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## **Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests**

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# Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests

## Summary

The Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) face common security challenges from crime, corruption, terrorism, and faltering commitments to economic and democratic reforms. Security in the region is likely in the near term to vary by country, since cooperation among them remains halting. Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's futures are most clouded by ethnic and regional tensions, and corruption in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan could spoil benefits from the development of their ample energy resources. Kyrgyzstan's emerging civil society may help the relatively small nation to safeguard its independence, and Turkmenistan's ethnic homogeneity and ample energy resources could put it in good stead, but both contain fractious regions and clans. Uzbekistan is the most likely to become a regional power able to take the lead on policy issues common to Central Asia and to resist undue influence from more powerful outside powers, because of its large territory and population (57 million) and energy and other resources. However, tensions between Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states stymie regional cooperation. Internal political developments in several bordering or close-by states may have a large impact on Central Asian security. These developments include a possibly more authoritarian and globalist Russia, ethnic and political instability in China, political liberalization in Iran, or re-surg-ing drug production and Islamic extremism in Afghanistan.

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the Administration has established bases and other military access in the region for U.S.-led coalition actions in Afghanistan, and it has stressed that the United States will remain interested in the long-term security of the region. U.S. interests in Central Asia include fostering democratization, human rights, free markets, and trade; assisting the development of oil and other resources; and combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug production and trafficking, and terrorism. The United States seeks to thwart dangers posed to its security by the illicit transfer of strategic missile, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons technologies, materials, and expertise to terrorist states or groups, and to address threats posed to regional independence by Iran. Some critics counter that the United States has historically had few interests in this region, and advocate only limited U.S. contacts undertaken with Turkey and other friends and allies to ensure U.S. goals. They also warn that the region's energy resources may not measurably enhance U.S. energy security.

Most in Congress have supported U.S. assistance to bolster independence and reforms in Central Asia, but questions remain about what should be the appropriate level and scope of U.S. interest and involvement in the region. Congressional attention has included several hearings and legislation, the latter including endorsements of regional energy development and criticisms of human rights abuses. The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress authorized a "Silk Road" initiative for greater policy attention and aid for democratization, market reforms, humanitarian needs, conflict resolution, transport infrastructure (including energy pipelines), and border controls.

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# Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests

## Introduction

The strategic Central Asian region<sup>1</sup> bordering regional powers Russia, China, and Iran is an age-old east-west and north-south trade and transport crossroads. After many of the Soviet Union's republics had declared their independence by late 1991, the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia reluctantly followed suit. Since this largely unexpected beginning of independence, the Central Asian countries have taken some uneven steps in building defense and other security structures and ties. In some instances, the states have viewed their exposure to outside influences as a mixed blessing. While welcoming new trade and aid, the leaders of Central Asia have been less receptive to calls to democratize and respect human rights.

This report discusses the internal and external security concerns of the Central Asian states. Security concerns faced by the states include mixes of social disorder, crime, corruption, Islamic extremism, terrorism, ethnic and civil conflict, border tensions, water and transport disputes, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and illegal narcotics. The Central Asian states have tried with varying success to bolster their security forces and regional cooperation to deal with these threats. The United States has provided assistance for these efforts and greatly boosted such aid and involvement after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, but questions remain about what should be the appropriate level and scope of U.S. interest and presence in the region.

## Central Asia's External Security Context

Central Asia's states have slowly consolidated and extended their relations with neighboring and other countries and international organizations that seek to play influential roles in Central Asia or otherwise affect regional security. These include the bordering or close-by countries of Russia, Afghanistan, China, Iran, Turkey, and the South Caucasus states (see below, *Appendix I*), and others such as the United States, Germany, India, Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Ukraine. In terms of ties with close-by states, Turkmenistan may be concerned more about

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<sup>1</sup> Central Asia consists of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. For overviews, see CRS Report 97-1058, *Kazakhstan*; CRS Report 97-690, *Kyrgyzstan*; CRS Report 98-594, *Tajikistan*; CRS Report 97-1055, *Turkmenistan*; and CRS Report RS21238, *Uzbekistan*. See also CRS Issue Brief IB93108, *Central Asia's New States*, updated regularly.

bordering Iran and Afghanistan than with non-bordering China, while Kazakhstan may be concerned more about bordering Russia than with non-bordering Afghanistan. While soliciting and managing ties with these states, the Central Asian countries also seek assistance from international organizations, including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Economic Community Organization (ECO), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and NATO.

Outside powers, while sometimes competing among themselves for influence in Central Asia, also have cooperated in carrying out certain common interests. Since 9/11, Russia, China, and the United States have cooperated more in combating terrorism in the region. A major question is whether this cooperation will continue now that the threat from Afghanistan has declined. Other common interests that could lead to cooperation include combating drug, arms, and human trafficking, managing water resources, developing and delivering energy, and tackling infectious disease. Iran and Russia collaborated during the latter 1990s to disrupt U.S. and Turkish involvement in developing Caspian Sea oil and natural gas resources. Though collaboration has ebbed, each state continues in varying ways to oppose such involvement. Some observers warn that increasing cooperation or similarity of interests among Russia, Iran, and China in countering the West and in attempting to increase their own influence could heighten threats to the sovereignty and independence of the Central Asian states. Others discount such threats, stressing the limited economic capabilities of the three states and their ultimately diverging goals.

## **Security Problems and Progress**

The problems of authoritarian regimes, crime, corruption, terrorism, and ethnic and civil strife and tensions jeopardize the security and independence of all the new states of Central Asia, though to varying degrees. Kazakhstan has faced the potential of separatism in northern Kazakhstan where ethnic Russians are dominant, although this threat appears to have diminished in recent years with the emigration of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russians. Tajikistan faces the uncertain resolution of its civil war and possible separatism, particularly by its northern Soghd (formerly Leninabad) region. Kyrgyzstan has faced increasing demands by its southern regions for more autonomy that it has tried to meet in part by promulgating a new constitution in 2003 that provides for some local rights. Turkmenistan faces possible clan and regional tensions that may flare up during a deepening succession crisis. Uzbekistan faces rising dissidence among its large ethnic Tajik population and what President Islam Karimov views as Islamic extremists. Ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz clashed in 1990 in the Osh region in Kyrgyzstan, and tensions have been exacerbated in recent years by Uzbek pressure on Kyrgyzstan to cede Uzbek-populated areas to Uzbekistan. All the states are harmed by drug and human trafficking and associated corruption and health effects.

Despite these problems, Turkmenistan's oil and gas wealth may contribute to its long-term stability. Its location at a locus of the Silk Road may also increase its economic security. Uzbekistan's large population and many resources, including oil, natural gas, and gold, may provide a basis for its stable development and security.

If Kyrgyzstan is able to develop economically, it may be able to bolster its defense and security systems.

The authoritarian presidents of the Central Asian states remain in power by orchestrating extensions to their terms and by sharply limiting political freedoms.<sup>2</sup> They range in age from 50 (Tajik President Imomaliy Rakhmanov) to 65 (Uzbek President Islam Karimov), suggesting that some might rule for several more years.<sup>3</sup> If the current leaders die unexpectedly, there are no clear political heirs apparent such as vice presidents or strong opposition party leaders (Nazarbayev's and Akayev's sons have been groomed by some courtiers as dynastic successors), raising the threat of succession struggles. These struggles for power may well be violent, fueled by popular discontent over low levels of democratization and high levels of income inequality.<sup>4</sup> There also have been violent efforts to remove Central Asian presidents from power, including assassination attempts in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, that raise the specter of civil turmoil (see below, *Terrorism*).

Regional cooperation theoretically is enhanced by affinities among the leaders. All learned a common language (Russian) and received similar Soviet-era ideological training stressing authoritarianism, and four of the five leaders were acquainted with one another as Communist Party officials. In actuality, the leaders sometimes vie with one another and regional cooperation is minimal.

Most of the people in the Central Asian states have suffered steep declines in their quality of life since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The gap has widened between the rich and poor, accentuating social tensions and potential instability.<sup>5</sup> Social services such as health and education, inadequate during the Soviet period, have declined further. Efforts to combat massive environmental problems threatening health and hampering economic recovery have made little headway. Attempts in Turkmenistan to cushion the decline in living standards through subsidies for flour, salt, water, and electricity have been deficient because supplies are often unavailable. In Kazakhstan, the government has given low priority to social welfare and has instead requested that foreign investors pay pensions and wage arrears and support sports, medical, and educational facilities, thereby eroding popular trust in the government.

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<sup>2</sup> In December 2002, Kazakh President Nazarbayev stated at a conclave of Central Asian leaders that they should "learn" from the succession practices of the Chinese Communist Party. *FBIS*, December 27, 2002, Doc. No. CEP-218.

<sup>3</sup> Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov reportedly is in uncertain health. He had lung surgery in 1993 and a quadruple bypass heart operation in 1998.

<sup>4</sup> According to Eugene Rumer, "political succession is the biggest long-term threat to regional stability." *Strategic Forum*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, December 2002.

<sup>5</sup> The numbers of people in poverty have increased despite improving macro-economies in the Central Asian states, according to some analysts. Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Kennan Institute, January 21, 2003; Dafne Ter-Sakarian, cited in *2002 in Review: Central Asia*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, December 12, 2002.

Increasing poverty could exacerbate ethnic tensions, separatism, and extremism, although a large percentage of the states' populations remain employed in the agricultural sector where economic gyrations have been somewhat buffered. This sector has a surfeit of manpower, however, and cannot readily absorb new workers as the populations continue to increase. In the late 1990s, the Central Asian states weathered the collapse of Asian and Russian economies and declines in world oil prices without major political and social repercussions, but civil disorder might increase if the governments fail to redistribute oil and other revenues.<sup>6</sup>

## Islamic Extremism

Calls for government to be based on Sharia (Islamic law) and the Koran are supported by small but increasing minorities in most of Central Asia. Most of Central Asia's Islamic population appears to support the concept of secular government and has had scant exposure to religion, but interest is growing. Tajikistan's civil conflict, where the issue of Islam in political life contributed to strife, has been pointed to by several other Central Asian states to justify crackdowns. They also point to Russia's conflict with its breakaway Chechnya region as evidence of the growing threat. In many cases, crackdowns ostensibly aimed against Islamic extremism have masked ethnic, clan, political, and religious repression. In some regions of Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley, many Uzbeks kept Islamic practices alive throughout the repressive Soviet period, and some now oppose the secular-oriented Uzbek government. Islamic extremist threats to the regimes may well increase as economic distress continues. The heavy unemployment and poverty among youth in the Fergana Valley is widely cited by observers as making youth more vulnerable to recruitment into religious extremist organizations.<sup>7</sup>

Although much of the attraction of Islamic extremism in Central Asia is generated by factors such as poverty and discontent, it is also fostered by groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere that provide funding, education, training, and manpower to the region.<sup>8</sup> Some of these ties were at least partially disrupted by the U.S.-led coalition actions in Afghanistan and the U.S. call for worldwide cooperation in combating terrorism.

The Central Asian states impose several controls over religious freedom. All except Tajikistan forbid religious parties such as the Islamic Renewal Party (Tajikistan's civil war settlement included the IRP's legalization), and maintain Soviet-era religious control bodies and official Muftiates.

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<sup>6</sup> *Incubator of Conflict: Central Asia's Localized Poverty and Social Unrest*, International Crisis Group, June 8, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, Yale: Yale University Press, 2002; Pinar Akcali, *Central Asian Survey*, v. 17, June 1998, pp. 267-284; Aziz Niyazi, *Religion, State & Society*, v. 26, March 1998, pp. 39-50.

<sup>8</sup> Kazakhstan has opposed Chechen separatism in Russia and has feared that Chechen rebels might enter Kazakhstan, where some Chechens continue to reside after being relocated there during World War II.



Officials in Uzbekistan believe that it is increasingly vulnerable to Islamic extremism, and Uzbekistan has been at the forefront in Central Asia in combating this threat. Reportedly, thousands of alleged Islamic extremists have been arrested and sentenced and many mosques have been closed. Restrictions were tightened when the legislature in 1998 passed a law on “freedom of worship” banning all unregistered faiths, forbidding religious dress in public, and making it a crime to teach religion without a license. The Uzbek legislature also approved amendments to the criminal code increasing punishments for setting up, leading, or participating in religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist, or other illegal groups.

Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states have launched arrests of adherents of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT; Liberation Party, a puritanical Islamic movement calling for the establishment of Sharia rule), sentencing them to lengthy prison terms or even death for pamphleteering, but HT reportedly continues to gain adherents. Uzbekistan’s insistence that HT is a terrorist organization received some credence following a raid on an alleged HT printing facility in northern Tajikistan in January 2003 that revealed a large-scale proselytizing effort and literature advocating violence. Some Kyrgyz authorities emphasize the anti-American and antisemitic nature of several HT statements, and warn that some elements of the group are moving away from nonviolence, but others in Kyrgyzstan argue that the group is largely pacific and should not be harassed.<sup>9</sup>

## Terrorist Activities

Terrorist actions aimed at overthrowing regimes have been of growing concern in all the Central Asian states and are often linked to Islamic extremism. Some analysts caution that many activities the regimes label as terrorist — such as hijacking, kidnaping, robbery, assault, and murder — are often carried out by individuals or groups for economic benefit or for revenge, rather than for political purposes. Also, charges of terrorism may mask repressive actions against religious or political opponents of the regime. Terrorist actions had long been characteristic of the Tajik civil war. After the elections in 1999-2000 that marked the final peace settlement, terrorism appeared to abate but still poses a threat to the government.

Terrorist activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; see below) and similar groups in the region appear to have been at least partially disrupted by U.S.-led coalition actions in Afghanistan. The crackdown on Islamic extremism in the region, particularly in Uzbekistan, also has contributed to an ostensible quietude. Some observers, however, warn that regional IMU networks remain and that surviving elements of the IMU, al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups may be infiltrating from Afghanistan, setting up new bases, and gaining adherents.<sup>10</sup>

**Turkmenistan’s Attempted Coup.** A late November 2002 failed coup in Turkmenistan apparently is not linked to Islamic extremism but to rising discontent

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<sup>9</sup> HT literature has demanded the withdrawal of U.S.-led coalition forces and the closure of the coalition’s Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. *FBIS*, March 13, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-104; *FBIS*, January 7, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-91.

<sup>10</sup> *FBIS*, March 6, 2003, Doc. No. 217.

with Niyazov's rule among some former elite members. Niyazov immediately launched mass arrests and detentions, and the first of several trials resulted in the conviction at the end of December 2002 of former Turkmen foreign minister Boris Shikhrmuradov and two other opposition leaders (tried in absentia) for organizing the failed coup. Subsequent trials have resulted in over 60 convictions. Many of the accused "admitted" their guilt on state television, and even begged to be executed, causing human rights organizations and others to raise allegations of torture. Niyazov accused various countries of tacitly or actively supporting the coup attempt, contributing to heightened diplomatic and military tensions with Uzbekistan and others, but the Niyazov government appeared to move during 2003 to mend its trade and other ties with several of the accused states. The U.S. State Department strongly protested violations of legal due process and "credible reports" of forced confessions and other human rights abuses. A U.S. citizen remains in custody.

**Uzbekistan's Attempted Coup.** After the February 16, 1999, explosions, which various reports said killed 13-28 and wounded 100-351, Uzbek officials detained hundreds or thousands of suspects, including political oppositionists and HT members. The first trial of 22 suspects in June 1999 resulted in six receiving the death sentence. Karimov in April 1999 alleged that Mohammad Solikh (former Uzbek presidential candidate and head of the banned Erk Party) was the mastermind of the plot, and received support from the Taliban and Uzbek Islamic extremist Tohir Yuldash. The 22 suspects were described in court proceedings as receiving training in Afghanistan (by the Taliban), Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Russia (by the terrorist Khattab in Chechnya), and as led by Solikh and Yuldash and his ally Jama Namanganiy, the latter two the heads of the terrorist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Testimony alleged that Solikh had made common cause with Yuldash and Namanganiy in mid-1997, and that Solikh, Yuldash, Namanganiy, and others had agreed that Solikh would be president and Yuldash defense minister after Karimov was overthrown and a caliphate established. According to an Uzbek media report in early July 1999, the coup plot included a planned attack on Uzbekistan by Namanganiy and UTO allies transiting through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (*see below*).

Another secret trial in August 1999 of six suspects in the bombings (brothers of Solikh or members of his Erk Party) resulted in sentences ranging from 8 to 15 years. In November 2000, the Uzbek Supreme Court convicted twelve persons of terrorism, nine of whom were tried in absentia. The absent Yuldash and Namanganiy were given death sentences, and the absent Solikh 15.5 years in prison. U.S. officials criticized the apparent lack of due process during the trial. Solikh has rejected accusations of involvement in the bombings or membership in the IMU. Yuldashev too has eschewed responsibility for the bombings, but warned that more might occur if Karimov does not step down. Dozens of Uzbek herdsmen accused of assisting the incursionists received prison sentences in July 2001 after trials and torture denounced as unjust by the U.S. State Department and human rights organizations.

**The Incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.** Several hundred Islamic extremists and others who fled repression in Uzbekistan and settled in Tajikistan (some of whom were being forced out at Uzbekistan's behest), and rogue groups from Tajikistan that refused to disarm as part of the Tajik peace settlement, entered Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. Namanganiy headed the largest guerrilla

group. The guerrillas seized hostages, including four Japanese geologists, and several Kyrgyz villages, stating that they would cease hostilities if Kyrgyzstan provided a safe haven for refugees and would release hostages if Uzbekistan released jailed extremists. The guerrillas were variously rumored to be seeking to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan's defense minister on October 18, 1999, announced success in forcing virtually all guerrillas out of the southwestern mountains into Tajikistan (some critics argued that the onset of winter weather played an important part in the guerrilla retreat). Uzbek aircraft targeted several alleged guerrilla hideouts in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, eliciting protests from these states of violating airspace. Uzbek President Islam Karimov heavily criticized Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev for supposed laxity in suppressing the guerrillas. In November 1999, the Tajik government, which has mercurial relations with Uzbekistan, incensed it by allowing the guerrillas to enter Afghanistan rather than wiping them out (some Tajik opposition elements have ties to Namangan).

According to many observers, the incursion indicated both links among terrorism in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia (Chechnya and Dagestan) and the weakness of Kyrgyzstan's security forces in combating threats to its independence. Observers were split on whether this terrorism is related more to Islamic extremism, or to efforts to control narcotics resources and routes.

Dozens of IMU and other insurgents again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 2000, in Kyrgyzstan taking foreigners hostage and leading to thousands of Kyrgyz fleeing the area. Uzbekistan provided air and some other support, but Kyrgyz forces were largely responsible for defeating the insurgents by late October 2000, reporting the loss of 30 Kyrgyz troops. In Uzbekistan, the insurgents launched attacks near Tashkent and in the southeast, leading to thousands of Uzbeks fleeing the areas and the loss of 24 Uzbek troops in putting down the insurgency. Limited engagements by Kyrgyz border troops with alleged insurgents or drug traffickers were reported in late July 2001. According to some reports, the IMU did not engage in major attacks in 2001 because of its increasing attention to bin Laden's agenda, particularly after 9/11 when IMU forces fought alongside bin Laden and the Taliban against the U.S.-led coalition. The activities of the IMU appeared to have been dealt a blow by the U.S.-led coalition. Although the threat of incursions has decreased, growing civil unrest in Kyrgyzstan has prompted Akayev to seek closer security ties with Russia, China, and the United States.

**Civil War in Tajikistan.** Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and movements — largely consisting of members of Pamiri and Garmi regional elites who had long been excluded from political power — tried to take over. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons, about 80,000 of whom fled to Afghanistan. In 1993, the CIS authorized "peacekeeping" in Tajikistan. These forces consisted of Russia's 201st Rifle Division, based in Tajikistan, and token Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek troops (the Kyrgyz and Uzbek troops pulled out in 1998-1999).

After the Tajik government and opposition agreed to a cease-fire in September 1994, the UNSC established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994 with a mandate to monitor the cease-fire, later expanded to investigate cease-fire violations, monitor the demobilization of UTO fighters, assist ex-combatants to integrate into society, and offer advice for holding elections. In December 1996, the two sides agreed to set up a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), an executive body composed equally of government and opposition members. On June 27, 1997, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmanov and UTO leader Seyed Abdullo Nuri signed the *comprehensive peace agreement*, under which Rakhmanov remained president but 30% of ministerial posts were allotted to the opposition. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, including the return of refugees, demilitarization of rebel forces, legalization of rebel parties, and the holding of elections. In March 2000, the NRC disbanded, and UNMOT pulled out in May 2000. The CIS declared its peacekeeping mandate fulfilled in June 2000, but Russian troops remain under a 25-year basing agreement. Stability in Tajikistan remains fragile. An unsuccessful insurrection in northern Tajikistan in late 1998 highlights concerns by some observers about secessionist tendencies in the Soghd (formerly Leninabad) region and about ethnic tensions between ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks in Tajikistan.

## Border Tensions

Borders among the five Central Asian states for the most part were delineated by 1936, based partly on where linguistic and ethnic groups had settled, but mainly on the exigencies of Soviet control of the region. The resulting borders are ill-defined in mountainous areas and extremely convoluted in the fertile Fergana Valley, parts of which belong to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Some in Central Asia have demanded that borders be redrawn to incorporate areas inhabited by co-ethnics, or otherwise dispute the location of borders. Various problems complicate the full delineation of borders, including surveying the extreme topography of most of the region. Caspian Sea borders have not been fully agreed upon, mainly because of Turkmen and Iranian intransigence, but Russia and Kazakhstan have agreed on delineation to clear the way for exploiting their seabed oil resources. China has largely settled border delineation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, reportedly involving “splitting the differences” on many of the disputed territories, which are usually in unpopulated areas. Popular passions were aroused in Kyrgyzstan after a 1999 China-Kyrgyzstan border agreement ceded about 9,000 hectares of mountainous Kyrgyz terrain. Kyrgyz legislators in 2001 opened a hearing and even threatened to try to impeach Akayev. He arrested the leader of the impeachment effort, leading to violent demonstrations in 2002 calling for his ouster and the reversal of the “traitorous” border agreement. Dissident legislators appealed the border agreement to the Constitutional Court, which ruled in late February 2003 that it was legal.<sup>11</sup>

The problem of ambiguous borders has been an important source of concern to Russia and Kazakhstan, since northern Kazakhstan still has a large concentration of ethnic Russians. During most of the 1990s, neither Russia nor Kazakhstan wished

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<sup>11</sup> *FBIS*, February 28, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-284; *FBIS*, March 9, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-27.

to push border delineation, Russia because of concerns that it would be conceding that Kazakhstan's heavily ethnic Russian northern regions are part of Kazakhstan, and Kazakhstan because of concerns that delineation might inflame separatism. In 1998, Russia established border patrols along its 4,200 mile border with Kazakhstan for security reasons, and determined to delineate the border. By early 2003, the two states reportedly had agreed on 85% of their borders.<sup>12</sup> To head off separatist proclivities in the north, Kazakhstan reorganized administrative borders in northern regions to dilute the influence of ethnic Russians, established a strongly centralized government to limit local rule, and moved its capital northward.

Uzbekistan's border claims have contributed to tense relations with all the other Central Asian states. Legislators and others in Kyrgyzstan in 2001 vehemently protested a border delineation agreement with Uzbekistan reached by the two prime ministers that ceded a swath of the Kyrgyz Batken region, ostensibly to improve Uzbek access to its Sokh enclave in Kyrgyzstan. Faced with this protest, the Kyrgyz prime minister argued that no binding agreement had been reached, and the government sent a demarche to Uzbekistan repudiating any intention to cede territory. In early 2003, each country traded accusations that the other was dragging its feet, so that less than one-half of the 700 mile border had been agreed on in three years of talks. Uzbekistan's unilateral efforts to delineate and fortify its borders with Kazakhstan in the late 1990s led to tensions. In September 2002, however, the Kazakh and Uzbek presidents announced that delineation of their 1,400 mile border was complete, and some people in previously disputed border villages began to relocate if they felt that the new borders cut them off from their "homeland." However, many people continued to ignore the new border or were uncertain of its location, leading to several shootings of Kazakh citizens by Uzbek border troops. The Uzbek and Tajik presidents signed an accord in October 2002 delimiting most of their 720 mile joint border.

Besides border claims, other problems revolve around whether borders are open or closed. Open borders within the Central Asian states after the breakup of the Soviet Union were widely viewed as fostering trafficking in drugs and contraband and free migration, so border controls have been tightened in all the states. During 2001, Kazakhstan joined Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in imposing a visa regime on cross-border travel, while Kyrgyzstan has loosened its visa requirements on U.S. and Western European travelers. Uzbekistan mined its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1999, intended to protect it against terrorist incursions, but in fact leading to many civilian Kyrgyz and Tajik casualties.<sup>13</sup> Kyrgyzstan has demanded that Uzbekistan clear mines it has sown along the borders, including some allegedly sown on Kyrgyz territory, but the Uzbek Foreign Ministry in March 2003 asserted that it would maintain the minefields to combat terrorism. (Kyrgyzstan too has raised tensions by sowing mines and blowing up mountain passes along its borders with Tajikistan.) Border tensions between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan also flared in late 2002, after Turkmenistan accused Uzbek officials of complicity in the coup attempt.

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<sup>12</sup> *FBIS*, February 19, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-275.

<sup>13</sup> Tajik officials reported in early 2003 that 60 people had been killed since the sowing of the mines in August 2000, and about the same number wounded. *FBIS*, January 6, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-130.

Uzbekistan's economic problems led it in mid-2002 to impose heavy duties on imports and at the beginning of 2003 to close its borders to "suitcase trading" (small-scale, unregulated trading), heightening tensions with bordering states.

Iran and Turkmenistan are the major impediment to wider agreement on Caspian Sea border delineation and resource use and access, contributing to tensions and the build-up of naval forces in the Sea. Iran's intransigence led Russia in August 2002 to conduct the largest naval maneuvers in its history in the northern Caspian. Kazakhstan announced its intent to form a navy in early 2003, leading to protests from the Russian Foreign Ministry, but Kazakh military officials emphasized their determination to proceed with plans to protect their offshore oil fields and maritime borders and said they were receiving support from the Russian military.

Russia's state-owned newspaper *Rossiyskaya gazeta* in January 2003 argued that the increasing border tensions among the Central Asian states played into the hands of terrorists seeking to exploit such national and ethnic divisions. It criticized the escalating number of border checkpoints and trade restrictions among the Central Asian states, asserting that these efforts had restricted economic development more than trafficking in drugs and other contraband. Minefields, it argued, had killed many civilians but had an uncertain affect on terrorists. It called for careful deliberation in delineating borders, so that the problems inherited from Stalin's drawing of borders are not exacerbated.<sup>14</sup>

## Crime and Corruption

Corruption is a serious threat to democratization and economic growth in all the states. The increasing amount of foreign currency entering the states as the result of foreign oil and natural gas investments, the low pay of most government bureaucrats, and inadequate laws and norms are conducive to the growth of corruption. Perhaps most important, the weakness of the rule of law permits the Soviet-era political patronage and spoils system to continue.<sup>15</sup> Organized crime networks have expanded in all the Central Asian states, and have established ties with crime groups worldwide that are involved in drug, arms, and human trafficking. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan serve as origin, transit, or destination states for human trafficking. Crime groups collude with local border and other officials to transport people to the Middle East or other destinations for forced labor or prostitution.<sup>16</sup>

Oil and gas revenues have exacerbated corruption in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Turkmen President Niyazov controls a "presidential fund," that receives 50% of gas revenues and is ostensibly used for economic development, though budgetary transparency is lacking on how the fund is used. He has fired and imprisoned many of his ministers and other officials on allegations of corruption.

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<sup>14</sup> *FBIS*, January 21, 2003, Doc. No. CEP-102.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Embassies in Central Asian capitals, *Investment Climate Statements*, 1998-2002; For ratings for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, see Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index*, [<http://www.transparency.org>].

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2002.

Perhaps the most sensational allegations of corruption have involved signing bonuses and other payments by U.S. energy companies operating in Kazakhstan that allegedly found their way into Swiss bank accounts linked to Kazakh officials, including Nazarbayev. U.S. officials concurred with a Swiss decision to freeze the funds and open investigations in 1999-2000. The *New York Times* reported that Nazarbayev unsuccessfully raised the issue of unfreezing some of these accounts during his visit with President Bush in December 2001. In April 2002, the Kazakh prime minister stated that \$1 billion in Swiss accounts were used only to cover Kazakh government budget deficits, and in February 2003, Nazarbayev maintained that the U.S. Justice Department was investigating only actions by U.S. firms and citizens.<sup>17</sup>

## Economic and Defense Security

The Central Asian states have worked to bolster their economic and defense capabilities by seeking assistance from individual Western donors such as the United States, by trying to cooperate with each other, and by joining myriad international organizations, including the ECO, OIC, CIS, EU bodies, NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP), GUUAM, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>18</sup> Regional cooperation has faced challenges from economic crises in Asia and Russia, differential economic development and hence divergent interests among the states, and more nationalistic postures. Cooperation also is undermined by what the states view as Uzbekistan's overbearing impulses. Some observers argue that the establishment of U.S. military bases in Central Asia has exacerbated the strategic imbalance within the region, with the states viewing Uzbekistan (and much less so, Kyrgyzstan) as gaining military power from its U.S. ties. However, others argue that the United States has somewhat ameliorated such concerns by stressing its "nonpermanent" basing arrangements and by bolstering military ties with most of the regional states. Nonetheless, concerns about Uzbekistan's power have contributed to Tajikistan's countervailing ties with Russia, Turkmenistan's ties with Iran, and Kyrgyzstan's and Kazakhstan's ties with Russia and China.

All of the Central Asian states have been faced with creating small military and border forces and have had vexing problems with military financing and training. At first dependent on the contract service of Russian troops and officers in their nascent militaries, the states now rely little on such manpower (except for Tajikistan), but continue to depend on training and equipment ties with Russia. After 9/11, the states have benefitted from boosted U.S. military training and equipment aid.

The capabilities of the military, border, and other security forces are limited, compared to those of neighboring states such as Russia, China, or Iran. Forces range from about 6,000 troops in Tajikistan (excluding Russians) to 60,000 in

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<sup>17</sup> *New York Times*, December 11, 2002, p. A16; *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, February 5, 2003; *Washington Post*, June 10, 2002, p. A12; *Financial Times* (London), April 16, 2002, p. 12; *Agence France Presse*, September 24, 2001; *PR Newswire*, January 10, 2001; *Washington Post*, September 25, 2000, p. A1. A National Fund was created in early 2001 by the Kazakh National Bank for receipt of oil revenues, and operates under strict accounting standards.

<sup>18</sup> GUUAM is named after members Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. See below.

Kazakhstan.<sup>19</sup> The states have variously solicited training and technical assistance from the United States, Turkey, China, and other countries, have forged security ties with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and NATO's PFP, and cooperated in regional bodies such as SCO and GUUAM.<sup>20</sup>

The Central Asian states (except Tajikistan) have generally criticized the CIS as both ineffective and dominated by Russia. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan joined Russia and Belarus in reaffirming the CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST) when it came up for renewal in 1999.<sup>21</sup> Turkmenistan did not sign the treaty, citing its neutral status. Uzbekistan withdrew from the treaty in 1999. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan participate in CIS (in actuality, Russian) air defense and air force programs and exercises.

Cooperation among the Central Asian states began to develop by the mid 1990s, leading to several initiatives, but by 2003 showed few if any results. A customs union formed between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in January 1994 (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined later) achieved some modest early success as a regional forum. Renamed the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC) in July 1998, it consisted of an executive committee of heads of state and government, a Council of Foreign Ministers, Centrazbat, and a Central Asian Bank. Criticizing the scant achievements of the CAEC, Karimov in early 2001 proposed that it become a forum for "wide-ranging" policy discussions, and it was renamed the Central Asian Cooperation Organization in December 2001 (CACO). Economic cooperation has been stymied by Uzbekistan's price controls and lack of a freely convertible currency, tariffs levied by the states on Kyrgyzstan because of its membership in WTO, and tightening border restrictions that stifle trade.<sup>22</sup> At its fourth summit in December 2002, the presidents called for greater security cooperation and discussed further coordination of aid deliveries to Afghanistan.

In another area of regional cooperation, the GUUAM states share a common interest in securing energy transport and supply that is outside Russian control, and they are involved in joint efforts to guard the Azerbaijan-Georgia oil pipeline. Formed in 1997, GUAM admitted Uzbekistan as a member in April 1999 while leaders and officials were attending the Washington NATO Summit. Karimov stated that Uzbekistan joined the group to facilitate the delivery of its oil and gas resources

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<sup>19</sup> *The Military Balance, 2002-2003*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002; *FBIS*, September 30, 2002, Doc. No. CEP-367.

<sup>20</sup> Another group is the 6+2 contact group on Afghanistan, formed under U.N. auspices at Uzbekistan's behest in 1997 to promote peace in Afghanistan. The members include Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, and Iran, along with the United States and Russia. The last meeting of the group was in September 2002.

<sup>21</sup> The CST calls for signatories to abjure force against each other and to assist one another in case of outside acts of aggression. See *FBIS-SOV-92-101*, May 26, 1992, pp. 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Analyst Martin Spechler argues that the Central Asian region lacks the impetus to cooperation provided by a perceived outside threat. *Problems of Post-Communism*, November/December 2002, p. 46.



to Western markets.<sup>23</sup> Ukraine and some other East European states are interested in Caspian region energy resources both as supplies and as means to lessen vulnerability to Russian sources. In 2001, GUUAM appeared riven by Moldova's election of a communist government that was seeking closer ties to Russia, and differences of view about where Caspian resources should go. Uzbekistan retracted an announcement in June 2002 that it was withdrawing from GUUAM because it had proven ineffective, but "suspended" its participation in some meetings. Perhaps allaying such concerns about GUUAM's ineffectiveness, in late 2002, Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones met with GUUAM ambassadors to announce a "Framework Program" for projects in trade and transport and combating terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking. The United States will initially fund customs and border security assistance and the creation of a "virtual" law enforcement center, along with meetings of U.S. and group law enforcement officials, the first of which took place in Baku in February 2003.

In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, signed the "Shanghai Treaty" with China pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of mutual borders, and in 1997 they signed a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,000 mile former Soviet-Chinese border. China has used the treaty to pressure the Central Asian states to deter their ethnic Uighur minorities from supporting separatism in China's Xinjiang province, and to get them to extradite Uighurs fleeing China (for details, see CRS Report RL31213, *China's Relations with Central Asian States*). In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the group, re-named the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In an interview explaining why Uzbekistan joined, President Karimov seemed to indicate that the primary motive was to protect Uzbekistan's interests against any possible moves by the SCO. He appeared to stress the possible military aid the SCO might provide to beef up the Uzbek armed forces and help it combat terrorism, and to dismiss the capability of the SCO to engage in effective joint action. He also indicated that Uzbekistan wished to forge closer relations with China.<sup>24</sup>

The SCO played no real role in U.S.-led coalition actions in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the United States attempted to contact the SCO right after 9/11, but discovered that its "headquarters" in Bishkek was dormant. China and Russia have appeared to move slowly in bolstering the SCO, since some of the reasons for forming it — to counter terrorism and limit U.S. presence — appear less salient since the United States moved militarily into the region after 9/11. Though raising concerns about how long the United States will maintain a military presence in the region, some Chinese officials have acknowledged that U.S. anti-terrorism efforts have increased stability along China's borders. Funding and staffing for the SCO's antiterrorism center in Bishkek are still under debate and it is not expected to open until the latter half of 2003.

**Water Resources.** Growing demand for limited water resources may threaten the stability of the region and hinder economic development (though more efficient water use would be ameliorative). River diversion and the overuse and misuse of water for cotton growing have drained the Amu and Syr Darya Rivers, so

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<sup>23</sup> *FBIS*, May 3, 1999, Doc. No. FTS-662.

<sup>24</sup> *The Times of Central Asia*, June 17, 2001.

that little or no water reaches the Aral Sea, creating region-wide environmental problems. Regional cooperation on water management has foundered, replaced by ad hoc arrangements. A three-year drought (2000-2002) has accentuated tensions among the states, since increased demand in the downstream states can not be met because of decreased supplies of water in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Despite the drought, profligate wasting of water continues because of ill-designed and deteriorating irrigation canals, lack of water meters, efforts to boost cotton production, and schemes such as Niyazov's attempt to create a new lake. The lack of regional cooperation is illustrated by Uzbekistan's early 2003 seizure of a part of the Karshinskiy Canal in Turkmenistan, the only source of water for Uzbekistan's Kashkardarya oblast, after bilateral water-sharing talks broke down. The need for even wider discussion of water resources is illustrated by China's efforts to divert Irtysh River water to its Xinjiang region, reducing such resources for Russia and Kazakhstan (the latter two states also vie over this water).

**Energy and Transport.** The land-locked Central Asian region must rely on the uncertain benevolence and stability of its surrounding neighbors to reach outside markets. Regional transport links include the railway from Druzhba in Kazakhstan to Urumchi in China, opened in 1992. China and Pakistan are assisting Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in upgrading the Karakorum Highway from Urumchi to Pakistan. A railway link between Iran and Turkmenistan opened in 1996. The "Friendship Bridge" linking Uzbekistan and Afghanistan was closed by Uzbekistan in 1997 as a result of drug and arms trafficking and terrorist threats, but re-opened in 2002 following the ouster of the Taliban. The EU-sponsored Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia (TRACECA) program started in 1993, aimed at the re-creation of the "silk road" linking East and West. The transport routes would bypass Russia and enhance the independence of the Central Asian states. TRACECA has funded the refurbishment of rail lines and roads, and is supporting the building of a rail line from Uzbekistan through Kyrgyzstan to China. Another EU program, INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe), focuses on rehabilitation, modernization, and extension of oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian region to the West. Some Central Asian observers have criticized these EU programs as slow-moving.

To a significant degree, Central Asia's energy security is dependent on stability in the South Caucasus and beyond. The CPC pipeline is vulnerable to instability in Russia's North Caucasus area. An oil pipeline now being constructed from Baku through Georgia to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan (termed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan or BTC pipeline) — which may receive some oil from Kazakhstan — and a proposed gas pipeline from Baku to Turkey — which may eventually be linked to Turkmenistan — face problems of instability in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Whereas terrorists such as Kurdish groups in Turkey are usually able to only temporarily and superficially disable pipelines, political and ethnic instability and separatism in the North and South Caucasus may pose greater problems.

The Central Asian states face pressures from Russia's energy firms and government to yield portions of their energy wealth to Russia and to limit ties with Western firms. These efforts include some free-market moves such as building pipelines and obtaining shares in Central Asian consortiums, but Russia's firms and government sometimes pursue negative measures such as trying to block Western

investment and Central Asian exports. For instance, Russia cut off Turkmen gas exports to the West in 1994 and forced it to ship its gas to CIS states unable to pay, such as Ukraine. Russia placed strict quotas on oil shipments through its pipelines to pressure Kazakhstan to yield shares in energy projects. Russia's restrictions on Tengiz oil exports to Europe were eased slightly in 1996 after the consortium admitted LUKoil, and after Gazprom was admitted to another consortium. Russian interests hold a major share in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which in early 2001 completed building a 930-mile oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. The completion of the pipeline provided a major boost to Russia's economic leverage in the Caspian region, since it controls the pipeline route and terminus, although Kazakhstan in theory also gained some say-so as an partner in CPC.

Turkmenistan is currently largely dependent on Russian export routes. In 1993, Russia had halted Turkmen gas exports to Western markets through its pipelines, diverting Turkmen gas to other Eurasian states that had trouble paying for the gas. In 1997, Russia cut off these shipments because of transit fee arrears and other problems. In 1998 and every year thereafter, Turkmenistan has tried to get higher prices for its gas but has capitulated to Russia's natural gas firm Gazprom or, since 2000, its subsidiary Itera. Putin's talks in January, 2002 with Niyazov on long-term gas supplies were unproductive because Niyazov balked at the low prices offered.

Seeking alternatives, Turkmenistan in late 1997 opened a 125-mile gas pipeline from a Turkmen gas field to the Iranian pipeline system for use in northern Iran. A 1998 framework agreement and a May 1999 gas supply agreement between Turkey and Turkmenistan envisaged Turkmen gas flows to Turkey when a pipeline either traversing Iran or a trans-Caspian route through Azerbaijan and Georgia were built.<sup>25</sup> In September 1999, Turkmenistan also joined Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey in signing a declaration on a trans-Caspian gas pipeline (with an eventual capacity of sixteen billion meters per year). Plans for a trans-Caspian gas pipeline, however, were derailed in 2000 by a clash between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan over how much gas each nation could ship through the Baku-Turkey leg of the prospective gas pipeline, and by Turkmenistan's rejection of proposals from the PSG consortium formed to build the trans-Caspian leg of the pipeline. Turkmenistan's efforts to interest investors in building a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan have been unsuccessful because of the Afghan government's uncertain control over its territory and questions about Turkmenistan's stability.

Perhaps marking dissatisfaction with Russian delays in opening pipelines, and Moscow's use of pipeline pressure to extract economic concessions, in December 1997, Kazakh President Nazarbayev, Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev, and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze agreed to explore building an oil pipeline under the Caspian Sea to link up with the proposed BTC pipeline. In October 1998, these leaders were joined by Uzbek President Karimov and the Turkish president in signing an "Ankara Declaration" endorsing the BTC route with a possible trans-Caspian extension. Turkmenistan later endorsed this route. On November 18, 1999,

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<sup>25</sup> The gas pipeline from Tabriz to Ankara began operations in December 2001, but Turkmen gas is not yet being sold to Turkey through this pipeline.

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey also signed an “Istanbul Protocol” on construction of the BTC pipeline, now under construction and expected to be completed in 2005 with a capacity of one million barrels per day.

## **Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

International concerns over the proliferation risks posed by Central Asia’s nuclear research and power reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and associated personnel have been heightened by increasing Western, Russian, and Central Asian media reports of attempted diversions of nuclear materials to terrorist states or criminal groups. Nuclear fuel cycle facilities are often only minimally secured, and personnel may be poorly paid, creating targets of opportunity. Kazakhstan is reported to possess one-fourth of the world’s uranium reserves, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are among the world’s top producers of yellow cake (low enriched uranium).<sup>26</sup> Major customers for Kazakhstan’s yellow cake have included the United States and Europe. Kazakhstan’s Ulba fuel fabrication facility provides nuclear fuel pellets to Russia and other NIS. Kazakhstan had a fast breeder reactor at its Caspian port of Aktau, the world’s only nuclear desalinization facility. Decommissioned in April 1999, it has nearly 300 metric tons of enriched uranium and plutonium spent fuel in ill-kept storage pools. Uzbek’s Navoi mining and milling facility exports yellow cake through the U.S. firm Nukem. Kyrgyzstan’s Kara Balta milling facility ships low-enriched uranium to Ulba and to Russia. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also hosted major chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities during the Soviet era, raising major concerns about possible proliferation dangers posed by remaining materials and personnel.

## **Illegal Narcotics Production, Use, and Trafficking**

The increasing trafficking and use of illegal narcotics in Central Asia endanger the security, independence, and development of the states by stunting economic and political reforms and exacerbating crime, corruption, and health problems.<sup>27</sup> As a conduit, the region receives increasing attention from criminal groups smuggling narcotics from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and elsewhere to markets in Russia and Europe. Afghanistan has been the main producer state trafficking drugs through the region. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that up to 20%

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<sup>26</sup> After the Soviet breakup, independent Kazakhstan was on paper one of the world’s major nuclear weapons powers, but in reality these weapons were controlled by Russia. On April 21, 1995, the last nuclear warheads were transferred to Russia.

<sup>27</sup> Up to 7% of the GDP of the region is derived from drug trafficking, but the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime warns that funds derived from drug trafficking “in criminal hands, obviously destabilize the state, civil society as well as the economy .... Corruption, violence, and ‘dirty money’, including financial support for terrorist organizations, have negative repercussions for legitimate investment and thus compromise economic growth in the long run.” It also reports that over 1.1% (600,000) of Central Asia’s population is addicted to drugs, with the percentage addicted to opiates being three times that in Europe. See United Nations. Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*, 2003, pp. 190, 203-204. See also Nancy Lubin, Alex Klaitis, and Igor Barsegian, *Narcotics Interdiction in Afghanistan and Central Asia*, Open Society Institute, 2002.

of the morphine and heroin produced in Afghanistan are trafficked through Central Asia, and up to 7% of the opium, and that these percentages are increasing. It also reports that such trafficking appeared to rebound in 2002 despite the anti-drug efforts of the post-Taliban Afghan government. Treatment facilities for the increasing numbers of drug addicts in Central Asia are inadequate.

Organized crime groups based in producer countries have been able to expand their influence in Central Asia because of poorly patrolled borders, lack of cooperation among the states, lawlessness, and corruption among officials, police, and border guards. Also, problems with traditional export routes for Asian drugs have encouraged the use of Central Asia as a heroin transshipment route. Nigerian organized crime groups reportedly tranship some Pakistani heroin through Central Asia to Russian markets, and sell some in Central Asia. Even Latin American crime groups have reportedly smuggled drugs into Central Asia destined for Russia, such as cocaine from Brazil. These and other international organized crime groups are integrating Central Asian crime groups into their operations.<sup>28</sup> Organized crime groups also have worked closely with Islamic terrorist groups such as the Taliban and the IMU in drug trafficking. According to Interpol, the IMU was the major smuggler of heroin through Central Asia.<sup>29</sup> Russian and Tajik border troops along the Tajik-Afghan border allegedly gain major revenues from bribes from drug smugglers from Afghanistan. In Kazakhstan, some police and security personnel reportedly vie to offer their services to drug traffickers.<sup>30</sup>

Counter-narcotics agencies in the Central Asian states are hampered by inadequate budgets, personnel training, and equipment, but most have registered ever greater drug seizures. Tajikistan's seizures declined in 2002, perhaps indicating that some smugglers were using alternative routes in other countries. In 1999, it set up a presidential level Drug Control Agency to coordinate myriad departmental efforts. Kazakhstan set up a Commission on Counteracting Drug Addiction and Drug Trafficking in 2002 to consolidate the activities of several agencies, and is cooperating with the EU in setting up a Central Asia anti-narcotics information center. A National Center for Drug Control set up by Uzbekistan continues to struggle to coordinate counter-narcotics efforts by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Security Service, and the State Customs Committee.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Irina Adinayeva, *International Drug Trafficking and Central Asia. Building a Common Future*, ed. by P. Stobdan, New Delhi, 1999; *FBIS*, August 4, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on Crime. Testimony of Ralf Mutschke, Assistant Director, Subdirector for Crimes Against Persons and Property, Interpol, December 13, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Martha Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2002, pp. 219-220.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. State Department. Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, March 2003.

## Implications for U.S. Interests

Since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the Administration has stated that U.S. policy toward Central Asia focuses on three inter-related activities: the promotion of security, domestic reforms, and energy development. The 9/11 attacks led the Administration to realize that “it was critical to the national interests of the United States that we greatly enhance our relations with the five Central Asian countries” to prevent them from becoming harbors for terrorism, according to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe in testimony in June 2002. While then-U.S. Caspian emissary Elizabeth Jones (currently Assistant Secretary of State) in April 2001 carefully elucidated that the United States would not intervene militarily to halt incursions by Islamic terrorists into Central Asia, this stance was effectively reversed after 9/11. U.S.-led counter-terrorism efforts were undertaken in Afghanistan, including against terrorists harbored in Afghanistan who aimed to overthrow Central Asian governments and who were assisting in Taliban fighting against the coalition. Added security training and equipment were provided to the Central Asian states, supplemented by more aid to promote democratization, human rights, and economic reforms, because the latter aid addressed “root causes of terrorism,” according to Jones in testimony in December 2001. She averred that “we rely on [Central Asian] governments for the security and well-being of our troops, and for vital intelligence,” and that the United States “will not abandon Central Asia” after peace is achieved in Afghanistan.

U.S. efforts to help resolve conflicts in the new independent states (NIS) have included naming a State Department Coordinator of Regional Affairs, whose portfolio in the 1990s included helping to settle the Tajik civil war. Similarly, the U.S. interest in Caspian oil and gas led in 1998 to the creation of the post of Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy, to coordinate TDA, OPIC, Eximbank and other agency programs to ensure the “development of the Caspian and open commercial access to its energy resources.” These posts have been retained by the Bush Administration (though the Special Advisor’s post has been slightly downgraded).

The U.S. government has moved to classify various groups in the region as terrorist organizations, making them subject to various sanctions. In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU, led by Yuldash, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. The “main goal of the IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan,” it warned, linking the IMU to bombings and attacks on Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. The IMU is being aided by Afghanistan’s Taliban and by terrorist bin Laden, according to the State Department, and it stressed that the “United States supports the right of Uzbekistan to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the violent actions of the IMU.” At the same time, the United States has stressed that efforts to combat terrorism cannot include widespread human rights violations. The designation made it illegal for U.S. entities to provide funds or resources to the IMU; made it possible to deport IMU representatives from, or to forbid their admission to, the United States; and permitted the seizure of its U.S. assets. It also permitted the United States to increase intelligence sharing and other security assistance to Uzbekistan. On September 20, 2001, President Bush in his

address to a Joint Session of Congress stressed that the IMU was linked to al Qaeda and demanded that the Taliban hand over all such terrorists, or they would be targeted by U.S.-led military forces. According to most observers, the President was stressing that Uzbekistan should actively support the United States in the Afghan operation. Some critics have argued that by formally condemning the IMU, the United States is viewed by many in Uzbekistan as allying itself with the Karimov regime.

In August 2002, the United States announced that it was freezing any U.S. assets of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a Uighur group operating in Central Asia, since the group had committed numerous terrorist acts in China and elsewhere and posed a threat to Americans and U.S. interests. In September 2002, the United States, China, and other nations asked the U.N. to add ETIM to its terrorism list. China reported that its military exercises with Kyrgyzstan in November 2002 were aimed at helping Kyrgyzstan to eliminate the group.

On the other hand, the United States has not yet classified Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) as a terrorist group. According to the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, "despite [Eurasian] regional governments' claims, the United States has not found clear links between Hizb ut-Tahrir and terrorist activities."<sup>32</sup> Reflecting this view, U.S. officials have criticized Central Asian governments for imprisoning HT members who are not proven to be actively engaged in terrorist activities, and for imprisoning other political and religious dissidents under false accusations that they are HT members. According to a November 2002 State Department factsheet, HT has not advocated the violent overthrow of Central Asian governments, so the United States has not designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organization. The State Department is monitoring HT because it has "clearly incite[d] violence" since 9/11, such as praising Palestinian suicide attacks against Israel, denouncing the basing of U.S.-led coalition forces in Central Asia, and calling for jihad against the United States and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, the State Department has urged the Central Asian governments to "prosecute their citizens for illegal acts, not for their beliefs." A statement of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in October 2002 emphasizes that thousands of religious dissidents have been imprisoned in Uzbekistan on questionable charges that they are HT members, and stresses that HT members and others should only be jailed on the basis of "actual conduct, beyond mere association or statements." Reflecting concerns about violence by HT, however, German authorities in January 2003 outlawed HT activities in Germany, declaring that it was a terrorist organization that advocates violence against Israel and Jews. After the start of coalition operations in Iraq in mid-March 2003, HT leaflets in Kyrgyzstan reportedly called for Muslims to fight against U.S. "infidels."

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<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, May 2002. According to Rashid, the U.S. Government debated the status of HT in 2000 but declined to classify it as a terrorist group. *Jihad*, pp. 132-135.

## U.S. Security Assistance

Besides humanitarian and reform aid, the Administration bolstered its U.S. security assistance to Central Asia after 9/11. Such aid amounted to \$602.3 million in cumulative budgeted funds through FY2002, of which the largest quantity went to Kazakhstan for Comprehensive Threat Reduction (CTR) programs (see Tables 1 and 3, below). U.S. foreign aid for FY2003 (Omnibus Appropriations, P.L.108-7) emphasizes security assistance to the Central Asian states. Funding for IMET programs is maintained or increased for all the states, with the aim of fostering closer military-to-military ties and respect for democratic civil-military relations, and funding for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is increased for all the states except Tajikistan (where program parameters are still being worked out) and Uzbekistan (which received a large boost in emergency funding for FMF in FY2002 during the height of U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan). Funding for non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, demining, and related programs (NADR) and for export controls and border security (EXBS) programs declined somewhat in FY2003 compared to the boosted emergency funding in FY2002.

**Table 1. Cumulative Funds Budgeted FY1992-FY2002 for Central Asian Security Programs (Freedom Support Act and Agency Funds)**  
(million dollars)

DOD Cooperative Threat Reduction	198.6
DOD DoD/FBI Counterprolif.	4.0
DOD DoD/US Customs Service Counterproliferation	2.6
DOD Warsaw Initiative (Partnership for Peace)	6.1
DOE Material Protection, Controls and Acct.	20.3
DOE Nonproliferation and Intern. Security	76.3
DOE / DOS Nuclear Reactor Safety	12.3
DOE / DOS Initiatives for Prolif. Prev. (IPP)	6.6
DOS Export Control and Border Security	81.4
DOS USDA - Agricultural Research Serv.	8.8
DOS EPA - Bio Redirect	1.6
DOS HHS - Bioterrorism Engagement Prog.	3.4
DOS Foreign Military Financing	82.1
DOS International Military Exch. and Training	12.7
DOS Peacekeeping Operations	0.7
DOS Nonproliferation/Disarmament Fund	0.6



DOS Science Centers	22.2
DOS Anti-Crime Training and Technical Asst.	44.2
DOS Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA)	8.5
DOS DoJ Overseas Prosecut. Development and Training	1.1
DOS / NSF Civilian R&D Foundation (CRDF)	8.1
TOTAL Security and Law Enforcement Asst.	602.3

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, U.S. fears of nuclear proliferation were focused on nuclear-armed Kazakhstan, and it has received the bulk of regional CTR and Department of Energy (DOE) aid for de-nuclearization, enhancing the “chain of custody,” and demilitarization. Some CTR and DOE aid also has gone to Uzbekistan. As of September 30, 2002, \$313.2 million in such funds had been budgeted for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Material physical protection aid provided to Kazakhstan’s Ulba Metallurgical Plant includes alarms, computers for inventory control, and hardening of doors.<sup>33</sup> Similar aid has been provided for Kazakhstan’s Aktau reactor. Agreements were signed at the November 1997 meeting of the U.S.-Kazakh Joint Commission to study how to safely and securely store over 300 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium and plutonium spent fuel from the Aktau reactor, some of which had become inundated by the rising Caspian Sea and was highly vulnerable to theft. Enhanced aid for export controls and customs and border security for Kazakhstan following reports of conventional arms smuggling, including a 1999 attempted shipment of Soviet-era Migs to North Korea.<sup>34</sup> Kazakhstan has received CTR funds for dismantling equipment and for environmental monitoring at several Soviet-era chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities.

At the U.S.-Uzbek Joint Commission meeting in May 1999, the two sides signed a CTR Implementation Agreement on securing, dismantling, and de-contaminating the Soviet-era Nukus chemical research facility. Other aid helped keep Uzbek weapons scientists employed in peaceful research. On June 5, 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell signed his first international agreement, extending new CTR assistance to Uzbekistan. The United States assisted in cleaning up a Soviet-era CBW testing site and dump on an island in the Aral Sea belonging to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where Western media in June 1999 had reported the alarming discovery of live anthrax spores.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Previous U.S. assistance has included removing about 600 kilograms of highly enriched uranium from an inadequately safeguarded warehouse in Kazakhstan, and shipping it to the United States (the operation was codenamed “Project Sapphire”). In 1995, the U.S. Defense Department assisted Kazakhstan in sealing tunnels at the Semipalitinsk former nuclear test site, to secure nuclear wastes.

<sup>34</sup> *FBIS*, February 17, 2001, Doc. No. CEP-120.

<sup>35</sup> Gulbarshyn Bozheyeva, Yerlan Kunakbayev, and Dastan Yeleukenov. *Former Soviet Biological Weapons Facilities in Kazakhstan*, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, (continued...)

**Counter-Narcotics Aid.** According to the State Department and U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), drugs produced in or transiting Central Asia have not yet reached the United States in major quantities. However, there is rising U.S. concern, since Latin American and other international organized groups have become involved in the Central Asian drug trade, and European governments have begun to focus on combating drug trafficking through this new route. U.S. policy also emphasizes the threat of rising terrorism, crime, corruption, and instability posed by illegal narcotics production, use, and trafficking in Central Asia. The FBI, DEA, and Customs have given training in counter-narcotics to police, customs, and border control personnel in Central Asia as part of the Anti-Crime Training and Technical Assistance Program sponsored by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Some Central Asian drug officials also have received training at the Budapest ILEA, and by the U.S. Coast Guard. Other U.S. aid is provided through the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime.<sup>36</sup>

**Military Aid.** The United States and the Central Asian states signed defense cooperation accords prior to 9/11 providing frameworks for aid and joint staff and working group contacts, paving the way for greatly enhanced cooperation after 9/11. Reportedly, such pre-9/11 ties included Uzbek permission for U.S. clandestine efforts against al Qaeda in Afghanistan. According to Assistant Secretary of Defense Crouch in testimony in June 2002, "our military relationships with each [Central Asian] nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>." Kyrgyzstan, he relates, is a "critical regional partner" in OEF, providing basing for combat and combat support units at Manas Airport (at the U.S.-designated Ganci airbase) for U.S., French, Italian, Norwegian, Canadian, and South Korean forces. Uzbekistan provides a base for U.S. operations at Karshi-Khanabad and a base for German units at Termez, and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez. It has also leased to the coalition IL-76 transport airlift for forces and equipment. Kazakhstan has provided overflight rights and expedited rail transshipment of supplies. Turkmenistan has permitted blanket overflight and refueling privileges for humanitarian flights in support of OEF. Tajikistan has permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for U.S., British, and French refueling and basing. While the Administration has rejected the idea of permanent military bases in these states, Crouch stated in June 2002 that "for the foreseeable future, U.S. defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats" and to build effective armed forces under civilian control.

Among recent accords, on March 12, 2002, a U.S.-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership was signed that includes a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirms that "it would regard with grave concern any external

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<sup>35</sup> (...continued)

Monterey Institute of International Studies, June 1999; *FBIS*, November 20, 2002, Doc. No. CEP-139.

<sup>36</sup> *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*. U.S. State Department, 2002; *The Supply of Illicit Drugs to the United States*. U.S. Justice Department, DEA, November 1998. *U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY2001 Annual Report*. U.S. State Department, March 2002.

threat” to Uzbekistan’s security and would consult with Uzbekistan “on an urgent basis” regarding a response. The two states pledge to intensify military cooperation, including “re-equipping the Armed Forces” of Uzbekistan. Similarly, visiting Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev and President Bush issued a joint statement on September 23, 2002, pledging to deepen the strategic partnership, including cooperation in counter-terrorism, and the United States highlighted its aid for Kyrgyzstan’s border security and military capabilities. Nothing was revealed about whether Kyrgyzstan would renew the Ganci base lease, but in January 2003, Akayev stressed that the presence of the coalition forces was temporary and would end when antiterrorist operations were concluded in Afghanistan. In early October 2002, Kyrgyzstan’s Deputy Prime Minister praised the economic benefits of Ganci, stressing that coalition forces already had spent up to \$35 million, about 15% of Kyrgyzstan’s yearly budget.

Even before 9/11, the United States fostered military-to-military cooperation through NATO’s PFP, which all the Central Asian states except Tajikistan had joined by mid-1994. With encouragement from the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), Tajikistan indicated in mid-2001 that it would join PFP, and it signed accords on admission in February 2002. At the signing, a NATO press release hailed Tajikistan’s support to the coalition as “of key importance” to combating international terrorism. Central Asian officers and troops have participated in PFP exercises in the United States since 1995, and U.S. troops have participated in Centrazbat exercises in Central Asia in 1997, 1998, and 2000. Many in Central Asia viewed these exercises as “sending a message” to Islamic extremists and others in Afghanistan, Iran, and elsewhere against fostering regional instability. Centrazbat suffered from wrangling among its members and has been replaced by bilateral or ad hoc multilateral training exercises and exchanges, which were stepped up after 9/11. In June 2001, Germany hosted PFP command staff exercises involving Central Asians. In March 2002, Uzbekistan participated in NATO and PFP exercises in Poland. It has appeared that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have vied to gain services from NATO.

All the states except Tajikistan became eligible in FY1997 to receive non-lethal defense articles and services (Presidential Determination No. 97-19), including FMF grants through the PFP program. Tajikistan became eligible in FY2002 (Presidential Determination No. 2002-15). FMF aid supports military interoperability with NATO and participation in PFP exercises, and has included communications equipment, computers, medical items, and English language and NCO training. The states received about \$6.9 million in FMF aid in FY2001, which was boosted after 9/11 to \$30.7 million in FY2002 (over \$25 million of which went to Uzbekistan), and \$16.5 million in FY2003. The states also are eligible to receive Excess Defense Articles (EDA) on a grant basis, to enhance interoperability with NATO. In February 2000, the United States transferred sixteen military transport vehicles to the Uzbek military to enhance interoperability with NATO forces, the first sizeable military equipment to be provided under the FMF program to Central Asia. A coast guard patrol boat was transferred to Turkmenistan under the EDA program in FY2000. In FY2003, FMF funding is being used to purchase interoperable communications equipment for the states and to refurbish Kazakhstan’s Atyrau airbase as a “U.S.-interoperable base

along the oil-rich Caspian.”<sup>37</sup> Other FMF for Kazakhstan is being used to purchase night vision devices, 39 “humvee” transport vehicles, and infantry equipment. In Kyrgyzstan, FY2003 FMF funding is being used to purchase vehicles, and personnel gear, and along with EXBS, to maintain and repair air assets for border security. In Turkmenistan, FY2003 FMF is being used to provide training. In Uzbekistan, FY2003 FMF is being used to foster peacekeeping cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and NATO, and to purchase personnel gear, ammunition, weapons, infrastructure upgrades, and transportation spares and repairs.

The IMET program supports PFP by providing English language training to military officers and exposure to democratic civil-military relations. About 70 personnel from all states except Tajikistan took IMET courses in FY2001 and 189 personnel in FY2002 (including Tajikistan). Training is expected for 247 in FY2003 and is requested for 302 in FY2004, indicating the growth of this program.

USCENTCOM in 1999 became responsible for U.S. military engagement activities, planning, and operations in Central Asia (the region was previously the aegis of European Command). It states that its peacetime strategy focuses on PFP, Marshall Center (the defense educational coordinator for PFP), and IMET programs to promote ties between the regional military forces and U.S. and NATO forces, and to foster “apolitical, professional militaries capable of responding to regional peacekeeping and humanitarian needs” in the region. USCENTCOM Commanders visited the region regularly, setting the stage for more extensive military ties post-9/11. During his August 2002 visit, USCENTCOM Commander Tommy Franks stated that the U.S. military presence would continue in Afghanistan and Central Asia for some time and that military-to-military ties with regional states would increase. Among other defense visits, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited the region in December 2001 and April-May 2002, and JCS Chairman Richard Myers visited the region in February and November 2002.

## **Safety of U.S. Citizens and Investments**

The U.S. State Department advises U.S. citizens and firms that there are dangers of terrorism in the region, including from ETIM and remnants of the IMU and al Qaeda. Groups such as Hizb ut Tahrir (HT) also foment anti-Americanism. The Peace Corps pulled personnel out of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan after 9/11, but in a policy aimed at fostering pro-U.S. views among Islamic peoples, personnel were re-deployed by mid-2002. U.S. military personnel in the region mostly stay on base, and travel in groups off base to maximize their safety. In the wake of the November 2002 coup attempt in Turkmenistan, the State Department has advised U.S. citizens to carefully consider travel to Turkmenistan because of the heightened security tensions. One U.S. citizen was held in connection with the coup attempt. Uzbekistan has no known incidents of damage to Western firms or politically-motivated violence against U.S. personnel. The risks of political violence and kidnaping are high in Tajikistan, and the State Department advises U.S. citizens to avoid travel to areas near the Afghan and Kyrgyz borders and in the Karategin

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<sup>37</sup> *Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations for FY2003: Europe and Eurasia*, p. 309.

Valley and Tavildara region. In June 2001, members of an international humanitarian group that included one U.S. citizen were taken hostage in Tajikistan, but were soon released. Kazakhstan, though viewed as low risk for political violence, including insurrections, has had economic protests that potentially could involve Western firms.

Some polls have shown that the regional populations are somewhat uncertain about what the United States intends by building up its presence.<sup>38</sup> Some observers have suggested that U.S. policies regarded with disfavor by many Muslims in the region, such as the 2003 Iraq operation, could harm the U.S. image and perhaps increase dangers to the safety of U.S. citizens and property.

In all the Central Asian states, widespread corruption is an obstacle to U.S. firms seeking to invest. In Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, U.S. firms have reported that corruption is pervasive throughout the central and regional governments and most sectors of the economy, and is an obstacle to U.S. investment. Corruption is rampant in the Uzbek government, with bureaucrats seeking bribes as business “consultants.” Some officials have been prosecuted for corruption. Corruption is pervasive and is an integral part of the Tajik government. There is little effort to combat corruption and anti-corruption laws are inadequate. In terms of crime, the State Department warns that Western investment property and personnel are not safe in Tajikistan, and that crime rates are increasing in all the states (though rates are lower than in many other countries).<sup>39</sup>

**Embassy Security.** Immediately after 9/11, U.S. embassies in the region were placed on heightened alert because of the danger of terrorism. They have remained on alert because of the ongoing threat of terrorism. U.S. government personnel in Kyrgyzstan since late 2002 have been restricted from traveling to areas south and west of Osh because of the threat of terrorism and presence of land mines along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border and in the Batken region. During the Tajik civil war, U.S. personnel faced various threats and some embassy personnel were evacuated during flare-ups of fighting. Two U.S. Embassy guards were killed in Dushanbe in February 1997 while off-site but in uniform. After the bombing of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August 1998, and intense fighting in Dushanbe, U.S. embassy operations in Dushanbe were suspended in September 1998 and diplomatic staff were moved to Almaty in Kazakhstan. Some operations were resumed in 2000 but the embassy remains only partly staffed in interim facilities and under heightened security. U.S. government personnel in Tajikistan must travel in the embassy’s armored cars with bodyguards, and are occasionally restricted from travel to certain areas because of safety concerns. U.S. officials have judged the embassy to be highly

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, October 2002, pp. 34-36.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Embassies in Central Asian capitals, *Investment Climate Statements*, 1998-2002; U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, 2002; U.S. Department of State. *Political Violence Against Americans 2001*, 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Riskwire: Kazakhstan Risk*, 2003.

vulnerable to terrorism, including threats from the IMU and al Qaeda.<sup>40</sup> Pakistani police in June 2002 reported the apprehension of three Uighurs with photographs and plans of U.S. embassies in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. Embassy in Beijing accused ETIM of working with al Qaeda to plan the attack against the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>41</sup>

Conferees on H.R. 4775 (Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for FY2002; P.L.107-206) approved \$20.3 million for opening and securing diplomatic posts in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and Kabul, Afghanistan. Among other diplomatic premises in the region, Congress approved State Department requests for FY2002 and for FY2003 for designing and building secure embassy facilities in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and in the new capital of Kazakhstan, Astana. The State Department hopes to begin groundbreaking for all three facilities in 2003.

## Issues for Congress

Most in Congress have supported U.S. assistance to bolster independence and reforms in Central Asia and other NIS. Attention has included several hearings and legislation, the latter including earmarks at times for aid for Kyrgyzstan, sense of Congress provisions on U.S. policy toward Central Asia, statements and resolutions concerning violations of human rights in the region, and endorsements of aid for energy development. (For details, see CRS Issue Brief IB95077: *The Former Soviet Union and U.S. Foreign Assistance*, updated regularly.)

## Should the United States Play a Prominent Role in Central Asia?

The Administration and others have argued that the United States should emphasize ties with the Central Asian states. They maintain that U.S. interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its coalition partners and friends, that Turkey and other actors possess limited aid resources, and that the United States is in the strongest position as a superpower to influence democratization and respect for human rights in these new states. They stress that U.S. leadership in world efforts to provide humanitarian and economic reform aid will help alleviate the high levels of social distress that are exploited by anti-Western Islamic extremist groups seeking new members. Although many U.S. policymakers acknowledge a role for a democratizing Russia in the region, they stress that U.S. and other Western aid and investment strengthen the independence of the states and their openness to the West and forestall Russian or Chinese attempts to (re-)subjugate the region.

Those who object to a more forward U.S. policy toward Central Asia argue that the United States has historically had few interests in this region, and that as peace is established in Afghanistan, the region will become less important to U.S. interests. They advocate limited U.S. involvement undertaken along with Turkey and other friends and coalition partners to ensure general U.S. goals of preventing strife,

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<sup>40</sup> Rashid, p. 166.

<sup>41</sup> TASS, June 30, 2002; ABC World News Tonight, June 14, 2002.

fostering democratization and regional cooperation, and improving human rights and the quality of life. Some accord a major role for a democratizing Russia in the region. Some objections to a forward U.S. policy might appear less salient given 9/11 and other recent developments. These include discounting concerns that an anti-Western Islamic extremism might make enough headway to threaten secular regimes or otherwise harm U.S. interests, doubting the existence of sizeable oil and gas resources in the new states, and questioning whether the energy could be economically delivered to Western markets.

## What are U.S. Interests in Central Asia?

While a consensus appears to exist among most U.S. policymakers and others on the general desirability of fostering such objectives in Central Asia as democratization, the creation of free markets, trade and investment, integration with the West, and responsible security policies, there are varying views on the levels and types of U.S. involvement. Many of those who endorse continued or enhanced U.S. support for Central Asia argue that the United States has a vital interest in preventing the region from becoming an Afghanistan-like hotbed of terrorism aimed against U.S. interests.<sup>42</sup> They argue that political instability in Central Asia can produce spillover effects in important nearby states, including U.S. allies and friends such as Turkey. They also assert that the United States has a major interest in preventing outside terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring nuclear weapons-related materials and technology from the region. They also advocate the greater diversification of world energy supplies as a U.S. national security interest (see below, *Energy Resources*).

Others argue that the region is “strategically tangential” to more important U.S. concerns for the stability of Afghanistan, Russia, China, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf, and for combating global human rights abuses, nuclear proliferation, and drug trafficking.<sup>43</sup> They point to the dangers of civil and ethnic conflict and terrorism in the region as reasons for the United States to eschew major involvement that might place U.S. personnel and citizens at risk. These analysts call for withdrawing U.S. military personnel from the region and depending on U.S. rapid deployments from bases in Turkey.<sup>44</sup> The reticence of the Turkish legislature in March 2003 to permit U.S. use of bases for the Iraq operation, however, must be weighed against the safety risks of maintaining U.S. bases in Central Asia.

Calling for greater U.S. policy attention to Central Asia and South Caucasus, Senator Sam Brownback introduced “Silk Road” legislation in the 105<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup> Congresses. Similar legislation was sponsored in the House by Representative Benjamin Gilman (105<sup>th</sup>) and Representative Doug Bereuter (106<sup>th</sup>).<sup>45</sup> In introducing

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<sup>42</sup> Charles Fairbanks, *The National Interest*, Summer 2002, pp. 45-53.

<sup>43</sup> Amy Jaffe, in Gennadiy Chufirin, ed., *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 150.

<sup>44</sup> Wishnick, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> The Silk Road language amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 by adding a chapter (continued...)

the Silk Road Act in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, Senator Brownback pointed out that the Central Asian and South Caucasian states are “caught between world global forces that seek to have them under their control.” To counter such forces, he argued, the United States should emphasize democratization, the creation of free markets, and the development of energy and trade with the region to bolster its independence and pro-Western orientations. The Silk Road language was eventually enacted by reference in H.R. 3194 (Istook), Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2000, and signed into law on November 29, 1999 (P.L. 106-113). The Silk Road language calls for enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport (including energy pipelines) and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasian and Central Asian states.

Other congressional initiatives include the Security Assistance Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-280; signed into law on October 6, 2000), which authorizes aid to combat nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and conventional weapons proliferation in the New Independent States. It authorized \$45.5 million in FY2001-FY2002 to assist GUUAM to carry out provisions of the Silk Road Act to strengthen national control of borders and to promote independence and territorial sovereignty.

### **What Roles Should Outside Powers Play in the Region?**

Although many U.S. policymakers argue that a democratizing Russia could play a positive role in the region, they stress that U.S. and other Western aid and investment strengthen the independence of the states and forestall Russian attempts to dominate the region. Some observers warn that a less democratic Russia might soon seek to reabsorb Central Asia into a new empire. Others, however, discount such plans by a Russia facing immense internal economic, political, ethnic, and military disorder, but nonetheless endorse close monitoring of Russian activities that might infringe on the independence of the NIS. Some appear to acquiesce to Russia’s argument of historic rights to a “sphere of influence” in Central Asia that provides a reduced scope for U.S. involvement.

According to some observers, Administration policy should focus more clearly on refereeing Russian, Iranian, and Chinese influence in the region — since these states are bound to play roles in the region — with the aim of maximizing the independence of the Central Asian states. U.S. interests may correspond to other outside states’ interests in political and economic stability and improved transport in the region, so that the coordination of some activities in the region becomes possible.<sup>46</sup> Alternatively, U.S. interests might conflict with those of Russia, Iran, or

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<sup>45</sup> (...continued)

12. The chapter supercedes or draws authority from the Freedom Support Act (P.L. 102-511), which constitutes chapter 11 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and adds otherwise to the authority of the Freedom Support Act.

<sup>46</sup> *U.S. Policy Priorities in Central Asia: Report of an Atlantic Council Delegation Visit*, The Atlantic Council, 1998, p. 2; Lena Jonson, *Central Asia & Caucasus Newsletter*, No. 1, 2003. On U.S. cooperation in a “regional concert,” see Charles Fairbanks, S. Frederick (continued...)



China, leading to compromises, tradeoffs, or deadlock. The U.S. interest in restricting Iran's financial ability to sponsor international terrorism, for instance, may conflict with desires by Central Asian states to build pipelines through Iran. U.S.-Iranian rapprochement might contribute to a less hostile Iranian attitude toward pro-U.S. governments in Central Asia and U.S. regional investment. In the cases of Russia and China, some observers warn that an ebbing of their anti-terrorism cooperation with the United States — linked to policy differences such as over U.S. operations in Iraq — could lead to their renewed efforts to reduce and limit U.S. influence in Central Asia. Poor U.S. relations with Iran and questions about Russia's role contribute to U.S. support for the BTC pipeline.

While the Administration has supported a role for Turkey in the region, others argue that its economic problems during the 1990s have hindered its positive influence. Also, its disagreements in 2003 with U.S. policy toward Iraq indicate that it may not serve optimally as a proxy for U.S. interests in Central Asia. Some call for the United States to recognize Iran's ties with the region, and not press the Central Asian states to limit economic and political ties with Iran.

The United States and Russia agreed to set up a working group on Afghanistan in June 2000 that assumed greater importance in the Bush Administration, particularly after 9/11. Headed on the U.S. side by First Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and on the Russian side by Vyacheslav Trubnikov, it was central to obtaining Russian acquiescence to the U.S. use of military facilities in Central Asia, with Armitage visiting Moscow just days after 9/11. In May 2002, the group's mandate reportedly was expanded to more broadly cover counter-terrorism in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and South Asia. At the meeting in January 2003, the two sides reportedly discussed the terrorist situation in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Georgia, Iraq, and North Korea, and Armitage reportedly reiterated that the United States would pull its troops out of Central Asia at the end of the anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan.

## **How Significant Are Regional Energy Resources to U.S. Interests?**

The Bush Administration's national energy policy report, released in May 2001, posits that the exploitation of Caspian energy resources could not only benefit the economies of the region, but also help mitigate possible world supply disruptions, a major U.S. security goal. It recommends that the President direct U.S. agencies to support building the BTC pipeline, facilitate oil companies operating in Kazakhstan to use the pipeline, support constructing a Baku-Turkey natural gas pipeline to export Azerbaijani gas, and otherwise encourage the Caspian regional states to provide a

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<sup>46</sup> (...continued)

Staar, C. Richard Nelson, and Kenneth Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Asia*, The Atlantic Council and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, January 2001. Analyst Stephen Blank urges that USCENCOM at Manas establish ties with the rapid reaction force at Bishkek, and that USCENCOM and the Russian General Staff establish an expanded cell at USCENCOM and other ties to discuss Central Asia matters. *The Future of Transcaspian Security*, Carlisle, PA, U.S. Army War College, August 2002, pp. 30-31.

stable and inviting business climate for energy and infrastructure development. It avers that the building of the pipelines will enhance energy supply diversification, including for Georgia and Turkey. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe in September 2002 re-affirmed U.S. support for multiple pipelines to deliver energy resources to global markets, including the BTC pipeline.<sup>47</sup>

Critics of Administration policy question the economic viability of BTC and trans-Caspian pipeline routes given uncertainties about regional stability, ownership of Caspian Sea fields, world oil and gas prices, and the size of regional reserves. They question whether the oil and other natural resources in these new states are vital to U.S. security and point out that they are, in any event, unlikely to be fully available to Western markets for many years. Analyst Amy Jaffe argues that Caspian energy “hardly seems worth the risks” of an enhanced U.S. presence, since regional oil production is “likely to be less than 5% of world oil demand by 2010.”<sup>48</sup>

Some of those who oppose U.S. policy also juxtapose an emphasis on energy development in these states to what they term the neglect of broader-based economic reforms that they argue would better serve the population of the region. Other critics argue that the Administration’s policy against energy routes and projects involving Iran makes it more likely that the Central Asian states will have to rely for several more years on Russia’s willingness to export their oil.

## **What U.S. Security Involvement is Appropriate?**

The events of 9/11 transformed the U.S. security relationship with Central Asia, as the region actively supported U.S.-led coalition anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Some observers advocate maintaining the U.S. security relationship even after the establishment of some degree of stability in Afghanistan. They argue that a major dilemma of current policy is that while the United States proclaims vital interests in the region, it also states that military basing arrangements are temporary. This makes the U.S. commitment appear uncertain, spurring the Central Asian states to continue their search for security ties with other outside powers, these analysts warn. They stress that Central Asia was host to Soviet-era weapons of mass destruction and associated research and development facilities, and that residual technologies, materials, and personnel might fall prey to terrorist states or groups.

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<sup>47</sup> Among Congressional action, the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for FY1998 (P.L. 105-118) stated that the Central Asian and South Caucasian states are a major East-West transport route and contain substantial oil and gas reserves that will increase the diversity of supplies to the United States. Congress urged targeting policy and aid to support independence, friendly relations, conflict resolution, democracy, free markets, integration with the West, and U.S. business and investment in these states. The conferees on Omnibus Appropriations for FY1999 (including foreign operations; P.L. 105-277) recommended that up to \$10 million be made available to promote Turkmen energy development, and endorsed an east-west energy corridor that would exclude building pipelines through Iran.

<sup>48</sup> Jaffe, pp. 145, 150. See also *Kazakhstan Unlikely to Be Major Source of Oil for the United States*, GAO, March 1994, pp. 2-3; Bulent Aliriza, *Caspian Energy Update*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 24, 2000.

They view military education and training programs as fostering the creation of a professional, Western-style military and democratic civil-military relations, and reducing chances of military coups. Training that these militaries receive through PFP is multinational in scope, involving cooperation among regional militaries, with the purpose of spurring these states to continue to work together. They also argue that as Iran increases its military capabilities, including missiles and possibly nuclear weapons, the Central Asian states may necessarily seek closer countervailing ties with the United States.

Critics argue that the United States should primarily seek to encourage demilitarization in Central Asia. They oppose providing formal security guarantees to the region and urge the pullout of U.S. bases now that the Taliban has been defeated and al Qaeda largely roused from Afghanistan. A few critics assert that the region is not a vital U.S. interest and that EDA and other such aid is a waste of taxpayers' money. Some analysts warn that increased U.S. engagement in the region, including military basing, is unlikely to soon turn the countries into free market democracies, and will link the United States to the regimes in the eyes of the local populations. This may exacerbate anti-American Islamic extremism, place U.S. personnel in danger, stretch U.S. military capabilities, and antagonize China and Russia. Long-term U.S. basing in the region could in particular harm U.S.-Russia ties, by giving Russian hardliners ammunition in their attacks on Putin's conciliatory foreign policy.<sup>49</sup>

## **Should the United States Try to Foster Democratization?**

While Central Asia's leaders have appeared to counterpose stability to democratization, and opted for stability, the Administration and other observers have generally viewed the two concepts as complementary, particularly in the long term. They suggest that although the Central Asian states are making scant democratization progress, over a generation or so the states may emulate the positive features of Turkish or other secular democracies. In the meantime, the United States should be watchfully engaged and encourage the states to uphold human rights, according to this view.<sup>50</sup> Senator Brownback on June 30, 1999 cautioned against "ignoring" the region because of faltering democratization and human rights violations, arguing that "it is important to engage and continue to encourage a positive process." Among recent Congressional action, S.J.Res.3, introduced January 14, 2003, criticizes Central Asian governments for human rights abuses such as arbitrary arrests, restrictions on opposition party activity, and religious persecution, and calls on the President to condition U.S. political, economic and military relations with the regional governments on their respect for human rights and democracy. Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 (P.L.108-7; signed into law on February 20, 2003) calls for FREEDOM Support Act aid to be provided to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan only if the Secretary of State determines that each is making substantial progress in meeting its commitments to democratization and respect for human rights (in the case

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, *The National Interest*, Summer 2002, pp. 45-53.

<sup>50</sup> Alternatively, Rumer argues that the United States may be faced with a trade-off between stability and democratization, with stability the most essential for U.S. security interests. *Strategic Forum*, December 2002.

of Uzbekistan, as pledged in the U.S.-Uzbek Declaration on the Strategic Partnership). In the case of Kazakhstan, a national security waiver is provided.

Critics of continued engagement have suggested that the Administration's stress on gradual and peaceful political change connotes U.S. support for the stability of current leadership. They warn that the populations of these states may come to view U.S. engagement as propping up authoritarian leaders, and such authoritarianism might encourage a countervailing rise of Islamic fundamentalism as an alternative channel of dissent. They also complain that increased U.S. aid to the Central Asian states after 9/11 has focused more on bolstering their counter-terrorism capabilities than on supporting their democratic and economic reforms, and that U.S. officials have tended to overstate reform progress in these states.<sup>51</sup> They urge reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive governments that widely violate human rights, and reject arguments that U.S. interests in anti-terrorism, nonproliferation, regional cooperation, trade, and investment outweigh concerns over democratization and human rights. Some point to an apparent contradiction between a U.S. policy toward Iraq and the wider Middle East that stresses regime change and democratization and a policy that appears to tolerate existing authoritarian regimes in Central Asia.<sup>52</sup> Still others oppose most aid for democratization programs they view as unlikely to succeed in cultures historically attuned to authoritarianism.

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<sup>51</sup> Wishnick, p. 29.

<sup>52</sup> Christian Caryl, *Collateral Victory*, *Washington Monthly*, November 1, 2002, pp. 21-27.

## Appendix 1: Selected Outside Players

**Russia.** For the Central Asian states, the challenge is to maintain useful ties with Russia without allowing it undue influence. This concern is most evident in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan, because of its shared 4,200 mile border with Russia and its relatively large ethnic Russian population, is highly vulnerable to Russian influence. Uzbekistan is interested in asserting its own regional power and in limiting Russian influence in the region. Alternatively, Tajikistan's President Rakhmanov has welcomed Russian influence that has helped keep him in power.

Russia's behavior in Central Asia partly depends on alternative futures of Russian domestic politics, though regardless of scenario, Russia will retain some economic and other influence in the region as a legacy of the political and transport links developed during Tsarist and Soviet times. The events of 9/11 may weaken Russia's influence over the Central Asian states, though long-term impacts depend on the duration and scope of U.S. and coalition presence in the region, Russia's countervailing policies, and the fate of Afghanistan. Prior to 9/11, the Putin Administration had tried to strengthen Russia's interests in the region while opposing the growth of U.S. and other influence. After 9/11, Uzbekistan reaffirmed its more assertive policy of lessening its security dependence on Russia by granting conditional overflight rights and other support to the U.S.-led coalition, nudging a reluctant Putin regime to accede to a coalition presence in the region in keeping with Russia's own support to the Northern Alliance to combat the Taliban. Russia's other reasons for permitting the increased coalition presence included its interests in boosting some economic and other ties to the West and its hope of regaining influence in a post-Taliban Afghanistan. Russia cooperated with Central Asia in supporting U.S. and coalition efforts, including by quickly sending military equipment and advisors to assist the Northern Alliance in attacks on the Taliban. On September 19, 2001, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov indicated that the nature of support given by the Central Asian states to the U.S.-led coalition was up to each state, and President Putin reiterated this point on September 24, 2001, giving Russia's assent to cooperation between these states and the United States.

Russian officials have variously emphasized interests in strategic security and economic ties with Central Asia, and concerns over the treatment of ethnic Russians. Strategic concerns have focused on drug trafficking and regional conflict, and the region's role as a buffer to Islamic extremism. By the late 1990s, Russia's economic decline and demands by Central Asia caused it to reduce its security presence, a trend that President Putin may be seeking to reverse. About 11,000 Russian Border Troops (mostly ethnic Tajiks under Russian command) still defend "CIS borders" in Tajikistan, but were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan in 1999. In late 1999, the last Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan. In 1999, Uzbekistan withdrew from the CST, citing its ineffectiveness and obtrusiveness. Russia justified a 1999 military base accord with Tajikistan by citing the Islamic extremist threat to the CIS.

In an apparent shift toward a more activist Russian role in Central Asia, in January 2000, then-Acting President Putin approved a "national security concept" that termed foreign efforts to "weaken" Russia's "position" in Central Asia a security

threat. In April 2000, Security Council secretary Sergey Ivanov called for the members of the CST to approve the creation of rapid reaction forces, including in Central Asia, to combat terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. He also stated that such a force might launch pre-emptive strikes on Afghan terrorist bases. A May 2001 CST summit approved the creation of a Central Asian force composed of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik country-based battalions and a headquarters in Bishkek. This initiative seemed in part aimed to protect Russian regional influence in the face of nascent U.S. and NATO anti-terrorism moves in the region. A regional branch of the CIS Anti-Terrorism Center, composed of intelligence agencies, opened in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in January 2002. Russia's threats of pre-emptive strikes against the Taliban prompted them in May 2000 to warn the Central Asian states of reprisals if they permitted Russia to use their bases for strikes. At the June 2000 U.S.-Russia summit, the two presidents agreed to set up a working group to examine Afghan-related terrorism, and the group held two meetings prior to 9/11. These events prior to 9/11 helped to ease the way for Russian and Central Asian assistance to the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan.

Soon after 9/11, Russia seemed to reverse the policy of drawing down its military presence in Central Asia by increasing its troop presence in Tajikistan by a reported 1,500. In mid-June 2002, Russia also signed military accords with Kyrgyzstan extending leases on military facilities to fifteen years (including, amazingly, a naval test base), opening shuttered Kyrgyz defense industries, and training Kyrgyz troops. Most significantly, Kyrgyzstan also agreed that its Kant airfield outside its capital of Bishkek could be used as a base for the Central Asian rapid reaction forces, marking a major re-deployment of Russian forces into the country. In signing the accords, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov declared that they marked Russia's help — along with the U.S.-led coalition and China — in combating terrorism, were necessary for Russia to monitor the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and marked Russia's intention to maintain a military presence in the region. According to some reports, Ivanov unsuccessfully urged Kyrgyz authorities to tell U.S. and coalition forces at Manas to vacate by mid-2003. Attack jets, transports, jet trainers, helicopters, and 700 Russian personnel began to be deployed at Kant at the end of 2002. China and Russia are negotiating on coordination between the SCO antiterrorism center and the CST rapid reaction battalion. Both will be operationally located at Kant and share headquarters in Bishkek. Reportedly, the SCO center will concentrate on China-related terrorism.<sup>53</sup>

Russian economic policy in Central Asia has been contradictory, involving pressures to both cooperate with and to oppose US and Western interests. Russia has cut off economic subsidies to Central Asia and presses demands for the repayment of energy and other debts the states owe Russia. Russia increasingly has swapped this debt for equity in strategic and profitable energy and military industries throughout Central Asia. Its opposition to U.S. and Western private investment in the region initially led it to demand that Caspian Sea oil and gas resources be shared in common among littoral states and to insist that oil pipeline routes transit Russian territory to Russian Black Sea ports. Russia's oil discoveries in the Caspian Sea, however, contributed to its decision to sign accords with Kazakhstan in 1998 and

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<sup>53</sup> *FBIS*, July 17, 2002, Doc. No. CEP-21; *FBIS*, September 27, 2002, Doc. No. CEP-221.

with Azerbaijan in 2001 on seabed borders. Russian energy firms have become partners with U.S. and Western firms in several regional oil and gas development consortiums. Nonetheless, Russia continues to lobby for pipeline routes through its territory. During Turkmen President Niyazov's Moscow visit in January, 2002, President Putin called for Central Asian states to form a Eurasian Gas Alliance to "export through a single channel," which Russian media speculated meant that Putin wanted to counter U.S. energy influence in the region. Instead of opposing, some Russians argue that enhanced cooperation with U.S. and Western private investment and business in the region would best serve Russian national interests and its oil and other companies.

The region's continuing economic ties with Russia are encouraged by the existence of myriad Moscow-bound transport routes, the difficulty of trade through war-torn Afghanistan, and U.S. opposition to ties with Iran. Also, there are still many inter-enterprise and equipment supply links between Russia and these states. While seeking ties with Russia to provide for some security and economic needs, at least in the short term, the Central Asian states have tried with varying success to resist or modify various Russian policies viewed as diluting their sovereignty, such as Russian calls for dual citizenship and closer CIS economic and security ties. Karimov and Nazarbayev have been harsh critics of what they have viewed as Russian tendencies to treat Central Asia as an "unequal partner."

The safety of Russians in Central Asia is a populist concern in Russia, but has in practice mainly served as a political stalking horse for those in Russia advocating the "reintegration" of former "Russian lands." Ethnic Russians residing in Central Asia have had rising concerns about employment, language, and other policies or practices they deem discriminatory and many have emigrated, contributing to their decline from 20 million in 1989 to 6.6 million in 2001. They now constitute 12% of the population of Central Asia, according to the CIS Statistics Agency. Remaining Russians tend to be elderly or low-skilled. In Kazakhstan, ethnic Kazakhs have again become a majority.

**Afghanistan.** The stability of Afghanistan is of central concern to Central Asia, China, and Russia. Particular concerns of Central Asia in recent years have focused on the export of drugs and Islamic extremism from Afghanistan. Historical trade routes facilitate the smuggling of drugs and other contraband through the region to Russian and European markets. Central Asia's leaders do not want Islamic extremists to use bases in Afghanistan, as the Tajik opposition once did. They objected to the refuge the Taliban provided for the IMU and for terrorist Usamah bin-Ladin, who allegedly contributed financing and training for Islamic extremists throughout Central Asia who endeavored to overthrow governments in that region. Several Central Asian ethnic groups reside in northern Afghanistan, raising concerns in Central Asia about their fates. Tajikistan has been concerned about the spillover of conflict and the fate of 6.2 million ethnic Tajiks residing in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan, likewise, has concerns about 1.5 million ethnic Uzbeks in Afghanistan. Karimov has supported ethnic Uzbek paramilitary leader Abdul-ul-Rashid Dostum in Afghanistan. Dostum lost to Taliban forces in August 1998 and exited Afghanistan, but returned to help lead Northern Alliance forces to victory post-9/11. Iran and Tajikistan supported ethnic Tajik Ahmad Shah Masood, who was killed on September 9, 2001, allegedly by al Qaeda operatives. Iran's massing of troops on the

Afghan border in August 1998 in response to the Taliban's takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif and killing of Iranian diplomats and Shiite civilians also gave support to Masood. Turkmenistan's concerns about the status of half a million ethnic Turkmen residing in Afghanistan, and its hopes for possible energy pipelines through Afghanistan, led it to stress workable relations with both the Taliban and the successor government.

Tajikistan was especially challenged by the Taliban's growing power. A Taliban victory in Afghanistan threatened to present it with regimes in both the north (Uzbekistan) and south (Afghanistan) that pressed for undue influence. Iran and Uzbekistan backed different sides in the Tajik civil war, but both opposed the Taliban in Afghanistan. Tajik opposition ties with Iran provided friction with the Taliban. Tajikistan's instability and regional concerns caused the Rakhmanov government to rely more on Russia and, by granting formal basing rights to Russia, antagonized Uzbekistan and the Taliban.

As Afghanistan stabilizes, Central Asian states will be able to establish more trade ties, including with Pakistan. Hopes for the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan were evidenced by the signing of a framework agreement in December 2002 by President Niyazov, Afghan President Hamed Karzai, and Pakistan's Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan. The problems of drug production in Afghanistan and trafficking through Central Asia have not abated, however, in part because the Afghan government remains weak. Interest in regional stability led Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China, Iran, and Pakistan to sign a "Declaration of Good Neighborly Relations" in Kabul in December 2002 pledging mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. (See also CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan*.)

**China.** China's objectives in Central Asia include ensuring border security, non-belligerent neighbors, and access to trade and natural resources. In April 1996, the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan traveled to Shanghai to sign a treaty with Chinese President Jiang Zemin pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of borders. They signed protocols that they would not harbor or support separatists, aimed at China's efforts to quash separatism in its Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang Province, which borders Central Asia. Instability in Xinjiang includes bombings and other violence, security problems that might affect a proposed Kazakh-Chinese oil pipeline. According to the U.S. State Department, China continues to commit human rights abuses against the Uighurs, an Islamic and Turkic people.<sup>54</sup> In April 1997, the five presidents met again in Moscow to sign a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,000 mile former Soviet border with China. In May 2001, the parties admitted Uzbekistan as a member and formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and agreed to pursue common antiterrorist actions through a center established in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In theory, China could send troops into Central Asia at the request of one of the states.<sup>55</sup> The

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<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002 — China*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, March 31, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> China and Kyrgyzstan held joint border exercises in October 2002, the first under SCO (continued...)



states signed a Shanghai Convention on joint fighting against terrorism, extremism and separatism, viewed by some observers as Russia's and China's effort to gain greater support by the Central Asian states for combat against extremists and regime opponents of the two major powers. China's goals in the SCO echo its general regional goals noted above, as well as containing U.S. influence.

After 9/11, SCO members did not respond collectively to U.S. overtures but mainly as individual states. China encouraged Pakistan to cooperate with the United States. China benefitted from the U.S.-led coalition actions in Afghanistan against the IMU and the Taliban, since these groups had been providing training and sustenance to Uighur extremists. Nonetheless, the U.S. presence in Central Asia poses a challenge to China's aspirations to become the dominant Asian power.

Most analysts do not anticipate Chinese territorial expansion into Central Asia, though China is seeking greater economic influence. China is a major trading partner for the Central Asian states and may become the dominant economic influence in the region. In comparison, Turkey's trade with the region is much less than China's. Central Asia's China trade exceeded \$1 billion annually by the late 1990s.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have been deft in building relations with China. They have cooperated with China in delineating borders, building roads, and increasing trade ties. However, officials in these states have also been concerned about Chinese intentions and the spillover effects of tensions in Xinjiang. Some have raised concerns about growing numbers of Chinese "suitcase" traders and immigrants, and there are tensions over issues like water resources. China's crackdown on dissidence in Xinjiang creates particular concern in Kazakhstan, because over one million ethnic Kazakhs reside in Xinjiang and many Uighurs reside in Kazakhstan. Some ethnic Kyrgyz also reside in Xinjiang. On the other hand, Kazakhstan fears that Uighur separatism in Xinjiang could spread among Uighurs residing in Kazakhstan, who may demand an alteration of Kazakh borders to create a unified Uighur "East Turkestan." China's relations with Tajikistan improved with the signing of a major agreement in May 2002 delineating a final section of borders in the Pamir Mountains shared by the two states.

In 1993, China abandoned its policy of energy self-sufficiency, making Central Asia's energy resources attractive. In September 1997, Kazakhstan granted China's National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) production rights to develop major oil fields, including the Aktyubinsk Region of northwestern Kazakhstan. China pledged to build a 1,900 mile trans-Kazakh pipeline to Xinjiang within five years (and a shorter pipeline to the Turkmen border). These pipeline plans are still under discussion but a short pipeline has been built linking the Aktyubinsk fields to export pipelines, including the CPC pipeline.

**Iran.** Iran has pursued limited economic interests in Central Asia and has not fomented the violent overthrow of the region's secular regimes. Iran's support for

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<sup>55</sup> (...continued)

auspices and the first by the Chinese People's Liberation Army on foreign soil. *FBIS*, September 19, 2002, Doc. No. CPP-031.

the Northern Alliance against the Taliban placed it on the same side as most of the Central Asian states and Russia. Iran has had good ties with Turkmenistan, having established rail and pipeline links. Iran's relations with other Central Asian states are more problematic. Kazakhstan's ties with Iran have improved in recent years with a visit by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to Astana in April 2002, during which a declaration on friendly relations was signed. Nazarbayev continues to urge Iran to agree to a median-line delineation of Caspian Sea borders rather than demand territorial concessions (Kazakhstan claims the largest area of seabed), and dangles prospects for energy pipelines through Iran and enhanced trade as incentives. Uzbek-Iranian relations have been mercurial. Iran allegedly harbors some surviving elements of the IMU, including founding leader Tohir Yuldash, creating Uzbek-Iranian tensions. Relations appeared somewhat improved in 2003 as both states cooperated on rebuilding projects in Afghanistan and as Uzbekistan attempted to develop trade and transport links to Middle Eastern markets.

The establishment of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan after 9/11 has directly challenged Iran's security and interests in the region by surrounding Iran with U.S. friends and allies, although Iran also has gained from the U.S.-led defeat of the Taliban and coalition operations in Iraq. Iran views U.S. support for the BTC pipeline and its regional military presence as part of U.S. efforts to make Central Asia part of an anti-Iranian bloc. During the 1990s, Iran and Russia shared similar interests in retaining their influence in the Caspian region by hindering the growth of U.S. and Western influence. They also opposed U.S. encouragement of Turkey's role in the region. They used the issue of the status of the Caspian Sea to hinder Western oil development efforts. With Russia's adoption of a more conciliatory stance regarding Caspian seabed development, Iran in 2001 became isolated in still calling for the Sea to be held in common, or alternatively for each of the littoral states to control 20% of the Sea (and perhaps, any assets). This ongoing stance and U.S. opposition have stifled Kazakhstan's interest in building pipelines through Iran to the Persian Gulf. (See also CRS Issue Brief IB93033, *Iran*, updated regularly.)

**Turkey.** After the Soviet collapse, Turkey initially expected to play a major role in Central Asia among its mainly Turkic peoples. While Turkey plays a significant and U.S.-supported role in trade and cultural affairs in the region, it has been hampered by its own political struggles between secularists and Islamic forces and has been obsessed with its own economic and ethnic problems. Also, the authoritarian leaders in Central Asia have been reluctant to embrace the "Turkish model" of relatively free markets and democracy. Russia opposes Turkey's building of oil and gas pipelines to Ceyhan that would circumvent Russian control. The EU's 1997 refusal to place Turkey on a fast-track for admission has invigorated Turkey's efforts to forge ties with other areas of the world, including Central Asia. Turkey's relations with Turkmenistan appeared strained in late 2002 after President Niyazov detained six Turkish citizens for involvement in a coup attempt against him, but Niyazov quickly moved to patch up ties by hosting a visit by (now Prime Minister) Recep Tayyip Erdogan in January 2003, and by returning the six suspects to Turkey in late March. (See also CRS Report RS20253, *Turkey*.)

Turkey's main priority has been enhancing its economic and security relations with both the South Caucasian and Central Asian states along the "Silk Road" to

bolster its future access to regional oil and gas. The building of prospective oil and gas pipelines will bolster ties between Central Asia and Turkey, and Turkey's role as an energy conduit also would enhance its influence in Europe, according to some observers. Turkey desires the abatement of ethnic conflict in the Caspian region that threatens energy development.

**The South Caucasus.** Central Asia is linked with the South Caucasus region as an historic and re-emerging transport corridor. Construction and plans for major pipeline and transport routes from Central Asia through the South Caucasus region to Europe make Central Asia's economic security somewhat dependent on the stability of the South Caucasus.

## **Appendix 2: Central Asia's Response to the September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks and Support for Operation Enduring Freedom**

Immediately after 9/11, the Central Asian governments condemned the attacks on the United States, but over the next two weeks, as U.S. attention focused on Afghanistan, none unambiguously offered to permit overflight rights or U.S. military airbase access. At first, Turkmenistan's foreign minister reiterated its policy of neutrality and its friendship with the Taliban in refusing to cooperate in a U.S.-led military campaign. Tajikistan, host to the largest Russian military presence in Central Asia and largely dependent on Russia to police its border with Afghanistan, was hesitant to cooperate with the United States without permission from Moscow. However, since Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had long supported the Northern Alliance's combat against the Taliban, they were predisposed to welcome U.S.-led backing for the Northern Alliance. These Central Asian states, along with Kyrgyzstan, also had suffered from incursions by the IMU and other terrorists, who were harbored by the Taliban.

Despite his earlier contacts with the Taliban, on September 24, 2001, Turkmenistan's President Niyazov gave his consent for ground transport and overflights to deliver humanitarian aid to support U.S. anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev also offered airfields, military bases, and airspace. That evening, President Putin stated that Russia would support U.S. efforts by providing intelligence, overflight rights for humanitarian cargoes, access to Central Asian airbases, and support for the Northern Alliance. The next day, Kyrgyz President Akayev indicated that he had received the backing of the other members of the CST for U.S. use of Kyrgyz airspace for anti-terrorism in Afghanistan. Many Uzbek officials were offended by a warning from the Taliban "foreign minister" on September 24, 2001, against permitting U.S. use of Uzbek territory to attack Afghanistan. Two days later, Uzbek President Karimov permitted U.S. use of Uzbek airspace against Afghan-based terrorists for "humanitarian and security purposes" if Uzbekistan's security was guaranteed. The IMU's Tohir Yuldeshev issued another warning to Uzbekistan on October 9, 2001, that its hosting of U.S.-led forces was "treason" to Islam and would lead to attacks on these forces by the IMU.

**Kazakhstan.** According to the State Department, Kazakhstan's strategic importance to the United States did not diminish after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, although the U.S. focus did shift somewhat toward the basing support that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan could provide for coalition action in Afghanistan. Before 9/11, at the meeting of the SCO in June 2001, Nazarbayev warned that Taliban influences increasingly threatened regional security. Responding to the events of 9/11, Nazarbayev on September 15 pledged military assistance for U.S. anti-terrorism efforts if requested by the United States. On September 18, Kazakhstan's foreign minister reiterated this pledge after a visit by Russia's Security Council head, but stated that any assistance to the United States would be "supervised" by Russia. Rejecting such a Russian role, Nazarbayev on September

23-24 again pledged Kazakhstan's readiness to assist an international coalition to combat the "evil" of terrorism, offering overflight rights and the use of airbases, but averred that Kazakh forces would not fight in Afghanistan. He repeated this offer during a phone conversation with President Bush on September 26. Major Kazakh concerns about military actions in Afghanistan centered around the infiltration of fleeing terrorists into Kazakhstan and the fate of several thousand ethnic Kazakhs residing in Afghanistan, with Kazakhstan pledging to accept ethnic Kazakh refugees and to provide aid to Afghanistan. At his meeting with Nazarbayev on December 9, 2001, Secretary Powell thanked Kazakhstan for providing overflight rights and for offering access to military bases. Kazakhstan also facilitated the transshipment of supplies to U.S. forces in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Nazarbayev in December 2001 hailed the overthrow of the Taliban as "a great victory for Central Asia," since it would permit the development of trade and other ties.

The United States and Kazakhstan signed a memorandum of understanding on July 10, 2002, permitting U.S. military aircraft to use Kazakhstan's airport in Almaty for emergency military landings. The accord was needed in part because military flights out of Kyrgyzstan's Ganci airbase at Manas Airport, 120 miles away, can be disrupted by harsh weather. Sensitive to some Kazakh, Russian, and Chinese concerns, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry stressed that there would be no "permanent" U.S. military presence. A few days later, another accord was signed providing increased U.S. military training and equipment for the Kazakh armed forces. During Kazakh Defense Minister Altynbayev's November 2002 U.S. visit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld thanked Kazakhstan for its contribution to U.S.-led coalition efforts in Afghanistan and pledged enhanced military reform aid, including possible aid for setting up an academy to train non-commissioned officers.

**Kyrgyzstan.** The Kyrgyz government declared its support for the war on terrorism almost immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States and agreed to provide information on terrorists. Initially, some Kyrgyz government officials voiced reservations about U.S. counter-terrorist actions in Afghanistan, raising concerns that such actions could cause refugees and Islamic militants to flee that country, creating instability throughout Central Asia. On the other hand, President Akayev stressed that the terrorist threat to Central Asia emanating from Afghanistan had increased, and on September 25, 2001, stated that he had approved a U.S. request to use Kyrgyz airspace for counter-terrorist operations in Afghanistan. The following day, Kyrgyz Deputy Foreign Minister Asanbek Osmonaliyev emphasized that the United States had "full rights" to attack terrorism in Afghanistan, and that Kyrgyzstan would support such actions.

On October 16, 2001, Akayev offered added support for U.S. and coalition actions in Afghanistan, stating that Kyrgyzstan wanted to "continue to be at the forefront of those who are fighting mercilessly against terrorism." In late November 2001, U.S. specialists reportedly were scouting Kyrgyz airbase facilities, and France, Italy, and Canada were negotiating with Kyrgyzstan on the use of military bases, and it was reported that U.S. combat aircraft were to be deployed in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, Akayev reportedly granted Russian requests for the use of airfields and other means to facilitate Russian aid deliveries to Afghanistan. On December 6, 2001, the Kyrgyz legislature approved a status of forces agreement for U.S. use of the Manas international airport, near Bishkek, for one year, reportedly with automatic

renewals. The U.S. military repaired and upgraded the air field, and war support to Afghanistan began in March 2002. According to media reports, the tent city (named the Peter J. Ganci base) in early 2003 was home to about 1,700 allied troops from the United States, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Italy, and South Korea (Norwegian troops and aircraft are pulling out in April 2003). About 20 aircraft were stationed there. The base is used for fighter coverage, tanker support, cargo deliveries, and search and rescue in Afghanistan. In an effort to assuage Russian and some Kyrgyz concerns, U.S. government officials have publicly declared that the United States seeks *access* to military facilities in Central Asia, but does not intend to establish permanent military bases. Kyrgyzstan also cooperated in the transport of World Food Program aid by train and truck through Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan.

While visiting the Manas airbase in July 2002, U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill highlighted the gains to the Kyrgyz economy from the funds the United States paid locally for construction, wages, services, fuel, landing, takeoff, and parking fees. Besides the benefits from the lessening of the terrorist threat from Afghanistan and from the economic infusions, Kyrgyz reformers hope the allied presence will help stem drug trafficking and other transnational crime. Some Kyrgyz opponents of Akayev and pro-Russian elements assert that the base disrupts daily life and harms Kyrgyzstan's ties with Russia and China.

**Tajikistan.** On September 12, 2001, Rakhmanov in a condolence message to President Bush affirmed Tajikistan's readiness to "take joint measures" with the international community to combat terrorism. Two days later, Tajik Prime Minister Akil Akilov indicated that Tajikistan was considering a U.S. request to use Tajik airspace, but that Tajikistan wanted to consult with Russia before a decision was made, and was worried about possible inflows of refugees if there was conflict in Afghanistan. Akilov in part had been responding cautiously in line with a statement by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov that Russia would not agree to the stationing of NATO weaponry in former Soviet republics. However, on September 25, Defense Minister Ivanov stated that the United States could use bases in Tajikistan to attack targets in Afghanistan "if the need arises," and that same day, the Tajik Defense Ministry indicated that Tajikistan would agree to permit use of its airspace by U.S. forces.

Informed by the United States that coalition air attacks against Afghanistan had begun, the Tajik government on October 8 voiced support, and Rakhmanov told a visiting Japanese envoy that Tajikistan was offering its bases for use by U.S. forces. Some coalition forces began to transit through Tajik airspace and airfields. On November 3, 2001, Rakhmanov and visiting Defense Secretary Rumsfeld announced the use of Tajik airspace by U.S. forces for humanitarian aid and search and rescue missions, and the possibility of basing rights. USCENTCOM had already begun to survey three Tajik air bases. At the end of November 2001, Tajik officials indicated that U.S., French, and Italian personnel might use air facilities, which was publicly affirmed by Rakhmanov on December 4. A status of forces accord was reached in late 2001 granting Defense Department and military personnel diplomatic status in Tajikistan and the right to carry weapons, and permitting military forces free transit rights for weapons and equipment. Another accord in August 2002 granted U.S. forces immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. U.S., French, and British personnel have used the Dushanbe airport to a limited degree for

refueling (and the French have based Mirages there), but the poor condition of facilities has precluded wide scale use by the coalition.

The Tajik government must take into account both the views of its Islamic and other political parties as well as Russia's views as it lends support for coalition actions. Seyed Abdullo Nuri, head of the Tajik Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), has basically endorsed the U.S.-led coalition's actions in Afghanistan, though he has joined other Tajik Islamic groups in calling for coalition forces to leave Tajikistan when operations are over. The head of the Russian Federal Border Service, Gen. Konstantin Totsky, in January 2002 likewise asserted that countries should request that coalition forces using their airfields exit after completing their operations in Afghanistan. The Tajik government's sensitivity to such views may have been indicated by Norwegian reports in October 2002 that Danish, Dutch, and Norwegian aircraft based in Kyrgyzstan were occasionally denied overflight rights.

**Turkmenistan.** Immediately after 9/11, the Turkmen foreign ministry stated that Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality and its friendship with the Taliban precluded cooperation in a U.S.-led military campaign. After Russia's President Vladimir Putin acceded to an expanded U.S. military presence in Central Asia, however, Turkmen President Niyazov on September 24, 2001, gave his consent for ground transport and overflights to deliver humanitarian aid to support U.S.-led anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan because "evil must be punished." Turkmenistan also permitted refueling privileges for humanitarian flights. Nonetheless, the foreign ministry still argued that Turkmenistan was "neutral" because it was not permitting military basing or the "transport of arms" through Turkmenistan. Also, before coalition airstrikes on Afghanistan began in October 2001, Niyazov criticized the impending action as threatening "innocent Afghans," and offered to facilitate negotiations between the United States and the Taliban to forestall conflict. After the airstrikes began, Niyazov voiced the hope that negotiations could soon end the fighting and lead to a multi-ethnic government in Afghanistan. Concerned about an influx of refugees, Turkmenistan tightened its borders with Afghanistan. In late 2001, much U.N. and other aid to Afghanistan was shipped through Turkmenistan, in part because of bureaucratic delays in Uzbekistan. In December 2001, Niyazov hailed the creation of the interim Afghan administration, but was critical of its dearth of ethnic Turkmen and called for the U.N. to foster the formation of an ethnically representative government. During an August 2002 visit, USCENTCOM head Tommy Franks thanked Niyazov for permitting up to 40% of humanitarian aid sent to Afghanistan since 9/11 to transit the country. These aid flows reportedly continued even after the November 2002 Turkmen coup attempt led Niyazov to accuse U.S. citizens and interests of complicity.

**Uzbekistan.** U.S. security ties with Uzbekistan prior to the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States proved useful in soliciting its support for OEF. Just after the 9/11 attacks, Uzbek Foreign Minister Komilov stated on September 16 that his government would entertain "all possible forms of cooperation" in the struggle against terrorism, including allowing U.S. forces to use its military facilities, and rejected Russian requests that Central Asian states refuse to assist "NATO countries."

U.S. military planners were reported by Uzbek defense sources on September 24 to be evaluating Uzbek airfields for possible coalition use. Two days later, Karimov announced on national radio that “we are ready to consider offering the use of our airspace for security and humanitarian purposes in the fight against terrorists,” arguing that Uzbekistan would benefit if the United States eliminated terrorist camps in Afghanistan that posed a direct threat to Uzbek security, as long as the United States provided security guarantees to Uzbekistan. By early October 2001, U.S. and Uzbek media had reported that over 1,000 U.S. troops from the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division had arrived in Uzbekistan, and this number soon reached 1,500 or more and various aircraft. A decision to permit the coalition to launch humanitarian and rescue operations from the Khanabad airbase, near the city of Karshi, was approved by the Uzbek Security Council on October 2, and this decision was relayed by Karimov to visiting Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on October 5, 2001. At a press conference after the meeting, Karimov officially stressed that Uzbekistan would not allow combat operations to be launched from Uzbekistan. (However, in other fora Uzbekistan repeated its offer of “all possible” support for the coalition, and various reports appeared of reconnaissance and targeting activities undertaken from Khanabad.) Rumsfeld indicated that “it should be clear to everyone that U.S. interests in Uzbekistan are long term in nature,” a stance repeated by Secretary of State Colin Powell in a visit in December 2001. An agreement on U.S. use of the Khanabad airbase was signed on October 7, just before the commencement of coalition air attacks on Taliban forces, and a joint U.S.-Uzbek statement on combating terrorism was broadcast on Uzbek television on October 12. The joint statement included a vague security guarantee for Uzbekistan, in that the two sides agreed to consult in the event of a threat to Uzbekistan’s security and territorial integrity. Karimov visited the United States in March 2002 for bilateral talks on Khanabad, military cooperation, U.S. assistance, and human rights, and the two sides signed a Strategic Partnership accord that reiterated the security guarantee.

Uzbekistan has benefitted from its alliance with the United States. In addition to security assurances and increased military and other aid, U.S. forces have helped eliminate much of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; a terrorist group based in Afghanistan and dedicated to the forceful establishment of Islamic rule in Uzbekistan). Not only were IMU bases destroyed in Afghanistan, but IMU military leader Juma Namanganiy was reportedly killed in November 2001. In April 2002, Karimov stated that intelligence had revealed that the IMU and other terrorists based in Afghanistan had planned to invade Uzbekistan that past autumn, and expressed Uzbekistan’s “gratitude to the United States” for playing the “decisive role in relieving [this] tension and danger on Uzbekistan’s southern borders,” by virtue of “its resolve and its well-trained Armed Forces.” At the same time, Karimov has appeared sensitive to some Islamic interests within the country, particularly in the Fergana Valley, that are opposed to the use of Uzbek territory for actions in Afghanistan.



**Table 2. Central Asia: Basic Facts**

Central Asian State	Kaz.	Kyr.	Taj.	Turk.	Uzb.	Total
Territory (000 sq.mi.)	1,100	77	55.8	190	174.5	1,597.3
Population (2002; Millions)	14.8	4.9	6.4	5.4	25.6	57.1
Gross Domestic Product (Bill. Dollars, 2002)	24.8	1.6	1.1	12.3*	7.9	47.6
GDP per capita (Dollars)	1,675	330	170	2,280*	310	948 (Avg.)
Oil Reserves Proven (Mill. Barrels)	5,417	40	12	546	594	6,609
Natural Gas Reserves Proven (Tr. Cubic Feet)	65	0.2	0.2	101	66.2	232.6
Size of Military	60,000	10,900	6,000	17,500	50,000-55,000	29,380 (Avg.)
FY2002 U.S. Aid Budgeted (Est.; Mill. Dollars)	89.34	95.66	141.29	18.06	239.78	599.16**
of which: Security Assistance (Mill. Dollars)	41.62	37.35	21.53	8.0	79.05	187.55
FY2003 U.S. Aid Budgeted (Est.; Mill. Dollars)***	42.72	37.85	25.8	7.8	38.75	152.92
Administration Request FY2004 (Mill. Dollars; Foreign Operations)***	32.0	40.0	35.0	8.0	42.0	157.0

**Sources:** *Economic Intelligence Unit; Central Asia Region*, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, 2002; *The Military Balance, 2002-2003*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2002; *U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with the New Independent States, FY2002 Annual Report*, Department of State; State Department, Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to the New Independent States; *Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations, FY2004*, The Secretary of State.

\*official Turkmen figures

\*\*Includes Central Asia Regional funding amounting to \$15.05 million.

\*\*\*Excludes Defense and Energy Department funds.

**Table 3. U.S. Government FY1992-FY2002 Budgeted Security Assistance to Central Asia, FREEDOM Support Act and Agency Budgets**  
(millions of dollars)

Agency*	Program	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	TOTAL
DOD	Cooperative Threat Reduction - Destruction and Dismantlement	\$179.7	\$0.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$18.5	\$198.6
DOD	DoD/FBI Counterproliferation	\$1.1	\$1.1	\$0.0	\$0.6	\$1.1	\$4.0
DOD	DoD/US Customs Service Counterproliferation	\$0.7	\$0.4	\$0.0	\$0.6	\$1.0	\$2.6
DOD	Warsaw Initiative (Partnership for Peace)	\$3.3	\$1.3	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$1.3	\$6.1
DOE	Material Protection, Controls & Accounting	\$17.6	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$2.7	\$20.3
DOE	Nonproliferation & International Security	\$74.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.6	\$76.3
DOE / DOS	Nuclear Reactor Safety	\$11.8	\$0.5	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$12.3
DOE / DOS	Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention (IPP)	\$6.6	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$6.6
DOS	Export Control & Border Security (EXBS)	\$11.9	\$20.6	\$8.8	\$6.3	\$33.8	\$81.4
DOS	USDA - Agricultural Research Services	\$6.3	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$2.5	\$8.8
DOS	EPA - Bio Redirect	\$1.5	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$1.6
DOS	HHS - Bioterrorism Engagement Program (BTEP)	\$3.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$3.4
DOS	Foreign Military Financing	\$13.7	\$17.5	\$3.7	\$2.8	\$44.4	\$82.1
DOS	International Military Exchanges and Training	\$4.1	\$2.6	\$0.3	\$2.2	\$3.5	\$12.7
DOS	Peacekeeping Operations	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.4	\$0.0	\$0.7
DOS	Nonproliferation/Disarmament Fund	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.6	\$0.6
DOS	Science Centers	\$13.5	\$3.3	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$5.5	\$22.2
DOS	Anti-Crime Training & Technical Assistance (ACTTA)	\$7.1	\$11.9	\$11.2	\$4.5	\$9.6	\$44.2
DOS	Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA)	\$2.6	\$1.9	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$3.9	\$8.5
DOS	DoJ - Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Training (OPDAT)	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.9	\$1.1
DOS / NSF	Civilian R&D Foundation (CRDF)	\$3.2	\$1.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$3.3	\$8.1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$363.0</b>	<b>\$63.4</b>	<b>\$24.2</b>	<b>\$17.6</b>	<b>\$134.1</b>	<b>\$602.3</b>

**Source:** State Department, Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to the New Independent States.

\*DOD, Defense Department; DOS, State Department; DOE, Energy Department; NSF, National Science Foundation.