted neo-imperial tendencies would be beneficial to Russia's people, the former Soviet members from the Baltic to Central Asia, Europe, and the United States, in short to all concerned. On the plus side this experiment in cooperative security would also represent a major step to guarantee that Central Asian economies function better and that they are less vulnerable to terrorist attacks on those pipelines or exploration sites. That, in turn, might be an important step toward greater regional security, something from which all concerned would benefit.

CONCLUSIONS: Russia has hitherto sought to restore a neo-imperial program in the former Soviet republics. Its military and Foreign Ministry also remain unreconciled to the loss of empire and its economic and political elites have therefore embraced not just efforts at military reunification of the Russian empire under a quasi-capitalist structure but also the creation of that capitalist structure, mainly buttressed by Russian domination of its former colonies' energy holdings. This unilateralism is bound to lead to disaster because it perpetuates bad governance across the entire post-Soviet region and because ultimately Moscow cannot bear such costs, illusions to the contrary notwithstanding. On the other hand, Alekperov's call, suitably transformed by either or both Washington and Brussels, could open the path to a general structure of cooperative security in the Transcaspien region which would make visible the benefits of a strategic

partnership between Russia, local states, and the West and also illuminate the costs of not doing so. Undoubtedly Alekperov, as much of a monopolist as his other colleagues in Moscow, did not have such partnership in mind for the CIS. If anything, Russia's energy companies which seek monopoly positions in the CIS would resist this initiative. On the other hand, if Washington and Moscow truly want to build an enduring strategic partnership, his plan, suitably amended, offers a way to do so in what could truly be a win-win situation for all concerned.

AUTHOR BIO: Professor Stephen Blank, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013. The views expressed here do not in any way represent those of the U.S. Army, Defense Department or the U.S. Government.

AZERBAIJANI ELECTIONS APPROACH AS TENSIONS ESCALATE

On October 2, Azerbaijani state TV aired the address of president Heydar Aliyev to the people in which he declared that he withdrew his candidacy in the October 15 presidential elections. It became a real sensation in the political life of the country, where pre-election political passions are on. Heydar Aliyev appealed to the people to support his son and first deputy chairman of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, Ilham Aliyev.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Vilayat Guliyev was the first among official representatives who at the beginning of October mentioned such a development of the situation in Brussels at a session of the Council of cooperation between the European Union and Azerbaijan. But Guliyev only informed that within the next few days the ruling party

Would put forward a unified candidate in the elections, but left without mentioning which of the candidates it would be. This announcement made it clear that the forthcoming presidential elections will result in a change of authority, at least as far as the personality is concerned.

Making comments on the president's decision, deputy executive secretary of YAP Mubariz Gurbanli declared that it was a personal decision by the President. He assessed that Heydar Aliyev's decision was accepted with understanding in the party, and YAP responded to the appeal from the chairman, and will support Ilham Aliyev's candidature in every way.

Ilham Aliyev, addressing voters, expressed regret concerning the decision of his father to withdraw. The withdrawal was "long expected", according to Etibar Mamedov, leader of the National Independence Party. He emphasized that Aliyev senior's leaving the political arena and the creation of a new political situation was officially arranged. Mamedov also doubted that Aliyev personally

made the decision, saying that no one knows who authored the removal of Aliyev's nomination.

The leader of the Musavat party Isa Gambar also expressed doubts that Heydar Aliyev was able to write the announcement. However, he concluded that "this means the end of Heydar Aliyev's era and simultaneously will bring increased opportunities for democratic development in Azerbaijan.

If in the beginning of the election campaign many people have been concerned about the large number of candidates to the presidency, the number is now rapidly decreasing. In the last few weeks, several candidates withdrew their candidacies in favor of Ilham Aliyev, including Milli Vahdat party chairman Yunus Oguz, chairman of "The alliance in the name of Azerbaijan" and Abutalib Samedov have withdrawn the nominees. Gudrat Hasanguliev and Hafiz Hajiyev among pro-YAP candidates are still in the race. Most likely, they will also withdraw in favor of Ilham Aliyev. In any case, there would be little harm if they stayed as candidates, as neither is likely to poll over one percent.

From the opposition camp, the chairman of the Popular Front Party Ali Kerimli withdraw his candidature in favor of AMIP leader Etibar Mamedov.

Meanwhile, as election day approaches, political conditions in the country are more and more heated.

The long-term Mission of the OSCE supervising the presidential elections in Azerbaijan has prepared a communiqué on the pre-election situation in Azerbaijan for the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. There is an increase of intensity and sharp polarization among political forces, the communiqué says. It mentioned unrest during election meetings both in Baku and the regions, interventions of police

during meetings between candidates and voters, and the use of dirty PR-techniques.

Frequently, fears are expressed that such developments could lead to the destabilization of the situation in Azerbaijan. The head of the Presidential Administration Ramiz Mehtiev declared that the government has information that the opposition is going to destabilize the country on October 15 and 16

According to the head of the public forum "In the Name of Azerbaijan" Eldar Namazov, non-democratic elections in Azerbaijan can lead to civil unrest. "Hostile relations before elections between authorities and opposition, and the infringement of human rights and democratic freedoms during these elections could lead to instability. Unfortunately, this threat has increased in the last few months".

Meanwhile, the last preparations for the elections are going on. An independent press center is already created in Baku with the purpose to facilitate the transfer of

information on the presidential elections to journalists. According to the chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) Mazahir Panahov, more than 2 million bulletins for voting have already been printed and sent to the district and local electoral commissions. All local electoral commissions are already provided with transparent ballot boxes.

The CEC has registered 667 international observers for the elections. Among these, 443 are representatives of the OSCE. Though the official accreditation process has ended, the number of registered international observers within the next few days could still increase.

Gulnara Ismailova

NEWS BITES

TAJIK GOVERNMENT WANTS RUSSIAN BORDER GUARDS TO STAY, SAYS DEPUTY PREMIER

25 September

Tajik Deputy Prime Minister Saidamir Zukhurov said on 25 September that the Tajik government does not share the opinion of State Border Committee First Deputy Chairman Major General Nuralisho Nazarov that Tajik border troops are ready to take over responsibility for guarding the country's frontiers. According to Zukhurov, who is responsible for Tajikistan's law enforcement agencies, the official position of the Tajik government is that the Russian border guards should stay. A Tajik-Russian commission that oversees implementation of bilateral agreements on the status of Russian border troops in Tajikistan is due to decide on the future protection of Tajikistan's borders soon. (Interfax)

U.S. ANNOUNCES CUT IN AID TO GEORGIA

26 September

Meeting with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze on 24 September, U.S. State Department official Thomas Adams said Washington will reduce aid to Georgia in 2004 from this year's level of \$100 million, Georgia. Adams pointed out that of the 27 countries to which the U.S. State Department provides aid, Georgia has the lowest level of development. In addition, Georgia is plagued by endemic corruption, and economic reforms are not being implemented. Washington will not provide further aid to the energy or financial sectors. The precise volume of aid for 2004 will be announced early next year. (RFE/RL)

US AND RUSSIA WARN IRAN

27 September

The US and Russian presidents have called on Iran and North Korea to stop their suspected nuclear weapons programs. President Bush said the two leaders shared a common goal - "to make sure that Iran doesn't have any nuclear weapon or a nuclear weapons programme". Russia's President Putin said they wanted to send "a clear but respectful signal to Iran" to increase its co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which oversees nuclear non-proliferation. Tehran has, meanwhile, announced that an IAEA team is to arrive in Iran on Thursday for further talks on the country's nuclear programme. At the two-day meeting at Camp David, near Washington, the presidents also discussed the ongoing conflict in Chechnya and described themselves as "allies in the war on terror". President Bush said "old suspicions were giving way to new understanding and respect". There was no suggestion that Russia had agreed to American requests to stop helping Iran's nuclear program. Russia is building Iran's first nuclear power station, at the southern port of Bushehr - including supplying

uranium over a 10-year period from 2005. The IAEA, urged by Washington, has raised concerns about Iran's nuclear aims and given Tehran until the end of October to dispel fears that it is secretly developing nuclear arms. Iran has repeatedly been told by the US and European countries to allow snap inspections of its nuclear facilities. Tehran denies any plans to develop nuclear weapons, and says its program is aimed at producing energy. Officials in Tehran said talks with the IAEA would be about clearing up legal and technical questions. (BBC)

UZBEK PRESIDENT PROMISES TO IMPROVE INVESTMENT CLIMATE

29 September

Islam Karimov on 29 September sent a message to the opening of an investors' conference organized by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Tashkent promising that Uzbekistan is taking measures to improve its investment climate. Uzbekistan joined the IDB earlier this month. More than 100 potential investors from IDB member states are attending the conference, which is focusing on investment opportunities in Uzbekistan. Karimov's message said the Uzbek government has already created a legal framework favorable to foreign investors and cited tourism, transportation, and humanitarian aid as the priority sectors in which Uzbekistan is seeking cooperation in the immediate future. Deputy Prime Minister and Economics Minister Rustam Azimov in his keynote speech told conference participants that Uzbekistan is ahead of schedule in introducing full convertibility of its currency and cited recent reforms intended to encourage the private sector, including private farming. (Interfax)

INVESTORS' CONFERENCE IN TAJIKISTAN NETS AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT-HOLDING BODY

29 September

A three-day investors' conference in Dushanbe sponsored by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) concluded with the signing on 27 September by Tajik Economy and Trade Minister Hakim Soliev and IDB President Ahmad Muhammad Ali of an assistance agreement. The agreement covers the creation of an investment-holding body with an initial capitalization of \$200 million. An unnamed official at the Economy and Trade Ministry told the agency that investors at the conference showed interest in development projects, particularly the construction of a cement plant and a luxury hotel in Dushanbe, as well as in rare-metals mining and hydropower projects. One hundred seventy investors from 11 IDB member states participated in the conference. (Asia Plus-Blitz)

ABKHAZIA DEMANDS SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR GOVERNMENT DELEGATION

29 September

The government of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia has demanded security guarantees for the delegation it will send to Tbilisi in early October to participate in talks on preventing the resumption of hostilities. Astamur Tarba, who is an aide to Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba, told Interfax. Tarba reasoned that "the hosting side is responsible for security, including moral responsibility." A delegation headed by Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba failed to travel to Georgia last week for UN-mediated talks after the head of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government in exile, Tamaz Nadareishvili, said on Georgian television that Shamba could be arrested if he came to Tbilisi. (Interfax)

ARMENIAN, TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET

29 September

The foreign ministers of Armenia and Turkey, Vartan Oskanian and Abdullah Gul, met late on 25 September in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. Oskanian told RFE/RL after the talks that he could report "no practical results," but he termed the meeting an "important circumstance" in the dialogue that he and Gul began in Madrid in early June. The two ministers also discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and, according to the "Turkish Daily News," a trilateral Armenian-Azerbaijani-Turkish meeting will take place after next month's Azerbaijani presidential election. The June meeting between Oskanian and Gul triggered optimistic speculation in Yerevan that Turkey might lift its decade-old blockade of Armenia and open its border with that country. The Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council recently issued a statement calling for the normalization of relations between the two countries and for defusing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. (RFE/RL)

US AMBASSADOR TO TURKEY URGES ANKARA TO OPEN BORDERS WITH ARMENIA

30 September

US Ambassador to Turkey Eric Edelman said that they wanted Turkey to open its Armenian border as soon as possible and called Armenia to recognize Turkey. According to Anadolu agency, delivering a speech in the symposium, Edelman said Turkey was very important for the United States, stressing that a strong Turkey was important for the region. He said they wanted to support Turkey to fulfill its targets, and noted that this was important for the interests of United States. Edelman said U.S. was ready to cooperate with all the countries in the world to fight against terrorism after September 11 terrorist attacks, stating that September 11 attacks changed point of view of the United States against the world. He said their target was to cooperate with the whole world on this issue. (Arminfo)

ATTACKS AGAINST ETHNIC CHECHENS ON INCREASE IN SOUTHERN REGIONS

30 September

Instances of racially motivated attacks against Chechens in Russian cities outside of Chechnya are increasing, presidential envoy for human rights in Chechnya Abdul-Khakim Sultygov told a human rights conference in Moscow on 29 September, "Izvestiya" reported on 30 September. Anti-Chechen incidents have taken place most frequently in Krasnodar Krai and Kabardino-Balkaria. In Nalchik, assaults against Chechens on 15-17 September left one person dead and 54 injured. Participants in the conference noted that there were no anti-Chechen incidents in Moscow after the October 2002 theater hostage drama, and blamed the policies of Krasnodar Krai Governor Aleksandr Tkachev and Kabardino-Balkaria President Valerii Kokov for the incidents in their regions. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKHSTAN TO INCREASE OIL PRODUCTION

30 September

Kazakhstan intends to increase its share in world oil output from 1.2 percent to 4 or even 5 percent over the next 10 to 15 years, Uzakbay Karabalin, President of the national oil and gas company KazMunaiGaz, reported. According to him, this may be done by implementing a state program on developing oil and gas deposits of the Kazakhstani part of the Caspian Sea shelf that was launched this year. To these ends, Kazakhstan needs \$6bn in investments in 2003 through 2005, \$10.3bn in 2006 through 2010 and \$15.6bn in 2011 through 2015. Geologic exploration may come up to 5 percent of the total volume of investments envisaged by the program. Karabalin noted that to attract the necessary funds KazMunaiGaz might issue securities backed by future revenues from oil and gas production. In accordance with a respective government decree, KazMunaiGaz is entitled to receiving at least 50 percent in any new Caspian project. Additionally, the company enjoys privileges allowing it to explore Caspian deposits without participating in corresponding tenders. To date, Kazakhstan produces over 50m tons of oil a year. (RBC)

PUTIN UNVEILS RUSSIAN MILITARY-MODERNIZATION DOCTRINE

2 October

President Vladimir Putin told Defense Ministry officials at a 2 October conference that the military faces no more radical cuts. "Since 1992 the armed forces have been cut by more than half," he said. "This is enough. This painful and difficult process is for the most part completed, the period of radical reform is finished," he said. The conference was dedicated to the publication of a doctrine for military reform that was drafted by the General Staff. According to the doctrine, by 2007 the military will have established a rapid-reaction force, completed its transformation into a contract-based army, and cut service terms by half, Putin noted. He added that he supports the idea of allowing CIS citizens to serve in the Russian military. Putin also said that Russia will develop its

strategic missile forces and re-deploy mothballed UR-100 NU heavy strategic nuclear missiles (classified by NATO as the SS-19), which will enable the country to reduce its Strategic Missile Forces. He said the country has a significant supply of the Soviet-era ICBMs and that "their capabilities to defeat any missile-defense systems are unmatched." (Interfax)

AZERBAIJAN'S ALIYEV PULLS OUT OF ELECTION TO MAKE WAY FOR SON

2 October

Azeri President Heidar Aliyev announced he was stepping down from office after 10 years as head of the former Soviet republic, and anointed his son Ilham as his chosen successor. In an official statement read out Thursday on national television by an anchor, Aliyev, who has been stricken by heart failure, said he was dropping out of presidential elections scheduled for October 15. "I am withdrawing my candidacy in favor of Ilham Aliyev. He is my political successor," the 80-year-old president said in the statement, which was also issued to the media by his administration. "He is a strong candidate, and a very intelligent and energetic personality," the statement added. "I am sure that what I have been unable to finish, he will complete, with your help." The dramatic announcement marks the end of Aliyev's long career at the helm of his oil-rich country, but it also leaves his son poised to take over as president, creating the former Soviet Union's first political dynasty. President Aliyev's retirement had been widely expected. The 80-year-old leader is being treated in a US clinic for heart failure and associated liver problems and has not been seen in public for two months. Ilham Aliyev, a 41-year-old oil executive and reformed playboy who was appointed prime minister this summer, had been running as his father's understudy in the election campaign. With Aliyev senior now bowed out, he is seen as the favorite to win the poll. However, some analysts say Ilham Aliyev lacks his father's authority and could be undermined by squabbles inside the ruling clique. (AFP)

KYRGYZ OPPOSITION PARTY PICKETS PRESIDENT'S UN SPEECH

2 October

Members of the Kyrgyz opposition Ar-Namys Party picketed outside the UN building in New York on 1 October while Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev was delivering a speech to the General Assembly, gazeta.kg reported on 2 October. As well as demanding the release from prison of party leader Feliks Kulov -- who is serving a 10-year sentence for alleged crimes committed while he held various government posts, including vice president, head of the National Security Committee, and mayor of Bishkek -- the picketers handed out leaflets critical of the current government of Kyrgyzstan. Party members reportedly intend to stage similar demonstrations in every country Akaev plans to visit. The New York-based human rights group Human Rights Watch has asked French President Jacques Chirac to raise the Kulov case with Akaev during the Kyrgyz

president's stop in France on his way home from the UN. (RFE/RL)

OVER 600 HIZB UT-TAHRIR ACTIVISTS SENTENCED IN TAJIKISTAN SINCE 1998

2 October

Dushanbe city Prosecutor Habib Vohidov told a law enforcement council meeting in Dushanbe on 2 October that between 1998 and September 2003 more than 600 activists of the banned Muslim extremist party Hizb ut-Tahrir have been sentenced in Tajikistan to prison terms of 10-18 years. Thirty-four activists have been arrested in Dushanbe alone since 2001, from whom three tons of subversive literature were confiscated, Vohidov added. The usual charges against Hizb ut-Tahrir members are inciting religious hatred, seeking to overthrow the constitutional order, and membership in a criminal organization. (RIA-Novosti)

US URGES FREE AND FAIR POLLS IN AZERBAIJAN, MUM ON POSSIBLE ALIYEV DYNASTY

3 October

The United States called for the government of Azerbaijan to ensure that this month's presidential election is free and fair but declined to comment on the likelihood of a father-to-son transfer of power. Sensitive to the issue given the facts of the current US presidency, the State Department refused to speak to the candidacy of Ilham Aliyev, whose father, Heidar, the current leader, announced his retirement on Thursday, clearing the way for his son to succeed him. "The withdrawal of President Aliyev is an internal matter for Azerbaijan," spokesman Richard Boucher said. "We look forward to free and fair presidential elections on October 15th," he told reporters. "It's very important to us that these elections meet the standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "We've long made that clear and worked toward that end," Boucher said before testily answering a question about whether Washington would prefer to see an eight-year period in which an Aliyev was not president of the country. "We don't pick people's candidates," Boucher snapped. "We don't pick their candidates, we just ask that they hold free and fair elections. "The voters of Azerbaijan should be allowed to decide who they want to vote for," he said. "We don't have any problem with the voters of Azerbaijan deciding who they want to vote for." The ailing Heidar Aliyev announced his retirement on Thursday after more than three decades in power, anointing Ilham as his chosen successor. In a message to the nation issued from the US clinic where he is being treated for heart failure, Aliyev said he was dropping out of the race and urged voters to back his son instead. (AFP)

PUTIN DEFENDS RIGHTS OF MESKHETIANS TO LEAVE RUSSIA

3 October

During a meeting with representatives of the Cossack community and World War II veterans in Krasnodar Krai on

3 October, President Putin said that Meskhetians have the right to return to their historic homeland and that this question has been raised with the leadership of Georgia more than once. However, Georgia's leadership "is not still ready to resolve this problem," Putin said. Putin added that while the "Meskhetian-Turks are living in Russia, they should live normally, observing our laws." Some 13,000 Meskhetians who live in Krasnodar Krai have been refused even temporary registration since October 2001. They also do not have the right to register their children and cannot lease land, which makes it difficult for them to survive since they are primarily agricultural workers. (RIA-Novosti)

POLLS OPEN IN CHECHNYA'S CONTROVERSIAL PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

5 October

Polls have opened in Russia's breakaway republic of Chechnya in a controversial presidential election, the first here since Russian troops poured in four years ago. The Russian authorities massively tightened security, deploying 15,000 soldiers and armoured personnel carriers to guard the 426 polling stations which opened at 8:00 am (0400 GMT). According to the electoral commission, 560,000 registered voters have a choice of seven candidates in a Kremlin-organized poll which Moscow pledged would be a free and fair opportunity for Chechens to choose their leader. But critics say, and many Chechens believe, that the election is heavily weighted in favor of Akhmad Kadyrov, Chechnya's Moscow-appointed administrator, whose chief rivals were either removed or forced out of the race. Kadyrov, 52, a mufti and one-time rebel who fought Russian troops during the first Russo-Chechen war, threw his lot in with Moscow at the start of the second campaign. However, his popularity had since plummeted and his hold on the republic is tenuous, with little or no improvement to ordinary Chechen lives, daily attacks on pro-Russian officials and rampant kidnappings blamed on his armed militia as often as on the guerrilla. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League are the only international organisations sending observers to the election, while Russian and European rights groups have refused to send observers to the poll. Polling stations also opened on the border with the neighboring republic of Ingushetia, to ensure that refugees who had fled their war-ravaged homeland to shelter in Ingushetian shantytowns could also cast their votes. (AFP)

UN TO SEND MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN

6 October

The United Nations Security Council has announced it will send a mission to Afghanistan to investigate ways to strengthen peace-keeping operations in the country. In recent months there has been a marked increase in the number of attacks by Taliban fighters. The UN mission will observe the international peace keeping force, Isaf, which is led by Nato and only operates in the capital, Kabul. For months the Afghan administration has been calling on the international community to expand the peacekeeping force and extend its

brief. Nearly two years after the fall of the Taliban regime there are almost daily attacks by remnants of the group. Over 300 people have been killed since the beginning of August. The UN mission is due to arrive in Afghanistan at the end of October. Earlier a Nato spokesman told the BBC that there was a willingness within the organization to expand operations beyond Kabul, subject to further military advice. A number of options are being considered, including the creation of so called islands of security in several of Afghanistan's provincial towns. Any change to the peace-keeping mandate requires approval by the United Nations Security Council. (BBC)

PARLIAMENTARIANS SEEK INFORMATION ON KAZAKHGATE BRIBERY CASE

6 October

Several members of the lower house of the Kazakh parliament have sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft asking to be informed of any progress in the investigation of the so-called Kazakhgate bribery case. The parliamentarians particularly asked to be informed of the names of any government officials implicated in the scandal. The deputies said their requests for information from Kazakh government agencies have been ignored, and some Kazakh officials have denied that there is an investigation under way in the United States. The Kazakhgate affair involves allegations that U.S. businessman James Giffen and others gave bribes to senior Kazakh officials, possibly including President Nursultan Nazarbaev. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

POLL: AR-NAMYS BEST-KNOWN PARTY IN KYRGYZSTAN

6 October

According to a national poll of 900 citizens conducted by a Bishkek polling service in September, the best-known political party in Kyrgyzstan is the opposition Ar-Namys Party of imprisoned former Vice President Feliks Kulov. Forty-one percent of respondents were unable to name any party, and 66.1 percent were unable to name a party they trust. Thirty-five percent were aware of the Ar-Namys Party, although only 17 percent of respondents said they trust it. The communists -- presumably both communist parties taken together -- were known by 25.2 percent of respondents and trusted by 14 percent, while the socialist Ata-Meken Party was known by 24.8 percent and trusted by 14 percent. Other parties were known by less than 20 percent and trusted by 10 percent or less. (RFE/RL)

DEFENSE MINISTER SAYS RUSSIA COULD USE FORCE TO DEFEND ITS COMPATRIOTS IN CIS

6 October

Speaking to journalists in Reykjavik en route to an official visit to North and South America, Sergei Ivanov outlined situations in which Moscow might carry out a preemptive military strike under the terms of its new military doctrine. Ivanov said Russia might carry out a preemptive military

strike if there is a distinct, clear, and inevitable military threat to the country. Moscow might also opt for such a measure if it is threatened with reduced access to regions of the world where it has crucial economic or financial interests.

Furthermore, Russia might use its military might within the CIS if a complex, unstable situation develops or if there is a direct threat to Russian citizens or ethnic Russians, Ivanov said. He added, however, that he sees no such threat within the CIS now and that military force would only be used if all other means, including the application of international sanctions, have been exhausted. (RFE/RL)

ACTING PRESIDENT WINS CHECHNYA VOTE

6 October

Officials declared Chechnya's Kremlin-appointed leader the winner in the region's presidential vote, a widely expected outcome after his main challengers withdrew or were removed from an election condemned by critics as a sham but promoted by Moscow as a step toward peace. With more than 77 percent of the votes counted, acting President Akhmad Kadyrov had 81.1 percent, regional election commission chairman Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov told reporters in Grozny on Monday. Kadyrov said he would ask the Russian parliament to renew an amnesty that was offered to rebels during the summer and expired in September. He said 171 fighters had surrendered under the amnesty and that many of them were now serving in his security service, headed by his son Ramzan, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency. Kadyrov's security service is widely feared and accused of kidnappings and killings. Some voters said they shared the Kremlin's conviction that the election — held as the war enters its fifth year — was a sign of civil order returning to Chechnya. No Western observers were present

for the low-tech voting. At some polling places, paper ballots were dropped into taped-up cardboard cartons. Human rights advocates questioned the fairness of a vote held during a war and said the election was heavily tilted in favor of Kadyrov. Major Western governments including the United States have been cautious about criticism, expressing hope that the vote can help foster a political solution of the conflict. The election was widely criticized after two candidates who rated higher than Kadyrov in early opinion polls disappeared from the ballot — one withdrawing to become an adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin and the other barred from running by the Chechen Supreme Court. Six virtually unknown candidates ran against Kadyrov, who was once allied with the rebels. (AP)

ARMENIAN, RUSSIAN PRESIDENTS ATTEND FOUNDING CONGRESS OF ARMENIAN DIASPORA ORGANIZATION

7 October

Presidents Robert Kocharian and Putin attended the founding congress in Moscow on 6 October of the World Armenian Organization (WAO), a body founded by Union of Armenians of Russia Chairman Ara Abrahamian. In an interview published in "Gazeta" on 6 October, Abrahamian listed the new organization's goals as strengthening Armenian statehood, achieving international recognition of the 1915 genocide, resolving the Karabakh conflict, and creating an international holding company to promote trade and investment by emigre Armenians in the economies of Armenia and Russia. He predicted that Armenian entrepreneurs would provide start-up capital amounting to more than \$100 million. (RFE/RL)

