



**BIWEEKLY BRIEFING**

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Wednesday/May 19, 2004

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Lord Robertson, former Secretary General of NATO, some time ago highlighted his perception of the growing importance of the South Caucasus by noting that "the more secure our neighbors are the more secure we are...European security first of all depends on how well our neighbors are protected." These states are looking to the NATO Summit in Istanbul in June for real change in their relationship with the Alliance, pushing for closer partnership or in some cases, future invitations to membership. Is this a realistic goal? Are they ready to be contributing members to the Alliance or only users? Should it be seen as only a win or lose decision?

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## 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](http://www.cacianalyst.org)) and described below.

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### **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](mailto:svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se) and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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## AJARIA'S FAILED SECESSION AND RUSSIA'S CAUCASIAN CHOICES

Pavel Baev

*It was not only Mikhail Saakashvili who was taken by surprise with his overnight triumph over mutinous Ajaria on May 6. When besieged Ajarian leader Aslan Abashidze in a very physical way destroyed his bridges just a few days prior to his escape to Moscow, many observers in the U.S., Europe and Russia saw yet another violent secessionist conflict in the Caucasus as a nearly unavoidable prospect. Ajarians, however, were of a different opinion – and rose in thousands to insist on it. There are still many questions about this miraculous conflict resolution, and some of the most puzzling of those concern the role of Russia. Indeed, why did Moscow wash its hands over Abashidze and what is the game-plan behind its self-restraint?*

**BACKGROUND:** During Georgia's time of troubles in the early 1990s, Ajaria remained an 'island of stability' that was secured primarily through tough bargaining with Tbilisi. Aslan Abashidze for more than a decade had every reason to be satisfied with the deal: he traded a symbolic recognition of Tbilisi's sovereignty for a real and virtually unlimited control over his family domain. Backing from Moscow was always an important chip in this bargaining, so while the Georgian authorities demanded the withdrawal of all Russian military bases, Batumi warmly welcomed the Russian 12<sup>th</sup> military base and encouraged local young men to enlist for service there. In order to supplement these 'strategic' ties, Ajaria also tried to build economic links to Russia, particularly targeting Moscow as a source of investments. Russia, however, has shown more interest in acquiring undervalued assets (primarily, energy infrastructure) in Georgia proper, seeing Ajaria as peripheral to key economic crossroads in the region. Nevertheless, befriending Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov, Abashidze felt quite safe about his reign and refrained from experiments with constructing an Ajarian ethnic identity. All these power balances and bargaining frameworks were upset in November 2003 with the meteoric rise to power of a new Georgian leader. Mikhail Saakashvili has mobilized every source of public frustration with the 'ancient regime' and skillfully exploited Moscow's irritation with Eduard Shevardnadze for staging his revolution (which saw quite a few smashed noses as well as some roses). Receiving a huge but short-term political credit for revitalizing Georgia's long-derailed state-building project, he had to deliver Ajaria – but outplaying Russia appeared to be an ambition too far.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Saakashvili arrived to the final showdown with Abashidze in early May by navigating through several Ajarian crises where he sought not that much to prevail as rather to demonstrate, first of all to Moscow, that his rival is a spent force. It was to Moscow that he paid his first presidential visit, conveying to Putin not only his respect for Russia's power but also his personal admiration for Putin's leadership style. Abashidze responded by activating his own networks – and was greatly emboldened by Luzhkov's impromptu visit in March. In retrospect, that visit could have been quite unhelpful since Putin harbors deep suspicions about Luzhkov and has shown reluctance to embrace his initiatives. The top brass do not have much

influence in the Kremlin these days, but those bureaucrats with an FSB background who do (often called *siloviki*) would most probably gloat at every Saakashvili failure. In early May, he appeared to walk straight into a self-made trap with only small caliber military instruments at his disposal and dire warnings from Russia and Europe against putting them to a practical use. Had he attempted a miniature 'Shock-&-Awe' operation, Russia quite possibly would have effectively, even if indirectly, backed Abashidze's motley forces, as it did in Abkhazia in October 1992. Putin's *siloviki* were ready to call Saakashvili's bluff – but were not prepared for his 'stealth attack' with overtaking Batumi by its own citizens. This blindness to the visibly maturing outcome might appear to be a professional blunder that could have been caused only by a serious relaxation during the extended May holidays. However, a structural explanation can also be advanced: prevailing perspectives in Moscow are shaped by a firm control over political life in Russia itself, and validated by suppression of every opposition in most post-Soviet states, from Azerbaijan to Kyrgyzstan. Abashidze was expected to stay in charge and prove that he commanded loyalty that could not be corrupted by Soros's 'petty money'. Key figures in Putin's court could not master enough courage to challenge their boss' sympathy (even if lukewarm) to Saakashvili, while Putin himself was most probably preoccupied with preparations for the inauguration. Thus, Russia seems to have arrived to a balanced and constructive policy by default, and Igor Ivanov was dispatched to Batumi with his proverbial 'kiss of death' when forceful options were no longer available. His 'surprise' visit to Tbilisi on May 17 had only one aim: to discourage any further experiments with 'exporting the revolution', but nobody in Moscow expected him to collect any dividends for delivering Ajaria.

**CONCLUSIONS:** It is entirely possible that Moscow has allowed Tbilisi to re-establish control over Ajaria following its own multi-purpose strategy for the Caucasus. However, most Russian policy analysts would probably agree that the simplest explanations centered on elementary decision-making failures should be tried first and then the 'Occam razor' could be applied to more complicated schemes and conspiracy theories. And if indeed it was a series of miscalculations that resulted in the 'loss' of Ajaria, Moscow would be urgently looking for an opportunity to settle the

score. Saakashvili, with his pro-Western orientation and course of sovereignty-building, remains an unacceptable figure for many if not most in Putin's narrow circle of trusted

aides. They could be growing impatient to wait for him to break his political neck in yet another reckless challenge.

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## SECURITY, GOVERNANCE, AND ECONOMIC REFORM IN SHIDA KARTLI

For the first time since Georgia's independence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 26 April deployed police in Proni Gorge while increasing police presence in Liakhvi Gorge—territories considered part of the "conflict zone" of Georgian-controlled South Ossetia. While in concert with the national anti-corruption campaign, these moves also represent an effort to exert control over these lawless territories, and perhaps to establish Georgia's territorial integrity.

These reform measures in Shida Kartli region combine with other efforts to constitute the largest anti-corruption campaign in the country. The new governor, Mikheil Kareli, aims to install loyal, law-abiding leaders in his region in order to institute governance, security, and economic reforms that will attract investment and prompt economic recovery. Tangible activities are just getting underway.

"Shida Kartli has been the region most active in combating corruption," says its new governor, Mikheil Kareli. Indeed, at the time of my first visit to Gori (the seat of Shida Kartli's administration and home of Stalin) on 23 April, my meetings with Governor Kareli were interrupted by the arrival of General Prosecutor Irakli Okruashvili and Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Baramidze regarding an operation to arrest suspected criminals in Liakhvi Gorge. Significantly, the now famous national anti-corruption campaign was launched in Gori by the then-governor, now-general prosecutor, Irakli Okruashvili in December 2003. From the outset, he targeted the primary channel for contraband and criminal activity in Georgia—the roads leading from Tskhinvali to Gori. He even blew some up, though criminals reportedly repaired the roads overnight.

To make President Saakashvili's security, governance, and economic reform programs a success, the new governor must aggressively curtail crime. Tskhinvali, the capital of separatist South Ossetia, is a primary transit point of contraband that enters Georgia from Russia and ends up on the Ergneti black market—the largest in Georgia and referred to as a criminals' Harrods—just outside Tskhinvali. Georgia controls a mere twenty percent of Ergneti territory, and Tskhinvali calls itself independent and has its own authorities.

Regional Chief of Police Aleko Sukhitashvili explained that "the issues between Gori and Tskhinvali are the hardest to combat in Shida Kartli." There are literally dozens of roads running between Tskhinvali and Gori. "Ossetian criminals just need 10 minutes to cross the border near Ergneti and to get to Tskhinvali. Once there they are home free." More precisely, there is no fixed border with South Ossetia—only undefined conflict zones divide the two. Thus, no permanent customs control or border guards can be posted between Georgian and Ossetian-controlled lands. Moreover, doing so would unconstitutionally establish an official border within Georgia. For now, it is lawless territory.

Governor Kareli explained that the primary function of police in Liakhvi and Proni Gorges is to control contraband and decrease crime. 64 policemen with "special equipment" operate in the gorges. Nineteen are in Proni alone. "For the last 13 years, since Georgia's break from the Soviet Union, there had only been a symbolic Georgian police presence in Liakhvi and no police presence in Proni. The road to Avnevi, the administrative centre of Proni Gorge, is one of the most dangerous of the conflict zone areas. Now, for the first time, Kareli claims, "police control the road." To further tackle corruption and establish control, the governor is in the process of moving some local authority and administrative offices to the two gorges.

Under directives from Baramidze and Okruashvili to more accurately record crimes, the police gather information, log cases, and send a weekly report to the prosecutor's office, which then conducts an audit. Sukhitashvili explained, "Under the former government, rather than risk not being able to 'close' cases, police simply did not record crimes. 'Open' cases were bad for careers." Worse, police were often complicit in crime. He hopes that recording all crimes as they occur will eventually lead to more case closures because "criminals make mistakes somewhere along the line". To demonstrate progress, he noted that the number of recorded cases in the period January to March 2004 was up 208 cases from the same period in 2003 (from 249 to 457). This progress may be due to more public confidence in authorities.

Because of Shida Kartli's dependence on agriculture, corruption in the agricultural sector

is the most important focus next to contraband. According to Governor Kareli, the head of the Gori Agricultural Department, Zakro Mazmishvili, was arrested allegedly for "illegally distributing land among close friends, relatives, and members of the old [Shevardnadze] government, as well as to people who bribed him over a four-year period." Two weeks ago, Kareli took the land recently reclaimed and redistributed it to villagers throughout Gori. Another prominent arrest was that of the Gori agricultural market director for evading taxes.

Continual waves of replacements from the post of governor down to local officials evidence governance reforms in Shida Kartli. Governor Kareli replaced three of four deputies and is restructuring the governor's apparatus. Most district gamgebelis (municipal authorities) have resigned. District police chiefs have been replaced. So was the head of the Education Department. Last week prosecutors stepped down. Kareli expects new tax authorities soon. Replacements total nearly 100, while the Governor fired another 100. For those who do not resign voluntarily, Governor Kareli sends a letter requesting their replacement to President Saakashvili or their respective ministries. New staff or officials will have a one-month period to demonstrate their ability to perform well, or they too will be replaced.

Governor Kareli stressed that the government's aim behind the anti-corruption campaigns and reforms is to provide a sound platform for domestic and international investment and, thus, economic recovery (which will ensure national security). While he has no substantive experience working with the international community, he welcomes local governance development programs and is intent upon taking whatever measure is necessary to secure foreign investment. He is eager to see training programs accompany future projects. The success of Shida Kartli's new leadership will become more apparent with time and once legal and institutional reforms are implemented on a national level. However, the new authorities fear that without future international support and economic development, their efforts will fail.

**Theresa Freese**

## IS THE SHANGHAI COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION CRACKING?

**Stephen Blank**

*On May 12, 2004 Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov gave a startling interview to Nezavisimaya Gazeta, in which he not only lambasted U.S. military presence in Central Asia but also publicly expressed opposition to Chinese military presence in the region. While denunciations of America are legion, the warning to China was the first instance in a long time of latent Sino-Russian tensions coming to the fore. Should this tendency continue, it could seriously hamper the effectiveness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.*

**BACKGROUND:** Trubnikov, whose remit comprises Russian relations with CIS members and intelligence sharing and collaboration with Washington in the war on terrorism, strongly denounced U.S. military policy and presence in Central Asia even though he has frequently extolled the cooperation with Washington in the war against terrorism. In reply to a question about Russia's view of foreign forces in Central Asia, he went on to state that Moscow opposed all foreign troop presence there, specifically citing Chinese forces and going out of his way to do so. Trubnikov emphasized that Central Asia is a sphere of vital Russian interests and that those governments, presumably including the U.S. government, have agreements with Moscow as to when the U.S. forces will leave. Yet he also voiced the complaint that he believes America will not leave Central Asia after the war on terrorism ends.

While these denunciations of American policy are standard for Moscow, though they have been increasing in frequency and stridency lately, the open criticism of China is astonishing. China is Russia's ally in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO is a genuine collective security organization whose founding treaty permits or even calls upon members to send troops to defend other signatories who may be attacked by terrorists, insurgents, separatists, etc. Thus China's right to send troops and conduct exercises with other members, including Russia, is recognized by international treaty and incontestable. Indeed, China has conducted such exercises with Kyrgyzstan in 2002-03 and in 2003 with members of the SCO.

The SCO grew out of the earlier border delimitation treaty of 1996 between China and all the post-Soviet republics. Its transformation from an organization intended to build confidence over borders into a collective security organization was largely a Chinese initiative. Its aims were to fight terrorism, insurgency, separatism, etc., in Central Asia, and for China, particularly in Xinjiang. Second, it was supposed to become a vehicle to obstruct further American inroads into Central Asia. Third, it was a centerpiece of Sino-Russian collaboration, and thus fourth, China has proclaimed it as a model for what it wants to achieve in other parts of Asia with its neighbors. As a result, Beijing has made full use of its provisions to increase its military presence in Central Asia as provided for by the treaty and has pushed hard to upgrade the SCO into a multi-dimensional security organization that also harmonizes trade and economic issues

among its signatories. Russia, for its part, has been pushing more strongly its own Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with Central Asian governments and it clearly has aimed all along to create an exclusive sphere of influence in Central Asia as well as the entire former USSR.

**IMPLICATIONS:** However, until now, despite considerable criticism of Washington's presence in Central Asia and considerable scholarly and expert writing about latent Sino-Russian tensions, no Russian official made any negative remarks about the Chinese military presence there. After all, both states were formal allies thanks to their bilateral treaty and the SCO treaty and charter. Indeed, Russian and Chinese officials missed no chance to stress the identity and congruence of both capitals' views on international affairs and pending issues. This is what makes Trubnikov's deliberate remarks about opposition to Chinese military presence in Central Asia so eye-catching. In the past, many scholars and analysts have speculated about the possibility of Sino-Russian rivalry in Asia in general and Central Asia in particular, but there had never been any overt sign of such important differences regarding Central Asia, although Russia clearly sought to restrict China's access to energy sources there. Moreover, recent official visits had once again provided the occasion for bilateral statements of an identity of views and of growing friendship between China and Russia on a host of issues.

Trubnikov's remarks suggest that behind this carefully constructed facade of amity and unanimity there are serious tensions and divergences of view between Beijing and Moscow. Apparently, Russia resents Chinese efforts to expand its capability and pretexts for projecting power into Central Asia that limits Russia's ability to do so, especially as Russian military power is being forced out of Tajikistan and the U.S. bases in Central Asia show no sign of going away. Those two points were incidentally among the negative signs that Trubnikov brought up in his interview. Tensions in the bilateral Russian-Chinese economic relationships in Asia include the issues of pipelines to China, the direction of the Trans-Korean railroad, a centerpiece of Russian policy in Korea, and Chinese efforts to gain access to energy companies in Russia or Central Asia. But until now, such tensions have never been publicly admitted and the protestations of unanimity have outweighed the statements of difference and rivalry, despite mounting evidence of the latter. It remains to be seen if China's efforts

to breathe life into the SCO's military and other organizations will now meet with Russian obstructions. Already in 2002, then Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov complained that the SCO was ineffectual, as was proven on September 11, 2001 and its aftermath. Now, apparently it may be becoming too effective for Moscow's taste and too much of an instrument of Chinese, as opposed to Russian, or even collective security policy.

**CONCLUSIONS:** If there is dissension over the SCO and Chinese power projection into Central Asia, this will manifest itself in one way or another and the organization's effectiveness will stagnate or even decline. More interestingly, if open dissension between Moscow and Beijing erupts, even if it remains bounded by diplomatic conventions and similar interests on other issues, this will undoubtedly affect local governments in Central Asia and Russian and

Chinese policies there, and potentially U.S. policy and its military presence in Central Asia. Sino-Russian relations matter greatly to whether local governments will become more or less amenable to a U.S. military presence whatever form it might take, as well as for energy policy. Obviously because Trubnikov's remarks were only the first sign of a possible rift in the SCO, only time will tell as regards the answers to these questions. It nevertheless does illustrate the need to monitor the relationship, given the possibility that another major turn of the wheel in Central Asia's international relationships is about to take place.

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## KAZAKHSTAN IS SET TO ROOT OUT CANNABIS FIELDS

Due to its geographical location, Kazakhstan has become notorious as a widely used linkage between the narcotics traders from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and drug purchasers in Russia. Worse still, the easily available and considerably cheap hemp from the Chu valley in the South contributes to the spread of drug addiction. Recently the government made public its promising project to put cannabis fields in the Chu valley to good use.

Easily accessible fields of wild Chu hemp cover vast expanses of the Moyunkum Desert. In the past century, as chronicled by old-timers, local government planted Indian hemp in some areas. The purpose was to stop the advancing sands to save pasture lands. But within decades, the effort boomeranged with no longer manageable expansion of wild hemp which drew drug dealers from the farthest parts of the country.

There have been many attempts in the past to get rid of the Chu hemp, including the use of herbicides to destroy plantations. But the only visible result was the irreparable contamination of the surrounding habitat. The hemp continued to grow, threatening to spread to inhabiting areas. The plants survived even after state inspectors set fires and ploughed up the whole area.

In 1992 the joint-stock company "Asia" undertook to put an end to hemp by way of reprocessing it for industrial use. The project was approved by government. But it turned out soon that the project was not worth the money and effort spent and technically unfeasible. An American company also showed a great interest in similar projects and presented a business proposal highly profitable for Kazakhstan. The joint enterprise was fiercely obstructed by local police and authorities. For them hemp fields of the Chu valley have been the source of illegal income. "We spent many days paying visit after visit to local departments of the Interior Ministry and the Committee of National Security, driving home our concept of cultivating these fields to turn them to economic profit. All our arguments

were lost on them. Finally they confiscated our first harvest of hemp saying that we were intending to produce hashish from hemp leaves. We had to abandon the project. I have every reason to believe that top placed police officials have links to drug dealers. They can't put up with the thought that the Chu hemp is slipping away from their grip" recalls Sagyn Tokumbayev, one of the project managers.

A new ray of hope for anti-drug campaigners and environmentalists beamed up when on January 11 of last year, the government issued a special decree on Chu valley which opened the way for Kazakh-German cooperation in reprocessing the Chu hemp for industrial purposes. FESA International, a Kazakh company, sealed a partnership with Germany's "Treuhand AG" from Berlin to implement a joint project of construction of hemp reprocessing plant. The construction of the joint enterprise "FESA Textile" began in April this year and will be completed in December 2005. It was calculated that the project demands 7,5 billion tenge of total investment.

If everything goes on as planned, the plant will produce 1750 tons of hemp oil annually. What is more important for Kazakhstan, the industrially reprocessed hemp is expected to be an excellent substitute for cotton. In Kazakhstan with its scarce water resources, cotton production has become an unprofitable business. Due to its low quality, Kazakh cotton is unmarketable and is largely consumed domestically. The Kazakh-German enterprise promises also to produce hemp-based textile products, heat-resistant insulation materials, fiber plates, perfumery and pharmaceutical products.

According to Serik Kulmanov, general director of FESA Textile, \$54 million is supposed to be invested at the initial stage of the construction of the plant. The joint project was dubbed as a "revolutionary breakthrough" by officials in combating drug dealing. The new enterprise should

create 300 workplaces for the unemployed of the region.

Wild hemp stretches over 138,000 hectares of the Moyunkum, enough to produce 145,000 tons of marijuana annually. According to independent data nearly 50% of the youth in the Chu is addicted to home-produced drugs. "Unemployed young people are bored to death not knowing how to idle away the time. Whenever they get together they eat spoonfuls of half-fried hemp mixing it with cooking oil or smoke it rolling it into a shape of a cigarette. The first time I smoked the hemp I had a sensation of floating in the air like a cloud. Then I was overcome by nausea. I dragged myself home somehow. Next morning my mother looked at me reproachfully but didn't say a word. I felt awfully ashamed and from that day I cut hemp-using friends out of my life" says a former drug addict from the Chu region.

Some time ago, officials considered the possibility of legalizing some kinds of "soft narcotics". But it is hard to tell exactly which drugs can be categorized as soft ones. Some experts believe that *nasybai*, a kind of a chewing tobacco popular among villagers, has the same intoxicating effect as a soft drug. In recent years, young Kazakhs are increasingly taking to *nasybai*, normally used by old people.

The construction of the hemp reprocessing plant can bring Kazakhstan not only economic and social gains. It can also help the country to reaffirm its commitment to combat drug use in the eyes of the international community. Despite all its undeniable pluses, the Kazakh-German project is only a part of the solution of the drug problem. To reach a decisive victory over drugs, Kazakhstan has to start with uprooting unemployment among the youth and corruption at the highest level of the governing bodies.

**Marat Yermukanov**

## NATO's OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD REGIONAL STABILITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

**William D. O'Malley & Roger N. McDermott**

*Lord Robertson, former Secretary General of NATO, some time ago highlighted his perception of the growing importance of the South Caucasus by noting that "the more secure our neighbors are the more secure we are...European security first of all depends on how well our neighbors are protected." These states are looking to the NATO Summit in Istanbul in June for real change in their relationship with the Alliance, pushing for closer partnership or in some cases, future invitations to membership. Is this a realistic goal? Are they ready to be contributing members to the Alliance or only users? Should it be seen as only a win or lose decision?*

**BACKGROUND:** The militaries of the South Caucasus states are facing significant problems and challenges as they each work to strengthen the foundation of their armed forces and adjust to their new and rapidly evolving security environment. Although these states are involved internationally, the military commitments remain small and supported by assets and personnel from only a few elite formations, with most of the force still struggling with readiness and capabilities issues. These states are in the midst of reform programs that they know must be effectively completed, but they are most challenged in *how* to proceed. To this end, they are looking outside for necessary guidance and military assistance to support the process of change and the development of the skilled, professional personnel to both manage and command the planning elements and combat assets of their future force.

In looking for military assistance, the principal provider was initially Russia, representing the link to the Soviet Army that they all knew and whose equipment and other assets they inherited. But a number of Western militaries are making inroads into the region and are providing a broad range of assistance, with the Turkish military as the principal mentor for both Azerbaijan and Georgia; post-9/11, the U.S. has become more directly involved. Although Armenia is now receiving nominal military assistance from Western states, it remains heavily tied to Russia for its security assistance. While the bilateral Western military assistance programs are providing positive inputs, they are not as well focused or managed as they could be, ensuring that what is provided fits into an established, time-phased national reform program. The national staffs generally have been ineffective in planning and managing these programs and seek outside help in enhancing the managerial efficiency of these programs, but more importantly developing the staff officers and procedures necessary to successfully do this on their own. Currently, they are looking to NATO and its member states for the critical training and guidance needed, especially in Azerbaijan and Georgia.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The U.S.-led train-and-equip programs in Georgia has been effective; its continuation is sought as Azerbaijan seeks a similar one, focusing not only on the military but also on counterterrorism training for internal, border, and coastal-guard capabilities for better protection of

their maritime borders and economic zones. Other key sectors where assistance is required are air sovereignty through the establishment of air situation data exchanges with NATO, as well as to accelerate the upgrading of civilian and military airports to NATO-compatible standards. However, the U.S. cannot be expected to sustain this burden on its own; this is where NATO comes in. The Alliance's presence in the South Caucasus is most visible in the growing role of its Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. In the 1990s, NATO's relationship with this region, which Russia regards as in its sphere of influence, evolved very slowly, restricted by ongoing ethnic conflict and the seemingly intractable issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. PfP, however, became NATO's principal means for deepening its military cooperation with the states of the South Caucasus, as it proved to be an effective security cooperation tool, not least in allowing inexperienced defense structures to learn from the experience of western militaries, but also in facilitating bilateral relations with NATO member states.

PfP contributed to the military education and professionalism of partner states, promoted democratic control over the armed forces and in general terms promoted democratic values. NATO was uniquely qualified to carry out this task, providing a framework for such large-scale efforts. Moreover, the new NATO accession states have recently confronted many of the same challenges that the states of the South Caucasus currently are working through. In the South Caucasus, this was especially important as PfP helped in the building of security systems as well as structures under unfavorable political and economic conditions. It has succeeded in this arena and all three states are currently involved with NATO in at least one peacekeeping operation. PfP also has given them broader access to the Alliance community.

Beyond PfP, the Alliance is looking for ways to better address regional security concerns, through the Planning and Review Process (PARP), the development of Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP), and other initiatives. In its current configuration and management, many question whether PfP can provide the assistance envisioned. To meet evolving needs, it appears that a strategic change is required in the nature of the program or in the relationship of the partner states to the Alliance. As part of a regional security concept,



applied on a country-by-country basis, the Alliance can address: peace-support and conflict-resolution efforts, traditional and new types of threats to security, acceleration and broadening of security sector reforms.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Istanbul summit provides the right forum and timing for political recognition of Georgia and Azerbaijan's aspirations to eventual membership. Such recognition can take the form of offering them a clear prospect of membership through Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs) leading to Membership Action Plans (MAPs). With established benchmarks, standards and timetables for progress, such plans hold built-in incentives to the aspiring countries, as well as non-declaratory political recognition of their membership goals.

In sum, anchoring the South Caucasus to the Euro-Atlantic system begins by projecting security into this region. The costs and the draw on resources would be a fraction of U.S. and NATO efforts elsewhere; the social and political environment in this region is friendly and receptive; and the strategic payoff to the Alliance would be of historic

proportions. Until now, the U.S. has taken the lead in this effort, with only nominal support from other Alliance members. However, the EU seems at present to be revising its earlier decision to leave the South Caucasus out of the 'Wider Europe' framework, inciting hope that Europe too could increase its contributions to building security in the South Caucasus. NATO's and the EU's new members, familiar with this region and sharing their recent experience as post-Soviet legacy states and NATO aspirants, are enthusiastic about contributing to this effort.

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## PERCEPTIONS OF NATO'S FUTURE IN AZERBAIJAN

Discussions of NATO membership and the basing of foreign military forces in Azerbaijan have led to public discussions of the issue, following high-level U.S. visits, most recently U.S. Deputy Secretary of State of Richard Armitage.

Already in May 1994, Azerbaijan joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program, PfP. Since 1996, official Baku has been increasingly active in the framework of PfP. Since 1996, Azerbaijani military representatives take part in exercises, workshops and trainings in skills development.

The recent visits of top U.S. officials to Baku take place in the context of the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and speculations in the region of a possible U.S. military intervention in Iran. This testifies to the interest of official Washington in strengthening its position in the strategically important South Caucasus region. One most important visit was that of the U.S. European Command, led by General Charles World. Other visitors included the Commander of the U.S. navy in Europe and U.S. Supreme Commander of NATO forces in Northern Europe, as well as several ambassadors.

During the final press conference, General World declared that the U.S. plans to hold joint maneuvers on the struggle against extremism and the trafficking in weapons of mass destruction in Azerbaijan. He categorically denied rumors that the U.S. is going to create military bases on the territory of Azerbaijan. One top military official

qualified the planned presence of mobile forces in Azerbaijan not as military bases, but, more likely, as temporary means for coordination of efforts in the struggle with transnational terrorism.

According to local analysts, one result of military-to-military contacts between Azerbaijan and the U.S. was an agreement to base mobile divisions of the U.S. armed forces on

Azerbaijan's territory.

Meanwhile, particular attention was attached to military issues during Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage's visit at the end of March. He highly assessed the cooperation between the two countries in the struggle against terrorism. Armitage furthermore denied plans of basing mobile U.S. military bases in Azerbaijan. "This question was not discussed, since the U.S. does not intend to place its bases in Azerbaijan".

According to Azerbaijan state news agency AzerTaj, president Ilham Aliyev during his meeting with Mr. Armitage emphasized that the two countries' military cooperation is at a very high level. "We are certain that this cooperation will be more effective. Azerbaijan supports the U.S. in carrying out antiterrorist operations. We are allies, and this policy will be continued".

Former U.S. ambassador to NATO Robert Hunter's statement attracted public attention in Azerbaijan. "Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan show a great interest to join the alliance. The Caucasus is far from NATO and Europe -

strategically and politically. The majority of the Alliance's present members would not commit to ensure Georgia's security. The same is true for Azerbaijan which is still at war with Armenia.

The possible basing of U.S. forces in Azerbaijan has upset Islamist forces in the country, who see it as a step in the complete blockade of Iran and as a preparation for a strike against Iran. Predictably, Russian State Duma members have also been alarmed. MP Nikolay Pavlov asked for a plenary session to discuss the decision of Ukrainian authorities to admit NATO

forces, and the basing of NATO divisions in Azerbaijan.

Former Presidential advisor Vafa Guluzade noted that the concept of "military bases" has already changed. "Military bases of the last century were military stations where soldiers lived with families etc. Americans have introduced new ideology to the theory of military bases. Actually they need a friendly country which will be ready to accept U.S. military forces when it will be necessary. They also need particular infrastructure to be deployed in case of need and accept particular number of US forces.

In spite of the unclear status of a possible U.S. military presence in Azerbaijan, a process of establishing a real bridgehead aimed to expand U.S. military presence in the region is beginning to emerge.

**Gulnara Ismailova**

## COLLECTIVE SECURITY EXERCISES IN CENTRAL ASIA: WRONG MEDICINE?

**Aziz Soltobaev**

*A recent wave of terror attacks in two Uzbek cities Tashkent and Bukhara has dramatically shifted perception of the ruling government of its policy. Uzbek Government stated the events to be part of the global terrorist threat and blamed Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and other Al Qaeda-linked extremist organization for conducting the terrorist acts. Presently Uzbekistan, a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, is considering boosting military cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, in order to enforce military power to fight against terrorism.*

**BACKGROUND:** The Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF) of the Collective Security Treaty are designed to combat international extremist groups. This year, collective security exercises will be conducted in a different way than previously. Military units and observers of members states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will take part in massive scale tactical exercises, although they are not part of the CSTO. Country representation in the military exercises will be expanded by the participation of Uzbekistan and China as observers this year. Currently the SCO includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The "Frontier-2004" exercises will be conducted in two stages on the area of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with the participation of Russian aviation located in Kyrgyzstan, 50km from the U.S.-led Coalition air force base at Manas. The scheme of the exercises is based on the battle tactics of the Islamist insurgents during the intrusions into Batken oblast, Kyrgyzstan, in 1999 and 2000. It is assumed that the CRRF will become the force that will enable the member-states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization to repulse attacks of Islamic extremists on Central Asian territory.

However, the feared insurgents seem to have switched to new battle tactics. After the Antiterrorist Coalition mission in Afghanistan that seemed to destroy most of Al Qaeda's operations in the region as well as its ally, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the remaining terrorist groupings are implementing the next stage of their plan. The IMU, which strives to establish an Islamic Caliphate based in the Ferghana valley, aims to influence first the population of Uzbek enclaves on Kyrgyz and Tajik territory, then inhabitants of the Ferghana valley more broadly, and eventually the whole Central Asian region to topple governing regimes. The IMU has changed its tactics of large-scale and massive intrusions to targeting vast territories, with smaller and more widespread impact such as terrorist acts and local clashes involving civilians.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The decision by Uzbekistan and China to cooperate with CSTO members on the military stage shows their inclination to use cooperative mechanisms against terrorist groups, in a sense helping revive regionalism in Central Asia, at least in the security field. China attempts to strengthen its presence in Xingjiang province, eliminating the

activities of extremist organizations such as the East Turkestan Liberation Movement. Previously, China conducted military maneuvers with Kyrgyzstan with the involvement of large scale forces. Uzbekistan had until recently not indicated it would participate in the exercises, but the terrorist acts in Uzbekistan as well as recent moves by Russia to revive its strategic relationship with Islam Karimov's government seem to have changed Tashkent's attitude. This has boosted attempts to increase military cooperation among states member to the SCO and CSTO variously. In June 2004, the SCO summit will be conducted in Tashkent, and could help clarify Uzbekistan's view on regional military cooperation.

CSTO member-countries have significantly expanded military cooperation. In the last six months, the numbers of the CRRF have doubled. The number of battalions in the forces increased from four to nine, and manpower reached 4,500. Tajikistan contributed two new battalions and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia one each. Besides general purpose forces, plans exist to create a unit of special forces.

Recently Russia provided Kyrgyzstan with up-to-date military equipment worth USD 3 million in military aid, as a second part of two packages. The first was provided when the Russian air force base was opened at Kant, outside Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek.

In spite of the increasing military cooperation and assistance among regional states, the apparent change of strategy on the part of the IMU could make this shield only a nominal one. The IMU clearly has no real power to wage direct insurgencies or military attack, and is capable neither to fight in Kyrgyz nor in Uzbek territory. For the foreseeable future, direct clashes as happened in Batken are unlikely; in fact the Batken events taught the insurgents to act in a different way.

An increasing observable trend has developed of smaller terrorist acts against government targets and civilians in the regional countries which have allowed the stationing of Antiterrorist coalition forces, conducting operations in Afghanistan, specifically Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Recently, the United States Government renewed its earlier warning that extremist Islamic groups may be planning terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens or interests in Kyrgyzstan. Prior this, Kyrgyz security services had once prevented a possible terrorist attack on the Manas air force base.

The IMU, much like the avowedly peaceful Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement, which shares the IMU aim to establish a Caliphate in Central Asia, earlier recruited members from poor families, as was the case in the insurgency of 1999. Presently, female terrorists that have been recorded in the recent events in Tashkent and Bukhara according to some reports come from well-educated families.

Increasing authoritarianism and continuing economic difficulties seem to boost the recruitment pool of the radical movements, as people seek rescue from poor living conditions in religious organizations. In Kyrgyzstan, a tendency of increasing Mosque attendance has also been recorded. In almost every village, new mosques are built, many funded by money from countries following the Wahhabi tradition. A part of the newly built mosques have still not passed official registration, which was launched three years ago.

**CONCLUSION:** Insurgent troops appear to be changing tactics from geographically large-scale actions to small

injections of terrorist attacks across on vast territory. The regional boost in military cooperation and assistance efforts would stand as a nominal shield against terrorists attacks. Yet both SCO and CSTO cooperation are designed to enable member countries to effectively mobilize an expanded CRRF in the case of a large-scale clash with Islamic militants. By contrast, these efforts are ill-placed to handle terrorist attacks of the type that recently occurred in Uzbekistan. It is unclear whether the events in Uzbekistan were a trendsetter, which will be repeated in other parts of Central Asia; But the current capacity of the IMU indicates that this is the most likely form of the threat in the near future. For all its show of force, the current military exercises may not be an effective way of addressing the threat.

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## IMPACT OF MILITARY SECTOR ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TAJIKISTAN

A group of experts from the Tajik government have been working for several years on a national military doctrine to determine further military reforms, yet the document is far from being complete. The process is slow due to the failure of military and political experts to identify what type and size of army Tajikistan needs in order to sustain internal security. Civil democratic control over the military forces is among the weakest in Tajikistan compared to other post-Soviet states. While a number of military reforms were implemented in the neighboring states, Tajikistan is still on the stage of constructing basic military legislation. The starting point for Tajikistan in terms of the formation of a military was different from other Central Asian countries. All post-Soviet military formations became the property of the 201<sup>st</sup> Motor Rifle division stationed in the country since many years and administered by Russia. The formation of the Tajik army since independence in 1991 can be divided into several phases. The time during 1993-1994 was a period of rapid registration of newly emerging armed formations within the Ministry of Defense. The first specialized battalions were created among former civilians who armed themselves at the beginning of the Tajik war. This was the first attempt to integrate armed formations into governmental troops. At that time, it was difficult to ascertain the precise quantity of active soldiers as there was a high degree of fluctuation of registered troops. A fundamental legislative base was established and a number of "umbrella" laws "On armed forces", "On universal service", "On defense" and "On rights and guarantees of military personnel and members of their families" were adopted.

In 1994-1997, as registration process had been completed, the Tajik government was able to take its first steps in military planning. In 1994 Emomali Rahmonov was elected the president and became the Commander-in-Chief of the national military.

The Peace Accord of 1997 reintegrated the Popular Front of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) and the governmental troops. As a result of recruitment of representatives from UTO into different governmental structures, control over the military was dispersed among power ministries and the president. After the peace agreement was formally achieved, many former soldiers wished to resign from the army, however it was difficult for the government to provide them with appropriate jobs. Four years of military operations made many former soldiers unable to compete in the job market. Although new legislation was introduced during the period after 1998 and institutionalization of the military continued, control over the military forces became more centralized. The number of UTO members in the government and the parliament decreased.

Data from international organizations indicates that state expenditure on the military amounts to ca. 4% of annual GDP. Local experts contend that during integration processes in the mid-1990s, the government was spending up to one third of the total state revenue on maintenance of the military, often incorporating funds from foreign aid. Such percentages can be compared with expenditures in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, where military development and a firm command over the army provide stability for political elites.

Official statements count ca 20-22,000 troops. However, according to the civilian Deputy Defense Minister of Tajikistan, the real number of Tajik internal troops could reach 100,000 people, including mobile troops, militia and the tax service. Annual army conscription in Tajikistan remains at a level as if there were a constant threat of war, but the military lacks resources for development.

In the beginning of this year, according to President Rahmonov's decree, the Presidential Guard will be transformed into a national guard. In

reality, this change does not promise any structural reorganization. The current Defense Minister, General-colonel Sherali Khairulloev has been holding his position for seven years. The Tajik parliament does not have access to reports on military finance or administration from power ministries. Moreover, the number of representatives from the UTO is well below the established quota. Annual military spending is determined without parliamentary consideration and the voice of civil society is insignificant. Independent media usually reports the perspective of military commanders who deny allegations of high corruption rates in security structures, widespread hazing and poor living conditions among soldiers.

The Tajik military, being considerably oversized, lacks potential for development. Unlike in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, no military industry is present in the country that would be able to provide independent domestic supply of ammunition. The country relies on foreign assistance and the army is bound to acquire all ammunition from abroad. Hence the army's ability to fight independently is limited.

After the end of the civil war, the UTO had a greater access to the military, but the number of representatives from the opposition in the government and parliament has decreased over the years. Centralized control, oversized military and high reliance on external resources complicates the formation of mid- and long-term security strategies for the maintenance of internal stability. Large military expenditures are paid at the expense of investments into the social and private economic sectors. The Tajik military hence has a long way to meaningful reform.

**Erica Marat**

## NEWS BITES

### **KYRGYZ CORRUPTION FIGHTER KILLED**

**5 May**

Unknown assailants gunned down Chynybek Aliev, the top anticorruption official at the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry, in Bishkek on 5 May. Aliev was shot several times at point-blank range on a crowded city street at 6:30 p.m. Although the attacker, or attackers, fled the scene, the police immediately blocked off roads leading into and out of the capital. Interior Ministry sources told ITAR-TASS that they are sure that Aliev's murder was a contract killing and not a random crime. At least seven high-profile contract killings have taken place in Kyrgyzstan over the last two months. (RIA-Novosti)

### **PAKISTAN PROTESTS AT US INCURSION**

**5 May**

The spokesman for the Pakistani military, Major-General Shaukat Sultan, says his government has lodged a protest with the United States over an incursion into Pakistani territory by US forces operating in Afghanistan. General Sultan said a few US troops had strayed into Pakistani territory near the Lwara Mandi area in North West Frontier Province while hunting for al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects. He said the US troops searched a few shops and a petrol station but turned back as soon as they were informed that they were in Pakistani territory. (BBC)

### **AJARIA WELCOMES GEORGIAN PRESIDENT**

**6 May**

President Mikhail Saakashvili has arrived in the province of Ajaria to scenes of jubilation a few hours after forcing its rebel leader to resign. Aslan Abashidze ended more than a decade in power by flying with his family to Moscow after talks with a Russian envoy on Wednesday night. "You are heroes," Mr Saakashvili told well-wishers from a window in Mr Abashidze's former residence in Batumi. Ajaria's return to Georgian control comes just months into his presidency. People in the crowd chanted his nickname - Misha - and waved the country's new red and white flag, as what had been protest rally became a celebration in the capital of the Black Sea province. The collapse of Mr Abashidze's rule came after a month-long confrontation during which his heavily armed supporters at one point blew up bridges leading into Ajaria from Georgia proper. Ahead of his talks with Russian Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov, Mr Abashidze had been saying he had "no intention" of quitting Ajaria. However, pressure came to a head on Wednesday when the president declared direct presidential rule and offered Mr Abashidze safe passage

abroad. Announcing the rebel leader's resignation on TV on Wednesday night, President Saakashvili said he wished to mark "the beginning of Georgia's unification". "Georgia will be united," he declared, in an apparent reference to two of the tiny Caucasus republic's other regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which have been out of Tbilisi's control for years. Presidential staff, however, have stressed that the problems there are quite different, involving ethnic conflicts. (BBC)

### **GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES PRESIDENTIAL RULE IN ADJARIA**

**6 May**

By 137 votes in favor and one against, deputies approved on 6 May a resolution empowering Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to dismiss the parliament and government of the Adjar Autonomous Republic and schedule new elections. Following a protracted standoff with Saakashvili, Aslan Abashidze stepped down late the previous day as Adjar Supreme Council chairman and left Georgia for Moscow. Georgian Prosecutor-General Irakli Okruashvili said on 6 May that the guarantees of immunity that the Georgian authorities extended to Abashidze and members of his entourage will not be revoked. "I do not think we shall open criminal proceedings," Okruashvili told. (Caucasus Press)

### **ABASHIDZE'S CARS AND DOGS TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION**

**8 May**

Georgian Prosecutor General Irakly Okruashvili told the press about plans to auction off some of former Ajarian leader Aslan Abashidze's property, in particular, three expensive Hummer vehicles as well as pedigree dogs. "Taking care of these dogs cost much more than the healthcare expenses for Ajaria's Khelvachauri district," Okruashvili said. Meanwhile, the television company Mze showed outdoor cages in which about 200 of Abashidze's pedigree dogs, primarily Caucasian shepherd dogs, are kept. Mze said Abashidze spent some \$20,000 monthly on taking care of the dogs. Mze also showed Abashidze's favorite Caucasian shepherd Basmach, who has refused to eat for a third day while waiting for his master. (Interfax)

### **FORMER ADJAR OFFICIALS ARRESTED**

**8 May**

At least five senior Adjar officials have been arrested since the resignation and departure for Moscow on 5 May of Adjar Supreme Council Chairman Aslan Abashidze. Murad

Tsintsadze and his son Merab, both of them senior Interior Ministry personnel, were detained in Batumi on 8 May, as was Kobuleti Governor Taniel Khalvashi, the man responsible for barring Saakashvili from entering Adjara in mid-March. Khalvashi has been charged with persecuting the opposition to Abashidze and illegally distributing weapons to the population. Roland Beridze, who headed the personal security guards of Abashidze's son, former Batumi Mayor Giorgi Abashidze, has also been arrested. (Caucasus Press)

### **AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT PARDONS MORE THAN 300 PRISONERS**

**10 May**

To mark the birthday of his deceased father and predecessor Heidar Aliyev, President Aliyev signed a decree on 10 May pardoning 363 prisoners. Those freed include several human rights activists and individuals considered by the Council of Europe to be political prisoners, among them the former acting head of the Baku Naval College, Djanmirza Mirzoev. Mirzoev was sentenced in November 2001 to eight years' imprisonment on charges, which he denied, of arranging the murder in 1993 of Rear Admiral Eduard Huseinov. Mirzoev claimed at his trial he was sentenced in retaliation for his campaign to expose corruption within the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry. (Turan)

### **RUSSIAN TROOPS IN KYRGYZSTAN GRANTED IMMUNITY**

**11 May**

Kyrgyzstan's parliament on 11 May ratified an agreement that grants immunity to Russian servicemen deployed to the Russian air-force base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan. Should Russian soldiers commit offenses, they will be tried under Russian, not Kyrgyz, law. U.S. troops stationed at Ganci Air Base, also in Kyrgyzstan, enjoy the same status. Kyrgyz Defense Minister Colonel General Esen Topoev told the news agency that the vote settles all remaining legal issues relating to the presence of Russian servicemen in Kyrgyzstan. Ismail Isakov, who heads the parliamentary committee on state security, said "The air base in Kant performs an important mission of guaranteeing the security of airspace on the southern borders of the CIS." (ITAR-TASS)

### **CHECHEN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TO TAKE PLACE IN SEPTEMBER**

**11 May**

Chechnya will elect its new president in September, Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov, chairman of the republic's elections commission, told Interfax Tuesday. "Under legislation, new presidential elections should be held in September," Arsakhanov said over the telephone from Grozny. Under

the Chechen constitution, new presidential elections are to be held within 120 days after the republic's incumbent president stops performing his duties before the expiration of his presidential term. "Several days of mourning have been declared in Chechnya. After, the Chechen elections commission will set the date for new elections. Life goes on. Elections must be held. The republic needs a legitimately elected president," Arsakhanov said. (Interfax)

### **RUSSIA TO BOOST CHECHNYA FORCES**

**11 May**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has paid a rare visit to Chechnya and pledged to send extra troops following the assassination of a key ally there. Mr Putin described the killing of Moscow-backed Chechen leader Akhmad Kadyrov as a "lesson" to Russia. More than 1,000 extra Russian troops will be sent to the Caucasus republic. Chechen guerrillas fighting Moscow's rule have been blamed for Sunday's bomb attack in the capital Grozny, in which at least seven people died. The latest victim was a young boy who died of head injuries, hospital officials said. Recent estimates suggest there are up to 80,000 Russian troops in Chechnya. This figure includes regular soldiers and the Kremlin-backed Chechen militias that work alongside them, according to Tom de Waal from the Institute of War and Peace Reporting. But exact numbers for the Russian military presence are not available. Plans to move the injured Russian commander Valery Baranov to Moscow have been delayed because of his critical condition. He was due to have been evacuated to Moscow for further treatment on Tuesday, but is now likely to leave on Wednesday, the Russian military said. Gen Baranov, Moscow's top military commander in the region, was at a victory ceremony with President Kadyrov when a bomb blast ripped through their enclosure at a stadium in Grozny. Mr Kadyrov, a Muslim cleric who once sided with the separatists before switching to become the Kremlin's favoured son in Chechnya, died almost instantly. Correspondents say the bombing has left Russia's Chechnya policy in tatters, after President Putin had claimed to have silenced the separatists. (BBC)

### **ARMENIAN PRESIDENT NOT TO ATTEND NATO SUMMIT**

**11 May**

Due to the lack of progress in improving Armenian-Turkish relations, President Kocharian will not attend the 28-29 June NATO summit in Istanbul, a presidential press spokesman told journalists in Yerevan on 10 May, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. The spokesman added that Kocharian's decision "has nothing to do with Armenian-NATO relations, which are currently on the rise." A series of meetings over the past year between the Armenian and Turkish foreign ministers fueled speculation

that Ankara might reopen its border with Armenia, but more recently Turkish officials have assured Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev that any such move is contingent on a solution to the Karabakh conflict that would formally preserve Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Armenia and Turkey do not have formal diplomatic relations. LF

### **INTERIOR MINISTRY TROOPS SENT TO SOUTHERN GEORGIA**

**11 May**

Some 100 Interior Ministry troops were sent to the mountainous southern district of Tsalka on 11 May in response to a request by the local Georgian minority population. Violent clashes in Tsalka between Georgians and Armenians, who account for up to 80 percent of the district's population, have been reported sporadically for several years, but they have apparently become more frequent in recent months. Several people were injured in violence there on 9 May. (Caucasus Press)

### **RUSSIAN PRESIDENT MAKES UNSCHEDULED TRIP TO GROZNY**

**12 May**

Vladimir Putin flew to Grozny on 11 May, where he presented posthumous awards to the widows of pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov and interim Chechen parliamentary speaker Khussein Isaev. Both men were killed by the bomb that exploded on the morning of 9 May at a Grozny stadium during a ceremony to mark Victory Day. Speaking to his cabinet on 11 May after visiting Grozny, Russian President said that the killing of pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov is both "a loss and a lesson for the government," RTR, ORT, and RIA-Novosti reported. Putin asked the government to create a special group to remedy quickly economic problems in Chechnya and to design a unified plan for the reconstruction of Grozny. "I have seen Grozny from a helicopter and it looks horrible," Putin said. In 1995-96 and 1999, Russian air and artillery bombardments left much of the city in ruins. (RFE/RL)

### **RUSSIA HAS ABOUT 50,000 SKINHEADS - HUMAN RIGHTS WORKERS**

**12 May**

There are about 50,000 skinheads in Russia, who commit on average 30-40 attacks a month based on motives of xenophobia and ethnic enmity, said the Moscow Human Rights Bureau's Director Alexander Brod. "I can ascertain a dramatic increase in the number of acts motivated by xenophobia and ethnic hatred, including assaults and beatings. Over the last 3-4 years, the number of such acts has been growing annually by 30%," Brod told the press on Wednesday. "There is virtually no region [in Russia] where there are no skinheads," he said. Moscow and St.

Petersburg are home to about 2,000 skinheads each, and their number in other cities varies from 500 to 1,000. "Neither society nor the state is purposefully fighting against extremism and xenophobia," Brod said. Holocaust Foundation President Alla Gerber told the same press conference that some people in security and law enforcement agencies benefit from the skinheads' activity. "I cannot say who finances or even simply facilitates the activity of radical neo-Fascist groups and parties, but I am sure they keep their finger on the pulse of these activities, and skinheads definitely do not exist simply by themselves," she said. The human rights advocates called for drawing the attention of the public, the state, and law enforcement agencies to the problem and "jointly fighting" this evil. (Interfax)

### **ARMENIAN OPPOSITION RESUMES CALLS FOR PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION**

**12 May**

Leading members of the opposition Artarutian alliance said on 11 May in Yerevan that they will convene a further demonstration on 14 May to press for the resignation of President Robert Kocharian, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Kocharian left on 10 May for a three-day visit to Lebanon, after which he will visit Moscow on 13 May. Opposition legislators said the Armenian authorities have declined to take any of the measures recommended in a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) resolution passed in late April, including releasing all persons detained for their participation in opposition rallies last month. Preliminary talks are, however, continuing between Artarutian and its opposition partner, the National Accord Party, and the three-party ruling coalition on the precise agenda for negotiations on defusing political tensions. Those negotiations are scheduled to begin on 13 May. (RFE/RL)

### **IRAN SEEKING TO GROW CASPIAN CRUDE SWAP VOLUME-IEA.**

**12 May**

Iran looks set to increase the quantities of crude swapped with Russian and Caspian producers, which are seeking diverse export outlets for their oil, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Wednesday. The country currently receives 120,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Russian, Kazakh and Turkmen crude delivered to its northern port of Neka on the Caspian Sea, providing these producers with an equivalent volume of its own Iranian Light crude in the Middle East Gulf. This volume could swell to 500,000 bpd by the end of 2004 if new pumping stations are added along the pipeline that transports the oil from Neka to the Tehran and Tabriz refineries, the IEA said in its monthly report. Sea borne supplies comprise 40,000 bpd each from Russia and Kazakhstan and 20,000 bpd

from Turkmenistan, the agency said, adding that the Neka swap route allows Caspian producers to bypass the congested Russian Black Sea and Mediterranean infrastructure while accessing lucrative Asian markets. The producers pay a swap fee of around \$2 a barrel to Iran, which also receives a steady supply of Caspian crudes for its northern refineries. Its own oilfields are mostly located in the south of the country. Analysts say the swaps are allowing Iran to stay in the race for exporting Caspian crude, after a U.S.-backed oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to the Mediterranean overtook its proposed export route. (Reuters)

### **50 HIV CASES IN TAJIK PRISONS**

**12 May**

A recent study of HIV cases in Tajik prisons discovered 52 HIV-positive prisoners in three penal colonies. Twelve of the 52 prisoners are women. The project, which focused on the prevention of AIDS in prisons, was carried out by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation (OSIAF) and Tajikistan's Justice Ministry with USAID financial assistance. Project coordinator Mahmud Majidov noted that research in Belarus and Ukraine has shown that keeping HIV-infected inmates in one place leads to outbreaks of the infection. Zuhro Halimova, the executive director of OSIAF, said, "We need to switch to preventive measures of fighting the disease. We should not repeat the sad fate of African countries." (Asia Plus-Blitz)

### **UN NOTES PROGRESS IN KAZAKH POVERTY REDUCTION**

**12 April**

Representatives of the UN Development Program presented a report on 12 May detailing advances in the fight against poverty in Kazakhstan. The report is called "Poverty in Kazakhstan: Causes and Ways to Overcome It." It notes that the country's growing economy, which created 300,000 new jobs in 2003, is helping to reduce poverty. Even so, 28 percent of the population still lives below the poverty line, and 45 percent are at risk of slipping into poverty, with monthly earnings of just over \$70. Vyacheslav Bobkov, who headed the group that authored the study, noted that the country's booming energy sector could potentially have a greater effect on living standards than is currently the case. According to the study's authors, economic diversification is necessary to increase employment further. (KazInform)

### **ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR NEW CHECHEN LEADER**

**13 May**

Elections for a successor to pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, who was killed by a bomb explosion in Grozny on 9 May, will be held on 5

September, Russian agencies quoted Vladimir Yakovlev, presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, as saying on 12 May in Rostov-na-Donu. Yakovlev added that the ballot will be financed from the central budget. In an interview published on 13 May in "Nezavisimaya gazeta," Yakovlev said the choice of a new leader lies with Chechen voters; he denied that the promotion of Kadyrov's son Ramzan to the post of first deputy prime minister means that the Kremlin has already decided that Ramzan should succeed his father. At the same time, Yakovlev argued that it is imperative to support what Kadyrov accomplished and "the person who helped him achieve it." In a separate interview with "Nezavisimaya gazeta" of 13 May, Chechen State Council Chairman Taus Dzhabrailov declined to confirm that he will contest the ballot for republican leader, saying that "Kadyrov's team" will decide jointly on the most appropriate candidate. (RFE/RL)

### **GEORGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS WITH COUNCIL OF EUROPE HEAD**

**13 May**

Salome Zourabishvili met in Strasbourg on 12 May with Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer but did not discuss some Georgian politicians' demands that the council's permanent representative in Tbilisi, Platon Nikolov, be recalled, Georgian media reported. President Saakashvili criticized both Nikolov and Schwimmer personally last week in connection with the crisis in relations with Adjaran leader Abashidze. Saakashvili said that "overpaid bureaucrats" have no right to criticize the Georgian leadership, which, Saakashvili claimed, pays their salaries. But the Georgian Foreign Ministry divulged on 12 May that Tbilisi owes a total of 1.2 million euros (\$1.42 million) in membership fees to the Council of Europe. (RFE/RL)

### **GEORGIA WELCOMES RUSSIAN INVESTORS IN AJARIA**

**13 May**

Georgia's government is prepared to allow major Russian investors the opportunity to put their money into the Ajarian economy, Georgian Economics Minister Irakly Rekhviashvili told Mze television on Wednesday. Tbilisi and Batumi will soon host a Georgian-Russian economic forum, at which specific investment projects will be presented, Rekhviashvili said. "Among priority projects are the development of the Batumi seaport, airport, oil refineries, a shipbuilding plant, and other large enterprises," he said. The minister noted that the state will retain controlling stakes in the seaport and airport, viewing them as strategic facilities. Asked about the future of investments that Russian companies have already made in Ajaria, Rekhviashvili replied, "The investments that have

been officially formalized will not be questioned." He also confirmed that Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov "has business interests in Ajaria." "As economics minister, I regard only two aspects as important: the volume of capital invested and the number of locals employed in these enterprises," he said. (Interfax)

### **US ATTACKED OVER AFGHAN 'ABUSE'**

**13 May**

US troops in Afghanistan have been accused of "systemic" abuse of prisoners by a human rights group. Human Rights Watch (HRW) said it had documented "numerous cases of mistreatment of detainees," similar to those reported in Iraq. The group said it had repeatedly warned Washington about the problems. The United Nations has meanwhile warned that trust in US forces in Afghanistan is at risk if the allegations are not properly investigated and made public. HRW say the deprivations suffered by prisoners include sleep deprivation, exposure to freezing temperatures, severe beatings, and detainees being stripped and photographed naked. The charges come a day after the US announced it was investigating allegations of abuse by an Afghan police officer who was detained in 2003. Former police colonel, Sayed Nabi Siddiqui, 47, was quoted by the New York Times as saying he was subjected to sexual abuse, taunting and lack of sleep while being held at a US base in Gardez, east of the capital Kabul. Mr Siddiqui told the newspaper he was wrongly detained on 15 July after reporting police corruption. In March, a HRW report said the US detention system in Afghanistan violated international law. It said the US military had still to "explain adequately" the deaths of three detainees in American custody. Two deaths at Bagram airbase were ruled as homicides by US military doctors. The group is now calling for the immediate release of details regarding these deaths. "It's time now for the United States to publicise the results of its investigations of abuse, fully prosecute those responsible, and provide access to independent monitors," HRW's Afghan researcher, John Sifton, said. UN spokesman Manoel de Almeida de Silva said that he had been receiving reports of violations for the past two years. "More than once we have requested details of investigations into the deaths of two detainees at Bagram," he said, "but regrettably we have not yet had access to this." Both the UN and HRW have backed calls by Afghan human rights organisations for access to carry out checks on detainees in US custody. At least 300 people, the majority of them Afghans, are believed to be held at the main US base at Bagram, north of Kabul, and an unknown number at other sites. (BBC)

### **CHECHEN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TO BE HELD AFTER AUG 15**

**14 May**

The Russian Central Elections Commission (CEC) will provide all necessary assistance to the Election Commission of Chechnya to lay the groundwork for Chechen presidential elections, CEC Chairman Alexander Veshnyakov told the press on Friday. The election will be scheduled by the republic's Election Commission between August 15 and September 5, he said. If there is just one candidate, the election will be put off, Veshnyakov said. Commenting on speculation on the need to amend the Chechen Constitution, Veshnyakov said that "the constitution cannot be amended without violating it, which is out of the question." As for holding presidential and parliamentary elections in Chechnya simultaneously, as advocated by some political figures, this possibility is only theoretical, Veshnyakov said. In light of the situation at hand and the constitutional deadlines for holding early parliamentary elections in Chechnya, Veshnyakov advised against holding both elections simultaneously. Elected on October 5, 2003, Kadyrov was killed in a terrorist attack in Grozny on May 9. (Interfax)

### **ARMENIA SIGNS AGREEMENT ON GAS SUPPLIES WITH IRAN**

**14 May**

Managing Director of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Roknoddin Javad and General Director of the Yerevany Power Station Ovakim Ovanessian have signed an agreement on gas supplies to Armenia, Arminfo news agency reported. According to Armenian Energy Minister Armen Movsisian, Armenia and Iran will construct a pipeline in two years and make it operational before January 1, 2007. Iran has agreed to deliver not less than 1.1bn cubic meters of natural gas to Armenia. Armenia is to pay for gas with electric energy supplies. The construction of the Armenian part of the pipeline linking the city of Megri with Yerevan with a length of 100 km is estimated at \$96m-\$100m. The Iranian 41-km part of the pipeline is estimated at \$120m. Each of the two countries is responsible for constructing its part of the pipeline. The minister declined to comment on possible sources of financing the construction. His Iranian counterpart Bijan Namdar-Zanganeh declined to name the agreed price of gas supplies. He stressed that under the 20-years agreement Iran was to deliver 36bn cubic meters of gas to Armenia. According to some data, the cost of gas supplies is agreed at \$84 per 1,000 cubic meters. The Armenia-Iran intergovernmental agreement covering the route of the 141-km pipeline was signed in 1995. (RosBusinessConsulting)

### **KAZAKH PRESIDENT DENIES LINK TO US OIL BRIBERY CASE**

**14 May**

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev brushed aside the



issue of a bribes-for-oil-contracts scandal that has dogged his leadership and said he hoped to be re-elected in 2006. Nazarbayev played down the significance of a case due shortly before a US court in which US oil consultant James Giffen is charged with passing more than 78 million dollars (65 million euros) in unlawful payments from US companies to top Kazakh officials. New York city prosecutors last month identified Nazarbayev and former prime minister Nurlan Balgimbayev as the recipients of the alleged payments made by, among others, the Mobil Corporation, which has since been incorporated into ExxonMobil. ExxonMobil denies any wrongdoing in relation to the charges. The case due to get fully under way in October "is against (Giffen) specifically and not against any citizen of Kazakhstan, so I don't consider it necessary to follow the case or comment," Nazarbayev said Friday during a television phone-in. "The only connection is that Mr. Giffen was an external advisor to the government ... our oil experts say that these contracts fully serve the interests of Kazakhstan thanks to him," he added. In all other respects charges of Kazakh involvement are "just insinuation and provocation," Nazarbayev said. Nazarbayev went on to express hope of retaining office at presidential elections due in 2006. "Without fail I intend to stand if everything is okay, if God wills," Nazarbayev said. "It depends on a lot -- this question will be decided by the people." Friday's hours-long nationwide phone-in appeared modelled on similar phone-ins hosted by Russia's President Vladimir Putin. The questions ranged widely, including one about why the only pot-hole-free roads in the largest city Almaty are those used by the presidential cortege. (AFP)

### **ARMENIAN OPPOSITION SEEKS TO MOBILIZE GREATER SUPPORT**

**17 May**

Armenian opposition leaders appealed at an unsanctioned rally in Yerevan on 14 May for the population to participate in a planned 21 May march to the presidential palace to demand the resignation of President Robert Kocharian, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Some opposition leaders are concerned at a recent decline in attendance at ongoing protest rallies. They attribute that decline to the repeated postponement of "decisive action" to force Kocharian's resignation and to the attempts, which collapsed on 13 May, to defuse tensions between the opposition and the three-party governing coalition by means of negotiations. Meanwhile, Armenian human rights activists picketed the Prosecutor-General's Office on 14 May for the second consecutive day to demand the release of 14 opposition activists against whom criminal charges have been brought in connection with their participation in a mass protest against Kocharian in Yerevan on 12-13

April that was violently dispersed by police, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. (RFE/RL)

### **ABKHAZ SETTLEMENT PLAN PUBLISHED**

**18 May**

Rustavi-2 made public on 18 May details of a new plan to resolve the Abkhaz conflict. Rustavi-2 said that plan, proposed by Moscow, defines Georgia as a federal state within which Abkhazia is a sovereign entity, and is similar to the "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi" drafted by former UN special representative Dieter Boden. But "The Georgian Messenger" on 14 May as cited by Groong claimed the new Russian plan envisages not a federation but a confederation. That publication predicted that the Georgian leadership, which hitherto rejected the confederation model, will agree to it on condition that provision is made for the Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war to return to their abandoned homes. (RFE/RL)

### **IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS WITH RUSSIAN LEADERS**

**18 May**

Speaking to journalists after his talks in the Kremlin with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, President Vladimir Putin said on 17 May that Iran is "our steady partner of long standing" and that relations between the two countries are developing in all directions. Putin also noted that trade between the two countries has grown since 2002 by 70 percent and reached \$1.37 billion in 2003. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking at a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart, said that they discussed the situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Caspian region. Lavrov also announced that Putin has accepted an invitation to visit Tehran, and that Putin will visit Tehran later this year both for bilateral talks and to attend a summit of the Caspian states. (RFE/RL)

### **CHECHEN WARLORD THREATENS RUSSIAN LEADERS**

**18 May**

In his statement claiming responsibility for the 9 May bomb blast in Grozny that killed six people, including pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, radical field commander Shamil Basaev indirectly threatened to kill Russian Prime Minister Fradkov or Russian President Putin, chechenpress.com noted on 18 May. "We are interested [to see] who will be appointed premier of Russia, Katya or Masha [the names of President Putin's two daughters], if, by the mercy of Allah, we carry out the special operation Moska-2 successfully," Basaev said. Kadyrov's youngest son, Ramzan, was named Chechen

first deputy prime minister after his death. Also on 17 May, Russian and Chechen officials alike queried the veracity of Basaev's claim to have killed Kadyrov. ITAR-TASS and Interfax quoted Yurii Rozhin, who heads the Chechen Department at the Federal Security Service (FSB), as saying that possibility is only one of several being investigated. Chechen Security Council Secretary Rudnik Dudaev and former Grozny Mayor Bislav Gantemirov both dismissed Basaev's claim of responsibility for Kadyrov's death as unsubstantiated boasting. (RFE/RL)

### **CHINA, KAZAKHSTAN TO BUILD OIL PIPELINE**

**18 May**

The top oil and gas companies of China and Kazakhstan have signed an agreement to build a crude oil pipeline to help slake this country's insatiable thirst for fuel. State-owned China National Petroleum Corp. and Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz signed the agreement Monday to complete a 625-mile pipeline from Atasu, in northwestern Kazakhstan, to the border of China's northwestern Xinjiang region. The size of the investment was not given. The deal came as Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev, on a four-day visit to Beijing, and President Hu Jintao signed a broad agreement for joint exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea. The two sides are also stepping up consideration of plans for a natural gas pipeline to connect

gas fields in the Caspian Sea with China, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. In 1997, China and Kazakhstan signed an agreement to build a 1,875-mile-long oil pipeline. The western section of that pipeline, spanning 280 miles, began operation in March. Construction on the section from Atasu to the Alataw Pass on Xinjiang's border is expected to begin sometime this year, according to earlier reports. Plans for the remaining section of the pipeline were not given. The two countries also signed an agreement to build up international passenger and freight rail transport, as part of an effort to boost trade and complete routes through Kazakhstan to Europe. A China-Kazakhstan rail link opened in 1992. (AP)

### **11 INTERIOR TROOPS DIE IN CHECHNYA**

**18 May**

Eleven Interior Troops died in Urus-Martan district of Chechnya on Monday, a source at headquarters of the federal force in the North Caucasus told Interfax on Tuesday. "Servicemen driving on an UAZ truck were ambushed in Urus-Martan district on Monday. Rebels blasted the vehicle and opened fire at the servicemen," the source said. An armored vehicle drove to the clash area as reinforcement but was also blasted and the servicemen in it came under fire. "As a result 11 Interior Troops died, five were wounded and one is missing in action," the source said. (RFE/RL)

