

# Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001-2005

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# Introduction

## S. Frederick Starr

Few, if any, observers anticipated the rapid downward spiral of U.S.-Uzbek relations during the past several years. Those who supported the strategic partnership did so with the confidence that it embodied the true interests of both countries and hence would be of long duration. Having staked their credibility, and in some cases their careers, on the validity of this proposition, they would have to have been astonished as they watched the breakdown unfold. By contrast, there were those on both sides who were critical of the U.S.-Uzbek partnership from the outset. But such skeptics were equally unprepared for the speed and extent of the deterioration.

The first purpose of the following papers is to begin the task of identifying the causes of this development. Only by clearly understanding what occurred will it be possible for each country to plot a rational path forward. To that end, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute/Silk Road Program organized an informal team of scholars and participants coordinated by John J. C. Daly to establish a chronology of the relationship between 2001 and the end of 2005.

The chronology of U.S.-Uzbek relations is long but by no means comprehensive, as it inevitably includes only a fraction of possibly relevant information on the subject. Additional events will be included as they become known. In preparing the chronology, every effort was made to include all relevant data, without regard to whether they favored one interpretation over another. Any fair reading of the chronology will lead one to conclude that the facts of the situation lend themselves to more than one interpretation.

Precisely because of this, it may be useful to suggest a few general conclusions from the many that might be drawn from the chronology below. These are offered without any attempt to rank their importance. Rather they are simply listed under three rubrics: those factors traceable to the U.S.

governments; those traceable to the government of Uzbekistan; and those generated by third parties.

### **On the U.S. side:**

1. The Department of State never really focused on Uzbekistan. During the 1990s the stress was on region-wide initiatives rather than on identifying and addressing the specific needs of individual countries. Deputy Secretary of State Talbott's 1997 statement of U.S. policy in the region did not even mention the country. Prior to 9:11 the Uzbek government attempted to direct Washington's attention to the issue of terrorism but to no avail. After 9:11 the U.S. government focused narrowly on its anti-terrorism mission. It was grateful to Tashkent for its ready support, but made little effort to identify reciprocal steps that might benefit Uzbekistan, notwithstanding widespread later charges to the contrary. Bluntly, the U.S. took Uzbekistan's support for granted.
2. The U.S. allowed the new priorities established after 9:11 completely to preempt all prior understandings of the U.S.' strategic interests in Uzbekistan and Central Asia. Such heretofore accepted goals as the strengthening of secure sovereignties, poverty reduction, economic and social development, the destruction of chemical weapons, the establishment of a nuclear free zone in Central Asia, and the prevention of any single outside power or group of powers from dominating the region, all went by the board. When the final break with Uzbekistan occurred, the Pentagon dismissed the loss as of little importance to the War on Terror. No other losses to U.S. interests were cited because no other interests were by then acknowledged.
3. The U.S. side failed to analyze correctly Uzbekistan's internal political forces and dynamics. This failure traces to inadequate work by the CIA and possibly by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, although it is also possible that more careful reporting by the embassy was simply ignored at higher levels. Thanks to this situation, the Department of State devised policies that were directed solely to the President of Uzbekistan, without any regard for their differential impact on other actors in the "kitchen politics" of Tashkent, whether those committed to preserving the status quo or to change. Stated differently, U.S. policy took account only of the formal division of responsibilities

within the government of Uzbekistan, and not of the informal power relations that inevitably shape the actions of any government in the modern world.

4. As it did elsewhere, the U.S. government under both Presidents Clinton and Bush sought to bring about change in Uzbekistan, but was convinced that the best means of doing so was to work through NGOs outside the government rather than with government offices themselves. This backfired in two ways. First, it arrayed scores of Uzbek officials against the U.S.. In their view, the U.S. was sponsoring groups and organizations that treated them as a corrupt and brutal enemy and refused to deal with them directly. Second, it meant that key bureaucracies in Tashkent were untouched by U.S.-sponsored training or modernizing programs and were allowed instead to continue along their old Soviet paths. This is notably true for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is by far the largest government agency in Tashkent and sets the tone for all the others internally. On account of the U.S.' indifference to reform in this key agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs could remain a bastion of resistance to governmental reform and to U.S.-Uzbek ties. During the Andijan events of 13 May 2005 it was troops from this Ministry that were principally responsible for the excesses and bloodshed caused by the government's side.
5. U.S. officials flatly missed the greatest opportunity to foster change in Uzbekistan when it failed to translate into concrete programs the "democracy" provisions of the Strategic Partnership agreement that had been proposed by Uzbekistan itself and signed by the U.S. government. This mistake was compounded when the U.S. government turned a deaf ear to Uzbek "back channel" efforts to arouse Washington to action.
6. Overall, the U.S. approach to change in Uzbekistan was short on carrots and long on sticks. Worse, its "sticks" involved repeated instances of public castigation and humiliation that were received with predictable resentment even by reformers in Tashkent. Thus, when Uzbekistan took substantial measures against perpetrators of prisoner abuse the U.S. barely took note of them, yet the abuses themselves had given rise to extensive public reporting by the Department of State, even when those abuses were already well-known thanks to NGO

reporting. Similarly, Uzbekistan's ready support after 9:11 was not reflected in any major U.S. actions in the economic area, as Tashkent might reasonably have expected.

7. Throughout the period of close U.S.-Uzbekistan ties no single officer or office served as the key point of contact and coordination between the various U.S. agencies involved. The result was a lack of overall policy coordination. This was especially true between State and Defense, but no less true with respect to Commerce and the Treasury. As a result, one might say that the U.S. had *programs* affecting Uzbekistan but not an overall *policy*, let alone a *strategy*. The whole of U.S. activity *vis-à-vis* Uzbekistan was therefore less than the sum of its parts. To the Uzbeks, this presented a picture of ill-coordinated confusion that was only heightened by the absence over many years of high-level U.S. visits to their country other than by the Secretary of Defense. When these were finally renewed late in 2005 it was too late.
8. In the absence of leadership at higher levels, initiative within the Department of State slipped into those offices that were most active, primarily the bureau of Labor, Democracy, and Human Rights, and, secondarily, the Central Asia-Caucasus office. When the programs and initiatives championed by these offices were frustrated, the offices moved into sharp opposition to the Uzbek government as such, adopting a posture that could only lead to the severing of the U.S.-Uzbekistan partnership. Other dimensions of America's engagement with Uzbekistan—security, commercial, etc—all fell by the wayside.
9. A similar problem existed within Congress, where the Helsinki Committee failed to deal in a balanced manner with all three “baskets” of the Helsinki agreement: i.e., security, economics, and human rights. Instead it focused almost exclusively on Basket Three issues of human rights, ignoring the other two, which had originally been seen as inseparable from human rights and, with them, mutually reinforcing.
10. The U.S. government achieved stunning progress in post-9:11 Afghanistan but failed to build on its success with a new “post-post-9:11” policy for Central Asia as a whole. Uzbekistan was left with the real possibility of a U.S. withdrawal from the region once the mission in Afghanistan was completed. In the absence of a post-post-9:11 policy from Washington, Tashkent was left with no alternative but to seek

an accommodation both with Russia and with China, via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

- II. The U.S. National Security Council and Department of State fundamentally misread Russia's intentions with respect to Uzbekistan and the region. Clinging to their belief that cooperation with Russia was an overriding concern that must define U.S. actions with respect to Central Asia, they failed to understand that Russia was playing a very different game, one based on zero-sum thinking. As a result, when Uzbek-U.S. relations faltered, Russia (and also China) moved immediately to present itself as a strategic alternative, and one that would place no inconvenient conditions on Tashkent in the area of democratization and human rights.
12. At no point did American business interests in Uzbekistan play a visible role in the overall relationship. Neither Uzbekistan's natural gas deposits nor its uranium were ever cited as being relevant to the U.S.' overall interests there.

### **On the Uzbek side:**

1. The single most important factor in the destruction of the U.S.-Uzbekistan strategic partnership was the domestic policy of the Uzbek government itself. Issues of human rights and democratization were most prominent among these, but the government's intransigence with respect to economic reform was also important in undercutting U.S. support. The Strategic Partnership with the U.S. arose at the very time when international financial institutions were increasingly critical of Uzbekistan's efforts in the area of economic policy. Rather than respond to these criticisms, Tashkent tried to use the U.S. relationship as a means of postponing fundamental change. In the end it discovered that Russia, not the U.S., would be the most active supporter of such an approach.
2. All countries, including the U.S., pursue certain domestic policies that arouse criticism abroad. Uzbekistan failed to address these

clearly in its contact with the U.S., and only rarely proposed concrete actions for addressing them. When it did, it was often successful. For example, when Uzbek authorities prosecuted local officials and police for abusing the rights of citizens they garnered respect in many quarters abroad. Unfortunately, such cases were too few, and too little known. Overall, it is hard to imagine a less effective program of public information than Tashkent's.

3. There were institutional causes for each of the conditions for which Uzbekistan was criticized. Issues of prisoner abuse, for example, trace to the ministries of Internal Affairs and Justice. Problems of privatization and market reform trace to Finance, Industry, etc. Behind all these institutional issues lurked political struggles involving President Karimov, some of the leading power brokers with bases in various industries and regional networks, and the smaller band of those oriented towards moderate change. Thanks to Tashkent's secretiveness, none of this was known in the West. The U.S. and West therefore drew the only appropriate inference, namely, that all policies to which they objected traced directly and solely to the President. By cloaking all these realities in secrecy, the Karimov government alienated many of those in the West who might otherwise have been most inclined to support long-term and evolutionary programs of change and development.
4. Cultural factors doubtless played a key role in this silence. The rather formal "vertical culture" of oasis societies do not lend themselves to the informal "horizontal" communication that could have made a big difference in this case. But Uzbekistan is part of the modern world and that world is based on communication. Not one loyal but respected Uzbek politician, publicist, writer, journalist, or cultural figure wrote for the western press or spoke to the western media. Most statements on Uzbekistan came either from the President himself or, failing that, from that country's harshest critics, domestic and foreign.
5. The government of Uzbekistan relied overly on its contacts with the Secretary of Defense and underestimated the importance in policy-making of Congress, the press, and NGOs. Stated differently, it took a nineteenth century formalistic view of

diplomacy --which was also the Soviet view—rather than one that recognized the realities of open societies.

6. Overall, the Uzbek side allowed the United States to take Uzbekistan's support for granted. This directly inflamed those in Tashkent who opposed a pro-American alignment in Tashkent and discredited those in the government who favored it.

### **Relevant factors not arising from Uzbekistan or the U.S.:**

1. The passivity of European Union policy towards Uzbekistan further undercut pro-western factions in Tashkent, who had hoped that a strategic partnership with the United States might deepen the country's overall relationship with the West. It did not. Worse, when the European Union banned senior Uzbek officials from entering Europe it failed to distinguish between reformers and opponents of reform it was criticized by both sides of the Uzbek political spectrum. The EU's posture doubtless traces in part to those in France, Germany and elsewhere who wanted to disassociate themselves as completely as possible from the United States, especially after the start of the Iraq war. The effect, though, was to convince many Uzbeks that there was no "West" with which to align their country, only an increasingly distracted and disinterested United States.
2. The British government was largely inert in the face of the many accusations thrown up against both it and the government of Uzbekistan by former ambassador Craig Murray. Preoccupied with other concerns, including its engagement in Iraq and the major anti-narcotics role in Afghanistan that the UN had assigned it, Westminster's inertness is perhaps understandable. Yet it had the effect of vindicating Murray's extensive claims in the eyes of the western public, and further undermining the reform faction in Tashkent.
3. As U.S. and European pressure increased in the area of democratization and human rights, both Russia and China were able to dangle before Tashkent alliances based on a less rigorous

standard in these areas, yet promising greater rewards than were forthcoming from Washington. Both were pursuing long-term strategic objectives, which they could present as less threatening to Tashkent than the U.S.' preoccupations. Whereas Tashkent was sending letters of enquiry to Washington that went unanswered, it was receiving a steady rain of seemingly attractive offers from Beijing and especially from Moscow.

It will doubtless be necessary to revise or supplement these tentative conclusions as further information becomes available. Lest the reader give them more credence than they deserve, we have included two more detailed analyses of the U.S.-Uzbek relationship. The first is in the form of ten essays written by the well-known analyst Vladimir Socor as the events unfolded between July 6 and November 17, 2005. Appearing first in the Jamestown Foundation's *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, they are reprinted here with only those editorial changes of tense that are appropriate to a sequential retrospective reading. The second analysis is the work of Kurt Meppen, who observed the process as a whole from his position as Central Asia Policy Director in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Meppen prepared his study during the autumn of 2005 while posted as a Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace. We are grateful both to the Jamestown Foundation and to the U.S. Institute of Peace for their willingness to participate in this joint publication.

S. Frederick Starr

Chairman, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

## U.S.—Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options

LTC. Kurt H. Meppen\*

In November 2005 the last of over 10,000 U.S. Air Force aircraft sorties departed Uzbekistan's Khanabad Air Base, a final blow to Washington's ambitions in creating a tenable, long-term relationship with Tashkent and a secure political and military toehold in Central Asia. Within a month all the hundreds of support personnel had departed, and the new and improved air base infrastructure had been turned over to the Uzbek military. From its initial use by United States Central Command (CENTCOM) in toppling the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, until the final flight, Khanabad played a key role in maintaining the logistics required to keep a modern military force fielded in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region, as well becoming a symbol of U.S. power projection in an isolated, land-locked and politically challenging domain. With its demise, Khanabad became the metaphor for the U.S.—Uzbekistan bilateral relationship.

By early 2006 the United States bilateral ties with Uzbekistan still show no sign of improvement. The question is not whether the Bush Administration can heal the mutual mistrust, but whether the political will exists in Tashkent and Washington to begin the effort. A strategic relationship once of critical importance to both nations, and of significance to the stability of the region<sup>1</sup>, today the partnership founders, marked by diplomatic iciness, while Tashkent makes new friends and allies in Moscow and Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

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\* Lieutenant Colonel Kurt H. Meppen is a career Army Foreign Area Officer (Eurasia Region) who is currently researching and writing on U.S. Central Asia policy at the U.S. Institute of Peace, where he is a Senior Fellow. On behalf of the Army War College: The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, The Department of Defense, of the U.S. Government. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited. On behalf of the United States Institute of Peace: The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

<sup>1</sup> RFE/RL, 5 October 2001, "Uzbekistan: Rumsfeld Visit Builds Hopes Of Closer Relations With U.S.", Zamira Echanova. Rumsfeld emphasized that Uzbekistan's importance to the U.S. does not stem solely from the events of 11 September, stating: "...the interest of the U.S.

Several issues require review: What did Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov originally believe he was going to gain from a close relationship with Washington, and what prompted the Bush Administration to believe Karimov would be a good partner for the U.S? What are the United States' remaining security interests in Central Asia and why could a strategic relationship with Uzbekistan remain important? Is the current break purely a factor of the well publicized Andijan killings in May 2005, or did bilateral relations begin to sour long before that event? Do Tashkent and Washington still share enough common strategic interests to rebuild an effective relationship?

### **National Security Interests Drive Agreement**

Central Asia remains key to the U.S. in the War on Terror, in curtailing and deterring the movement of weapons and narcotics, and in providing the rule of law in potentially uncontrolled spaces. Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet system, Uzbekistan still retains a significant portion of Central Asia's administrative and academic elites who could bring about the dynamic social, political and economic changes needed throughout the region. As such, Uzbekistan is potentially a significant engine for growth, development, and leadership within the region. Uzbekistan's position adjoining each state in the region, to include critical road links to Afghanistan, make it a natural trading partner and transit route for international trade and business in Central Asia. Even neighboring Kazakhstan's current powerhouse economy, coming online after years of international effort and investment, does not place that nation in an exclusive leadership role for the region.

This regional dynamic was well understood in 2001 as President Bush cast about for reliable partners in Central Asia to assist in the prosecution of Operation Enduring Freedom<sup>3</sup> (OEF). Uzbekistan stood out as the geographic and political keystone of that successful campaign. Indeed,

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in Uzbekistan, it should be well understood, precedes the events of September 11. Indeed, on my first visit to Brussels for a NATO meeting, I made a point to have a bilateral meeting with the minister of defense of Uzbekistan because of my interest and interests of our countries."

<http://www.rferl.org/features/2001/10/08102001110340.asp>

<sup>2</sup> BBC News, 28 November 2005, "Struggle for Influence in Central Asia", Sarah Shenker. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4467736.stm>

<sup>3</sup> In late fall, 2001, OEF was still a vague concept in military planners' minds and not a brilliantly executed *fait accompli* in Afghanistan. Legions of military pundits and doubters were lamenting in advance the U.S.'s folly in attempting to topple the Taliban.

Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov, President since independence in 1991, appeared to be an ideal leader for such a role. Having spent ten years keeping the Russian Federation at arm's length in Uzbek foreign policy and defense relations, while distantly courting favor with the U.S. and NATO, Karimov had shown the necessary political mettle for the close alliance with the U.S. which was guaranteed to raise concerns in Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, and regionally.

The U.S. had a great deal to offer Uzbekistan in 2001 and early 2002, and by inference, the Karimov regime. It was widely speculated that as a result of close cooperation with Washington in the War on Terror, security assistance and economic assistance would be forthcoming to Tashkent well beyond anything previously considered.<sup>4</sup> First, the U.S. needed an airbase of significant size and capability, which Tashkent was happy to offer at Khanabad, in southwestern Uzbekistan. From the Uzbek perspective, such an airbase could potentially stimulate the local economy, providing welcome investment in a remote location, and it would put Uzbekistan in a continuing relationship with the world's remaining military superpower. Secondly, the U.S. needed a capable, politically mature government with which to deal. Karimov wanted an ally and was prepared to fill the same role for the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

Karimov understood the U.S. military perspective that Uzbekistan offered a stable, reliable, central location from which to project power in the region. He may not have fully appreciated at the time that Uzbekistan also fit well into U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's vision for a modern, transformed military force. The force Rumsfeld envisioned would not be constrained by previous geographic and physical limitations, but would be able to leverage small, mobile and highly lethal military capabilities from multiple global locations to meet U.S. defense requirements for the new century.<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan could become a perfect partner for such a venture, as Tashkent was eagerly leading the way regionally in military modernization and reform, and Uzbekistan's Minister of Defense Kadyr Ghulamov

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<sup>4</sup> RFE/RL, 12 OCT 2001, "Uzbekistan: U.S. Alliance Leaves Tashkent Feeling Confident", Bruce Pannier, <http://www.rferl.org/features/2001/10/12102001114721.asp>

<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official. He went on to explain that at this point, even with pressure from Russia and Islamic nations, President Karimov was determined to work with the West.

<sup>6</sup> Author's interviews with policy officers, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 9 NOV 2005,

understood very well the opportunities afforded by continued close cooperation with CENTCOM and the Department of Defense (DoD).

Additionally, Tashkent had a vested political and security interest in the U.S. led operations in Afghanistan. Leaders throughout the region had spent years watching the fundamentalist Taliban march to power in Kabul.<sup>7</sup> As a group, these leaders understood that Taliban rule in Afghanistan would translate into political and security threats to their standing regimes, as well as magnifying concerns for increased narcotics traffic. Taliban rule would also strengthen the hand of Osama bin Ladin, raising the likelihood for the smuggling of components for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) which Al-Qaeda was already trying to acquire.<sup>8</sup> U.S. success toppling the Taliban in Afghanistan would create a breathing spell for Uzbekistan in battles with its own Islamic fundamentalist terrorists from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the activists of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT).<sup>9</sup> The IMU and HT had a common cause in toppling the Karimov regime, and they were willing to work with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda to that end. Each organization had a different tactical and political approach, but their shared goal of removing Karimov and establishing a Central Asian Caliphate caused Tashkent great concern that an eventual effective political union could be forged in Afghanistan among the regime's enemies.

The terms of the initial U.S.-Uzbek Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with respect to use of Uzbekistan's air fields, airspace and soil were vague enough to allow the U.S. to begin moving immediately and to deal with details later. Both nations were therefore immediately able to pursue their own interests.<sup>10</sup> It was a promising political moment and Karimov seized it, accepting significant personal and national political risk in his belief that the U.S. would prevail in Afghanistan and he would not be left alone in Central

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<sup>7</sup> BBC, "Central Asian ministers meet to discuss Taleban advance", August 22, 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/156471.stm>

<sup>8</sup> While Osama bin Ladin was not a household name prior to 9/11, he and Mullah Omar were well known and feared in Central Asia long before 9/11 or even the Clinton Administration's cruise missile bombings of Al-Qaeda camps following the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. The fear of what the Taliban could destabilize regionally, with bin Ladin's and Pakistani ISID assistance, essentially drove the security policies for the five Central Asian States.

<sup>9</sup> Author's interview with a senior Central Asian diplomat. Uzbekistan initially attempted to work within the CIS to find a security guarantor with regard to Afghanistan, but the organization was consumed with the South Caucasus at the time and was not able to come to consensus; it was, therefore, of no assistance.

<sup>10</sup> U.S.-Uzbekistan 2001 Status of Forces Agreement

Asia to face the fundamentalists who were his sworn enemies. Khanabad Air Base quickly became the critical link in day-to-day operations for U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, American forces were given a secure footing in Central Asia for their logistical air bridge from Europe, and Uzbekistan had seemingly gained a strong ally in its quest for security.

The complexity of operations at Khanabad soon escalated to an awe-inspiring tempo. To arrive at Afghanistan's Bagram Air Base, U.S. aircraft would overfly Europe, refuel mid-air over the Black Sea with U.S. tankers flying from Romania, cross the Caucasus states of Georgia and Azerbaijan, span the Caspian Sea north of Iran, then cross into Central Asia and overfly Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and possibly Tajikistan. After offloading cargo at Bagram, the C-17's would fly to Khanabad, refuel, and continue to Europe, retracing the original ingress route. Each C-17 crew thus sustained a 24 hour crew day while completing one mission to Afghanistan, while another crew was waiting in Europe for the airplane to return in order to repeat the process. Soon, more than 10 C-17's were landing daily at Khanabad to complete their journey. The air corridor from Europe over the Caucasus and Central Asia became the key to maintaining combat capability in Afghanistan, and Khanabad was the critical refueling and logistics nexus to keeping the flow moving.

Even with this enormous increase in military to military contact and cooperation between the U.S. and Uzbekistan, it was recognized within Washington that the bilateral relationship was based on numerous mutual interests that transcended the obvious concern for military operations in support of OEF. Over the extended period, Washington's goal for the region was that Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular, not be threatened by devolution to an uncontrolled space such as had developed in Afghanistan; longer-term interests in the region were intended to be key to the overall flavor of the bilateral relationship. In the short run, though, military operations drove the tempo of the bilateral relationship as OEF picked up pace. The eventual loss to the U.S. of Khanabad in 2005 did not signal the closure of U.S. operations in Afghanistan, but it did require operational work-arounds to keep the air bridge alive. Through great expense, DoD utilized Kyrgyzstan's commercial civilian airport at Bishkek, added extra tankers and C-17's to the total package, and lengthened the air bridge almost all the way to the Chinese border. However, that logistical work-around in Bishkek is not a positive final solution for Afghanistan operations, and the

U.S. still has essential national security interests remaining in common with Uzbekistan that must be addressed in some fashion. A better relationship with Uzbekistan, therefore, remains in the United States' long-term interest.

### Cultural Roadblocks

A thorny issue in U.S. bilateral relations with the former Soviet states of Central Asia and the Caucasus is the interpretation by local regimes that “national security interests” and “perpetuation of the regime” are synonymous terms; they are not. This quandary is most apparent in Turkmenistan, where President Saparmurat Niyazov, the self-styled “Turkmenbashi,” or “Leader of All Turkmen,” has created a cult of personality rivaled by none. His name, fame and graven image are officially bound up as part of the government ideology. In Turkmenistan's alternative universe, Niyazov's very existence certifies his legitimacy. The U.S. has difficulty working with such a government.

In Uzbekistan, President Karimov has not gone so far in lionizing himself as his neighbor, but he has worked to assure that his regime, and his regime's interpretation of every issue, is the single choice offered to Uzbeks, attempting to assure de facto regime perpetuity. In practice, this has come to mean that anyone challenging a tenet of the Uzbek State can be perceived as challenging the President personally, which is potentially criminal behavior. This situation necessarily obstructs the creation of a viable, peaceful opposition, and inflates the chance that anyone with a legitimate grievance will either be forced to give up his differences with the government or make the difficult choice of going into a political underground. The situation, not unusual in Central Asia, also lends itself to Uzbek government officials finding easy solutions to difficult issues without public debate, on the pretext that nobody is going to challenge the assumptions and conclusions of local, regional or national government officers. This does not represent good governance.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rafis Abazov, “Kyrgyzstan and Issues of Political Succession”, *Russia and Eurasia Review*, The Jamestown Foundation, May 27, 2003, [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=16&issue\\_id=623&article\\_id=4528](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=16&issue_id=623&article_id=4528); see also Martha Bill Olcott, “Commentary on the Situation in Uzbekistan”, Carnegie Endowment, April 11, 2004, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1503&prog=zru>.

Underground options for political and economic dissent include HT and the IMU. They both actively collect proselytes from among the dispossessed, or create politicized activists from among devout Muslims disappointed in the regime's corruption, the economy, or any other of a host of social and government ills. These proselytes are offered fundamentalist interpretations of Islam and radical political solutions as the best and only hope for themselves, their families and their nation. Their view of the nation-state is then subsumed into the greater HT or IMU goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in place of the Karimov regime. For those without any hope, little education and even less experience, these alternatives shine with promise.

It is important in understanding the allure of these organizations to an individual to first appreciate the mindset and outlook of an Uzbek citizen, at both the grassroots level and at the level of the educated elite. The Asia Development Bank cites a quarter of the Uzbek population was living below the poverty line in 2004 and into 2005,<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, with money come privilege, education and hope. Without money and economic opportunity come despair and a willingness to try anything that offers a change. Uzbeks living at or below the poverty line do not have a stake in the future success and stability of Karimov's Uzbekistan; for them Uzbekistan currently holds no promise. An HT or IMU recruiter will find himself working in fertile ground.

The lure of any ideology in such a political climate will have a rapt audience if it promises a better life, even if the details for such a better existence are necessarily fuzzy. In Uzbekistan, the HT and IMU recruiters must manage to get the message past government censors and internal security forces set in place to apprehend them. HT in particular has had tremendous success by instilling an organizational discipline unmatched by most other groups.

In 2001, as Karimov contemplated working with the U.S., Uzbekistan was fighting an ideological battle against the IMU and HT. The IMU was the more prominent internationally known effort, as it detonated a series of bomb blasts in Tashkent in 1999, almost hitting Karimov's motorcade at one point.<sup>13</sup> The IMU military leader, Juma Namangani, had attempted to mount a badly inspired but brilliantly led insurgent uprising against the Karimov

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<sup>12</sup> Asia Development Bank, *Asian Development Outlook-2005:Uzbekistan-Macroeconomic Assessment of 2004*, Hong Kong, 2005, 184-187

<sup>13</sup> BBC, "'Extremism' behind Uzbek bombs", February 17, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/280408.stm>

government following the bombings. The organization's goal was to overthrow the entire political order and establish a caliphate throughout Central Asia, to be headquartered in the ancient Central Asian Islamic city of Samarqand.

For HT's part, it had emerged earlier than the IMU, but with less sinister drappings, primarily organizing in the Fergana Valley and disavowing violence while dressing itself as merely an Islamic teaching organization. However, it endorsed the overthrow of the Uzbek government, establishment of a Caliphate, and the idea that violence would almost certainly have to take place to enable such an Islamic revolution to topple the Karimov regime. In short, HT began agitating and training a foundation of Islamic believers, politicizing their faith, and then urging them to find positions in society, government service and the security organs in order to eventually assist a revolution. HT is an international organization with roots in Jordan and an active, London-based worldwide headquarters. It is a virtual propaganda machine, espousing virulently anti-Semitic, anti-American and anti-Democratic messages aimed at destabilizing any non-Islamic political order. It is organized on Leninist lines, and is dedicated to the principle of elite management of political and religious affairs in an eventual Caliphate. Within HT's world plan, representative democracy will have no role.<sup>14</sup> HT has flourished best in the Fergana Valley in the politically tense and densely populated traditionally religious border regions shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Lack of police cooperation across the borders in the enclaves has enabled individual dissidents and couriers to roam between cities without apprehension.

Both OEF and an eager Bush Administration provided Tashkent the opportunity to combine with the U.S. to create greater capabilities in the region against both the Taliban threat in Afghanistan and Tashkent's internal IMU and HT fundamentalist enemies. The IMU's public declaration to being part of Al-Qaeda only served to cement the arrangement.<sup>15</sup> The U.S. showed greater reluctance, however, to brand HT as a terror organization because its members had not committed any known

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<sup>14</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir: Islam's Political Insurgency*, Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004, 24.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, the IMU's military commander, Juma Namangani, took control of Al-Qaeda's foreign fighters battling to the death in Kunduz province in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance and U.S. advisors. He reportedly lost his life in the battle.

terror attacks. (HT is outlawed in Turkey, Germany and all other Central Asian States) This difference of interpretation between who was or was not a terrorist was swept away as both nations marched in lockstep to create a counterterrorism force in Uzbekistan that could handle an Islamic insurgency. At the close of 2001 the bilateral relationship was strong and expanding.

### **The Relationship is Forged**

With the Bush Administration eager to line up Islamic nations as coalition partners in the War on Terror, Uzbekistan was a politically choice nation for the U.S. to work with even without its key geographic position. Central Asians had historically practiced a very tolerant form of Sunni Islam, and it was hoped that Uzbekistan could lend significant legitimacy to the U.S. effort to bolster tolerance within the Islamic Umma over narrowly interpreted dogmas extant. The initial agreement for the U.S. use of Khanabad was simply the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), hastily arranged between the two nations in October of 2001, which guaranteed the U.S. the free use of Khanabad Air Base.<sup>16</sup> No other strings were attached. The U.S. was displaying great willingness to make a significant commitment to Uzbekistan's future, thereby strengthening the Karimov regime internally and in the region.

President Karimov conducted a state visit to Washington in March of 2002 to meet with President Bush, Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Rice. He regarded his oval office visit with President Bush as an excellent start to the strategic relationship after the President told him, with respect to Human Rights, "We are not going to teach you." This raised expectations within Tashkent, as Uzbekistan's leadership expected to be treated as an equal by Washington with much less criticism of the regime than had previously been experienced. Looking back at that moment from 2006, Karimov's White House visit appears to have been the high-water mark of the bilateral relationship. In response, Uzbekistan threw political support to the U.S. whenever possible, to include voting to support Washington's positions on Iraq and Israel in the United Nations.<sup>17</sup> As an

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<sup>16</sup> Jim Nichol, *Uzbekistan's Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications*, Congressional Research Service (CRS), October 7, 2005. "The SOFA was signed on October 7<sup>th</sup>, with the Air Campaign in Afghanistan beginning an hour later."

<sup>17</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official.

Islamic nation, Uzbekistan was making a significant statement of support for the U.S. and the War on Terror.

In July of 2002, Washington and Tashkent signed a second, more substantial agreement, the “Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation between the United States of American and the Republic of Uzbekistan,” which was intended to be a longer-term political agreement and proved to be much more comprehensive than the SOFA. Both governments knew the document by its shorthand titles as either the “Framework Agreement,” or simply “The Agreement.” The Agreement was initially an Uzbek idea, and Tashkent offered the first draft from which the two governments negotiated.<sup>18</sup> It contained little mention about the War on Terror, and did not mention Khanabad Air Base at all,<sup>19</sup> but it did speak a great deal about issues that were dear to the heart of the Bush Administration in spreading democracy globally, and in countering the seventy-plus years of Soviet mismanagement of the region.

For the Uzbeks, it encapsulated a desire for economic and military assistance to enable Tashkent to be first among equals in Central Asia. Within Karimov’s inner circle an ideological debate was being pursued regarding the speed, pace and direction of reform, democracy, western economic models, and the role of the government in shaping that debate. In 2001, reform minded moderates were able to gain Karimov’s ear, arguing that a close association with the West, particularly the U.S., was in Uzbekistan’s interest. The quick embrace of U.S. troops on Uzbek soil provided a ready opportunity to increase the necessary bilateral relations and give reformers a working chance to succeed. Differences of opinion within the government regarding the relationship and the nature of reform were based primarily on ministry lines, with the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry leaderships championing reform, while the Interior Ministry maintained close ties with Russia and became, in essence, an opposition.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the Framework Agreement, while only a piece of paper, nevertheless looked very promising to both nations in contemplating the future relationship.

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<sup>18</sup> Author’s discussion with both State Department and Department of Defense staff legal counsel involved in the negotiation of the Framework Agreement.

<sup>19</sup> *Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation between the United States of American and the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Released July, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Author’s discussions with Uzbek officials, 2005-2006.

Specifically, the Framework Agreement spelled out goals for bilateral cooperation in democratization, military cooperation and security (to include transnational threats), Partnership for Peace activities (NATO), disaster prevention and response, economic market reforms, World Trade Organization trade and investment cooperation, regional cooperation, education, science and technology cooperation, human rights and mass media development, legislative reform assistance, and law enforcement cooperation. The Agreement was a comprehensive document which signaled sweeping reforms and modernization for Uzbekistan and pledged significant good faith efforts by the U.S. to assist the process with specialists and money as available. It did not include a *quid pro quo* to Uzbekistan for U.S. basing at Khanabad, nor did it specify Uzbek levels of support to the U.S. in the War on Terror. It did not stipulate any monetary amounts, to include any rental or leasing agreements for Uzbek facilities, nor did it promise any specific amounts of aid, either military or economic. However, those involved in the decision-making process assumed the U.S. assistance package to Uzbekistan would grow substantially, which it did.<sup>21</sup>

Congress displayed immediate interest in the subject of financial assistance to Uzbekistan as the levels of support increased dramatically; so likewise grew interest from a variety of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) critical of the Uzbek regime.<sup>22</sup> Central Asia had become a hobby horse for NGO's and lobbyists concerned with human rights, and Uzbekistan was a common target. As a result of the concerns of these groups, coupled with significant Congressional interest, the 2004 Foreign Operations appropriation, indexed Uzbek reforms against the stated goals of the Framework Agreement. The apparent objective was to push Karimov toward

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Freedom Support Act (FSA) monies to Uzbekistan prior to the War on Terror in 2001 totaled \$24.8M. These funds were increased to \$118.2M in 2002. Simultaneously, Foreign Military Finance (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds to Uzbekistan grew from a combined \$3M in 2001 to \$37.7M in 2002. In 2003 the FMF/IMET monies leveled back to \$8.6M, while FSA monies leveled at \$39.5M. ("Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations", 2000-2006, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/>.) Foreign Military Finance (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) are State Department programs administered by the Department of Defense. Both programs provide the bulk of what is known as DoD Security Assistance, but they are in fact State Department programs funded annually as part of the Foreign Operations Act.

<sup>22</sup> International Crisis Group, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are on record, along with several other NGO's, with strong and repeated criticisms of the Karimov regime and the Bush Administration's close ties with the Uzbek government following the onset of the War on Terror.

reforms he might otherwise resist. This tactic effectively froze the Bush administration's policy flexibility in providing Security Assistance support to Uzbekistan. Tashkent's pace of reform and political development became a serious debate within the administration.

Under the 2004 Act, Secretary of State Powell was required to certify that Uzbekistan was making progress in meeting the terms of the Framework Agreement before any funds could be passed to the Uzbek government. Additionally, in anticipation of a possible political end run around the Foreign Operations Bill's strict language (by an administration eager to maintain ties with Karimov), Congress specifically denied national security waiver authority for the Secretary of State in his certification determination for Uzbekistan, while specifically including it for Uzbekistan's neighbor, Kazakhstan. This snub to Tashkent did not go unnoticed by Karimov.<sup>23</sup> The same language was inserted for the 2005 and 2006 Foreign Operations Bills.<sup>24</sup> (Since 2004 the FMF/IMET monies have not been paid due to these constraints on disbursement.<sup>25</sup>) Additionally, unlike other elements of military spending, the FMF and IMET funds are annual budget allocations, not programmed funds with multi-year outlays. Through this mechanism Congress maintains a very close hold on military security assistance, and nations like Uzbekistan are held to a de facto annual review. The omens did not appear strong for any future significant funding to the Uzbek government without Karimov changing the way he ran his country, something to which he was not predisposed.

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<sup>23</sup> Author's interviews with Uzbek officials, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Section 574, FY03 Foreign Operations Act; Section 658(b) of the FY04 Act. Section 574 reads: "(a) Funds appropriated by the Act may be made available for assistance for the Government of Uzbekistan only if the Secretary of State determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that the Government of Uzbekistan is making substantial and continuing progress in meeting its commitments under the 'Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the United States of America.'" Sub section (b) referred to Kazakhstan. Sub Section (c) stated: "The Secretary of State may waive the requirements under subsection (b) if he determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that such a waiver is in the national security interests of the United States."

<sup>25</sup> In 2004 and 2005 the Secretary of State was unable to certify progress in the listed areas and allocated security assistance monies were not paid.

## Regional Dynamics of the U.S. Presence in Central Asia

By 2002 the U.S. had become a central actor in larger Central Asian security issues, well beyond events in Afghanistan, by virtue of significant funding to other Central Asian States, and by its significant troop presence at Khanabad and the Kyrgyz international airport at Manas. Although Moscow had nominally supported the Central Asian States hosting U.S. forces for OEF, the publicized “Strategic Alliance” between Tashkent and Washington caused concern among Russian pundits as to long-term U.S. plans for the region.<sup>26</sup>

U.S. influence was perceived by most observers as being on the rise within the region, potentially threatening Russia’s historic interests. President Bush’s assurances to President Putin that the U.S. did not harbor interests inimical to Moscow’s long-term interests in Central Asia were not sufficiently comforting. In addition to the Framework Agreement, Russian fears of a U.S. juggernaut were stoked by U.S. pronouncements on future NATO accessions and potential U.S. bases in Poland and Romania.<sup>27</sup> Putin nevertheless realized that the defeat of the Taliban and weakening of Al-Qaeda had strengthened Russia’s security on its Southern border, and he was not in a position to offer Karimov, or any other Central Asian leader, a package of support and military modernization and reform comparable to Washington’s.

China, too, although not as overtly involved in Central Asian events, was uncomfortable by the growing U.S. presence in the region. China maintains long-term strategic interests in Kazakhstan’s Caspian oil fields, and it is anxious to not let the U.S. dominate the region politically or financially.<sup>28</sup> Russia and China, therefore, acting together through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), began attempting to push SCO-flagged military and counterterrorism arrangements as alternatives to U.S.

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<sup>26</sup> RIA-Novosti, on Russian concern with the U.S. presence

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Lee Meyers, “As NATO Finally Arrives on Its Border, Russia Grumbles”, *New York Times*, April 3, 2004, <http://www.mindfully.org/WTO/2004/NATO-Arrives-Russia3apro4.htm>

<sup>28</sup> John Daly, “The Dragon’s Drive for Caspian Oil”, *China Brief*, The Jamestown Foundation, May 13, 2004, [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=395&issue\\_id=2952&article\\_id=236701](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=395&issue_id=2952&article_id=236701); Stephen Blank, “Xinjiang and China’s Strategy in Central Asia”, *Asia Times Online*, April 3, 2004, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FD03Ado6.html>

counterterror initiatives in the region, although denying it was to specifically counter the large U.S. presence.<sup>29</sup>

In 2003, Russia announced that it was building its own counterterrorism base in Central Asia at a former Soviet Airfield in Kant, Kyrgyzstan.<sup>30</sup> Although the base was not to be located in Uzbekistan, Uzbek officials privately explained that nobody in the region had any doubts that it was a direct response to the U.S. presence and was a caution to Tashkent in its willingness to host American forces. As one Uzbek official explained, the base was a “dagger pointed at the Uzbek throat.”<sup>31</sup>

Doubtless another pressure upon Tashkent was the presence of Iran. Tehran has been hemmed in during the last several years by U.S. ground forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, by Washington’s close relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan and Pakistan, and by a significant U.S. presence in Central Asia, specifically at Khanabad. As one Uzbek official noted during discussions of international pressures that Tashkent had to consider in dealing with the U.S, “Never forget that we are an Islamic nation. We must work to maintain good relations with other Islamic nations. We feel this pressure as we host U.S. forces.” The veiled hint was later confirmed in private conversation to refer specifically to Iran and the destabilizing role it could play in the region if it so chose.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Iran has not played a significant public role in Central Asia outside of attempting to work for closer economic ties, but fear of the Islamic Republic and its potential for escalating tensions continue to factor into strategic calculations and bilateral relations in each Central Asian capital. For Tashkent, the presence of a seemingly permanent U.S. facility at Khanabad presented a blunt challenge to Tehran in the face of Iranian animosity toward Washington. This strategic dynamic, with such a

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<sup>29</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization began with five member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It was originally conceived as an organization that could bring the neighboring states into agreement on border delimitation issues and cross-border commerce. Uzbekistan joined in June, 2001. SCO website, <http://www.answers.com/topic/shanghai-cooperation-organization>

<sup>30</sup> Steve Rosenberg, “Kyrgyzstan Agrees to Russian Base”, BBC News, September 22, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3129582.stm>; In May 2005 Russia announced plans to strengthen Kant, “Russia to Beef up Air Fleet at Kant Base in Kyrgyzstan”, (<http://www.mosnews.com/news/2005/03/07/kyrgyzbase.shtml>) while Uzbekistan was simultaneously requesting U.S. departure from Khanabad.

<sup>31</sup> Author’s conversations with senior Uzbek MOD officials in Tashkent, Fall, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Author’s conversations with senior Uzbek MOD officials in Tashkent, Fall, 2004

potentially destabilizing regional impact, could not be discounted by Karimov or his inner circle.

Through Russia's actions at Kant, internal SCO meetings, and bilateral diplomatic contacts, Uzbekistan began feeling pressure not to ally itself too closely with the U.S. and NATO.<sup>33</sup> The negative pressure Russia could bring to bear was significant, as Uzbekistan, like the other Central Asian States, relied upon Russia for spare parts and maintenance support for virtually all of its military equipment. Those states that supported Russian policy were generally granted a discount status on their parts purchases. Uzbekistan was being forced to pay the full market price. Uzbekistan is totally reliant even today upon the rail lines and commercial access routes to the West and to the world markets that all traverse Russian territory. Russia remains Uzbekistan's most significant trading partner.<sup>34</sup>

For its part, China also supported moving Uzbekistan and other Central Asian States away from a robust bilateral relationship with the U.S. Without the political muscle in Uzbekistan to follow the same strategy as Russia, China was nevertheless able to offer economic incentives and commercial loans at discounted rates.<sup>35</sup> China also offered something else that appealed to Karimov: little challenge to his autocratic style of government or his handling of discordant elements in the population. The Uzbek President was finding himself subject to lectures on human rights, freedom of speech and due process on an almost daily basis from the Western press. Washington adopted a very private and urgent tone with him on matters of human rights, economic and political reform, while various European allies were more publicly critical. China, with human rights concerns of its own, was not about to issue embarrassingly direct warnings on police practices or human rights cases.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>33</sup> Author's note: One such measure was to deny certificates of airworthiness to any American modified, Russian built rotary winged aircraft in the Uzbek Air Force. In 2002 the U.S. offered to upgrade Uzbek helicopters for night operations on border operations, but finally had to concede that with Russian intransigence on certification of such airframes, the project would have to be downgraded. This was not an uncommon tactic.

<sup>34</sup> CIA World Factbook, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Alisher Ilkhamov, "Profit, not patronage: Chinese interests in Uzbekistan", Association for Asian Research (AFAR), October 23, 2005, <http://www.asianresearch.org/articles/2746.html>. China has offered over \$1 billion worth of credit guarantees and loans to Tashkent.

<sup>36</sup> Grant Podelco, "Uzbekistan: President Begins Visit To China Carrying No Baggage From Andijan Crackdown", *RFE/RL*, May 25, 2005. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/5/8AEC6277-BoA6-450A-8E08->

Chinese centrally planned economy does not present a philosophical challenge to the self-destructive centrally planned economic policies Karimov has embraced, providing a de facto endorsement of Tashkent's lackluster economic reform measures.

But in spite of the gathering steam of Russian and Chinese challenges to U.S.-Uzbek bilateral relations in 2002 and 2003, and Uzbek annoyance at the West's reluctance to publicly and politically embrace his regime, Karimov supported Washington, his strategic partner, with continued access to Khanabad. He rolled out a robust program of military reform and modernization which focused on the strengths of Western military models with Non-Commissioned Officers trained by the U.S., highly capable Special Operations Forces modeled on similar U.S. organizations, acquisition of strategic and tactical Command, Control, and Communications (C3) capabilities from U.S. corporations, and side-by-side counterterrorist training with U.S. forces in Uzbekistan.

Senior U.S. Defense Department officials met regularly with Uzbek leaders in Bilateral Defense Consultations, and in 2002 and 2003 the State Department sponsored Joint Security Cooperation Consultations aimed at increasing mutual cooperation and understanding. The Framework Agreement provided the baseline of issues to be discussed for each such gathering.

### **The Relationship Begins to Fray**

By the end of 2003 Tashkent began hinting broadly at some sort of programmed remuneration for the U.S. use of Khanabad. The German government had previously agreed to significant payments for its use of Termez airfield in southern Uzbekistan as Berlin took over the mantle of leadership for NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). As well, the apparent wealth Uzbekistan's neighbors in Kyrgyzstan were able to acquire through leasing portions of Bishkek's civilian airport to the Coalition was not lost on Karimov and his military advisors as they attempted to finance military reform and modernize aging Soviet era equipment and infrastructure.<sup>37</sup> Having expected continued U.S. financial assistance at the

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CBCEoB4688B2.html. In fact, following Andijan, Beijing congratulated Uzbekistan on dealing with its restive citizens positively and decisively.

<sup>37</sup> Private meetings between author and Senior Uzbek military officials.

time of The Agreement, only to see the levels of security assistance drop due to the Congressional Certification issue, Uzbek interlocutors began hinting at some sort of “permanent arrangement,” for regulating the long-term use of Khanabad. In blunt terms, the Ministry of Defense needed money and Khanabad was a potential cash cow.

Over a period of time stretching from late 2003 to early 2005, Tashkent presented no less than six drafts of a permanent agreement for the U.S. use of Khanabad. Each draft was carefully considered in Tashkent, as the leadership attempted to divine which words and concepts were necessary to convince the U.S. to come to the bargaining table.<sup>38</sup> Based on the favorable terms granted to the U.S. in the SOFA and the Framework Agreement, Washington showed little inclination to negotiate. Secretary Rumsfeld was pursuing multiple basing arrangements around the world, and the standing policy of making payments only for privately owned airfields, and not paying for the use of military facilities, was fiscally sound. Across the Potomac, the State Department’s sanguine views were summed up in one senior staffer’s comment that, “Uzbekistan needs us more than we need them. They’ll come around.”<sup>39</sup>

The fact that the Kyrgyz President, Askar Akayev, was understood to be profiting financially through his son-in-law’s management of the Bishkek airport at Manas was not considered part of the issue from the U.S. perspective. However, Kyrgyz remuneration was very important to the Uzbeks, who understood perfectly well the nature of such business operations in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz President was making significant revenue, while not committing politically to the U.S. as heavily as the Uzbeks. In private meetings, Uzbek officials regularly mentioned financial windfalls by Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan as examples of a seeming double standard for the U.S.<sup>40</sup> Karimov doubtless felt himself looking like the fool to his neighbors, while being used by the Americans.

The U.S. was, however, continuing to assist funding of Non-Government organizations working in Uzbekistan on issues within The Agreement.

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<sup>38</sup> UzReport.com, Business Information Portal, March 8, 2005. This news service is an organ of the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and its editorial board’s views are assumed to mirror the Karimov administration.

<sup>39</sup> Author’s discussions with State Department Policy & Plans personnel regarding the U.S.-Uzbekistan relationship, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Author’s discussions with Uzbek officials, 2005.

Unfortunately for those interested in close relations between Tashkent and Washington, political winds of change were blowing throughout the region, with the 2003 and 2004 democratic upheavals in Georgia and Ukraine directly threatening the perception of the Karimov regime's legitimacy. Tashkent made certain that any NGO's financed by the U.S. faced a hurricane of official paper and bureaucratic blocks, effectively stopping their U.S. funded activities. Tashkent equated U.S. efforts with NGO's to undermining the existing political structure and offering a potential threat to the sustainability of the regime.<sup>41</sup> It was to counter just such threats that Karimov had entered into an alliance with the U.S., not to foster an upending of his regime. The recurring problem of equating regime sustainability with national interests was becoming a bone of contention between the two nations, although neither would ever choose to articulate it in this fashion publicly.

Karimov maintained confidence, however, in his personal relationship with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. It is not unusual in private meetings in Central Asia for local leaders to attempt to distinguish between Department of State, for whom they often hold great antipathy, and the Department of Defense, usually a source of largesse and little criticism.<sup>42</sup> Based upon this factor, and the understandable concern the Pentagon had regarding every facet of the bilateral relationship, it was understood in Washington that Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was a good choice to carry hard messages to Karimov. His particularly pugnacious style of leadership, coupled with the aura of victory he carried after successful operations in Afghanistan and in the march to Baghdad gave him an additional cachet with Karimov that others did not have. They spoke very frankly. The Secretary of Defense always began his meetings with a discussion of the need for reform in Uzbekistan, and often mentioned specific human rights issues. For his part, Karimov would stress the threats to his nation and the need for a firm partnership with the U.S. Karimov usually left it to his ministers to discuss financial issues with their counterparts; the discussion of payments and obligations would usually not enter the dialogue.

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<sup>41</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official.

<sup>42</sup> Author's interview with an Uzbek diplomat. Under these circumstances Tashkent had difficulty interpreting what the administration policy was toward Uzbekistan, considering the DoS and DoD split on foreign policy in the region to be an institutional framework around which the Uzbeks had to make decisions. (Author's note: Interestingly, Tashkent apparently failed to consider that any message delivered by Rumsfeld would have already been cleared by the administration.)

In the spring of 2003 President Karimov addressed a personal letter to President Bush requesting economic assistance. It is possible he felt this letter would allow him to get his issues around the State Department, and would be more productive than trying to work through the certification issues Congress had implemented. Perhaps he was mirror-imaging his own situation in power onto the U.S. President: In Uzbekistan, if the legislature becomes problematic (and it does not), then President Karimov has a great deal of latitude in simply making decrees, financial or otherwise. Did Karimov feel that Bush could override Congress and find some source of money for economic assistance that went around the congressional and State Department bureaucracies? In any event, Karimov eventually received a negative personal response from President Bush in which he cited the need for real reforms, shattering hopes the Uzbek President may have held for a personal relationship to override the political realities in Washington. The response also elicited Karimov's frustration in that he did not see his economic reforms as insufficient or badly executed.<sup>43</sup> This was perhaps the first real event to cause both Karimov and the Uzbek elites in his government to begin questioning the nature of the relationship between the two strategic partners.<sup>44</sup> It also demonstrated to Karimov that the U.S. was not going to go to great lengths on his behalf. To a president fighting an Islamic insurgency, casting about for reliable international partners, this was not an encouraging sign. However, the siren song of a Russian and Chinese rapprochement with Uzbekistan was just over the horizon.

Popular opinion to the contrary<sup>45</sup>, the break in U.S.-Uzbek relations had its roots long before the killings in Andijan<sup>46</sup> took place. Andijan simply served to amplify rhetoric and public debate. In fact, the killings and the very public denunciations in the aftermath served merely to highlight a rupture that was

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<sup>43</sup> While both letters are known to exist, no copies have been made available to the public.

<sup>44</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official. According to source, Bush's letter was "the moment" that Karimov decided the U.S.-Uzbek relationship was no longer going to serve Uzbek interests.

<sup>45</sup> Roger McDermott, "Tashkent Seeks New Military Alliance", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, 6 January 2006. "...the downturn in security relations with the United States and NATO that developed rapidly after international condemnation of the use of Uzbek security forces to fire on civilians in the spring of 2005 left a chasm in the regime's security reform strategy."

[http://jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=414&issue\\_id=3575&article\\_id=23706](http://jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=414&issue_id=3575&article_id=23706)

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<sup>46</sup> BBC, "US loses key base in Central Asia", 31 July 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4732197.stm>

in process for two years previous. Prior to Andijan, and as a result of Uzbekistan's failed attempts to negotiate a new agreement on the U.S. use of Khanabad, Tashkent had already made the decision to begin charging the U.S. for its use of Khanabad. That failing, the U.S. would be asked to leave.<sup>47</sup> Negotiations on the permanent status of the base that had finally begun in earnest in the fall of 2004 had, by April of 2005, devolved into a series of bilateral meetings involving Uzbek attempts to raise the political and financial ante for the U.S. For its part, U.S. negotiators were mystified by Uzbekistan's repeated attempts to extract monetary concessions, particularly after explaining to the Uzbek negotiators that in other theaters, sovereign nations paid into the U.S. treasury for American troops to stay on their soil as a security guarantee and not vice-versa.<sup>48</sup>

To ameliorate the situation with Tashkent somewhat, Pentagon staffers to Secretary Rumsfeld began looking at reimbursement to the Uzbek Ministry of Defense for services rendered in the War on Terror and for U.S. forces which constituted out-of-pocket expenses by Uzbekistan to meet U.S. requests. The funding mechanism was to be the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), a large pot of money given by Congress to DoD in 2003 and 2004 budget supplementals in order to wage the War on Terror.<sup>49</sup> In Uzbekistan the mechanism had only been used once before, in 2003, for \$10.7M to reimburse Uzbekistan for expenses Tashkent initially incurred in moving its forces off of Khanabad Air Base to other locations, and for continued services in providing security for the installation. The money was not security assistance, per se, but was a reimbursement from one government to another for legitimate expenses.

In early 2004 the U.S. negotiators began attempting to determine how much CSF Uzbekistan could be eligible for in reimbursable expenses. This was the sole source of cash the Administration was willing, or able, to provide for continued use of Khanabad. In order to ratchet up U.S. interest, Uzbekistan began curtailing the numbers of C-17 sorties the U.S. could operate daily from Khanabad. The explanation given by Tashkent for the sortie curtailment was that the runway was taking a severe pounding from several

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<sup>47</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official.

<sup>48</sup> Author was a U.S. participant in the negotiations.

<sup>49</sup> This was the same source of money for U.S. repayments to Pakistan and Jordan for specific acts on behalf of U.S. interests. In Pakistan and Jordan the sums totaled tens and hundreds of millions of dollars per financial quarter.

years of C-17 use, and it was a safety of flight issue that the Uzbeks could not ignore.<sup>50</sup> U.S. engineers were not totally in agreement, but had to agree that the runway did receive more use under the U.S. than it ever did under Uzbek control. The CENTCOM staff was directed to begin studying ways of repairing and maintaining the runway to meet Uzbek standards.

Unfortunately, this was not the message the Uzbeks wanted to send. Tashkent did not particularly want extra maintenance on its runway; it wanted money. The flight restrictions were an intentional signal of the future pain the U.S. would feel if it did not meet Uzbek demands for cash for its continued utilization of Khanabad. Within the Framework Agreement and SOFA, however, there was no established payment mechanism. The Uzbek Government could not charge for the U.S. use of its facilities without being accused of abrogating bilateral agreements. Among Uzbek elites whom Karimov relied upon for political standing it was understood that many had disagreed with Uzbekistan's close ties to the U.S. The payment situation was causing Karimov embarrassment and humiliation within his inner circle. There was some influence on Tashkent from the local levels as well. The general population of Uzbekistan, particularly in the Khanabad region, were disappointed that a major U.S. air base did not bring economic second and third order effects to stimulate their locally flagging economies.<sup>51</sup> As a result of these varied pressures, and with no sign from the U.S. of willingness to enter into a financial agreement for the use of the facility, Karimov would continue to turn the screws on the U.S. throughout the spring and summer of 2005, repeatedly restricting flights in an increasing attempt to make the U.S. blink first and offer to renegotiate the original documents.

The U.S. believed this Uzbek tactic was based on the assumption in Tashkent that no base in Central Asia except Khanabad would meet the logistical and operational requirements of the U.S. There was some sense of defiance among policy staffers supporting the negotiation process that the

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<sup>50</sup> In follow-up: after U.S. forces departed, Russian forces anticipating moving into Khanabad in their places remarked that "Khanabad airfield is in perfect condition and its landing strip is designed to receive all types of aircraft, including heavy military transport planes," the source said. "The Americans have left good infrastructure behind." MosNews, November 23, 2005, "Russian Military Unit May Replace U.S. Base in Uzbekistan — Source", <http://mosnews.com/news/2005/11/23/baseuzbekistan.shtml>

<sup>51</sup> Author's discussions with faculty and students, while lecturing at Tashkent's University of World Diplomacy in Spring 2004. It appeared that many Uzbek citizens expected the U.S. to develop Khanabad Air Base along the order of a small Ramstein in Germany. When it failed to materialize, there was general disappointment and disillusionment in the local region.

U.S. would not be blackmailed by Tashkent. As a result, CENTCOM was planning to simply walk away from Khanabad if necessary. By the end of March, following another round of base negotiations in Tashkent that yielded no new willingness by the U.S. for a financial agreement, Karimov gave up on Washington and was trying to cash in on the relationship in any way possible before turning off all U.S. access to Khanabad completely.<sup>52</sup> In April, CENTCOM and the Air Force concluded that while alternatives to Khanabad were not inexpensive, the U.S. could, in fact, maintain air and logistics operations in Afghanistan over the long-term without the use of Khanabad. Thus, the very pillar on which Uzbekistan was attempting to leverage the negotiations had actually strengthened U.S. determination to go elsewhere if necessary.<sup>53</sup>

If the U.S. lost Khanabad, however, it was uncertain what would become of the greater Strategic Partnership between the two states. It obviously had to undergo a transition, but transition to what? Throughout the debates over Khanabad, the U.S. never lost sight of the fact that its bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan was not a single issue pegged solely to the use of the Air Base. Per the original strategic reasoning from 2001, the U.S. believed that Uzbekistan was still very important for many reasons, not the least of which was its continued cooperation in deterring and halting any flow of WMD components, arms traffic, narcotics movement, cooperation in halting the movement of “persons of interest,” and in several other rule of law and economic areas that would lend greater stability to Central Asia. The failure of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan after the departure of the Soviet Union in 1990 had created a vacuum for terrorists to strengthen and eventually take hostage the entire nation. The U.S. administration was dedicated to the principle that this could not and would not take place again in Central Asia. Thus, U.S. strategic interests in Central Asia, and specifically in Uzbekistan, were military in the short term, but over the long-term covered the entire political, economic and security continuum.

The very intense debate over the role of Uzbekistan in U.S. strategy came to public consciousness in May of 2005, when Uzbek Ministry of Interior forces were accused of killing several hundred demonstrators in Andijan, the heart of Uzbekistan’s troubled Fergana Valley. The tragedy began with a planned

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<sup>52</sup> Author’s interview with an Uzbek diplomat involved in the Khanabad deliberations.

<sup>53</sup> Author was part of the staff effort exploring options for the U.S. in the negotiations.

attack by a few individuals to seize government weapons and then use them to liberate Islamic businessmen being held in what was perceived to be a politically motivated trial. These actions provided a catalyst for a massive popular demonstration against the economic policies of the Karimov government that had served to cripple local businesses. It is not known how much of this was planned in advance by those seizing the government weapons and attacking the local prison, but it became apparent that the effort to defy the government touched a wellspring of emotion and support locally. Thousands reportedly jammed the main square to demonstrate or simply watch with eagerness to see what the government would do. As Uzbek Interior Ministry forces arrived to quell the dissent, the locals in Andijan refused to disperse, continuing to mass in the public square. President Karimov himself arrived at a secure location in the area to deal directly with the armed leaders of the demonstration. Reports conflict on who fired weapons first within the square, but at some point both sides began firing and thousands of unarmed locals were caught up in the event, with several hundred losing their lives in the cross-fire. Although armed insurgents orchestrated the initial chain of unfortunate events, with the government forces holding the preponderance of firepower there was never a doubt as to the eventual tactical victors. However, the scene of carnage was soon turned into an international symbol of the Karimov government and his alleged defiance of international norms. Tactical victory was turned into a strategic loss for Karimov in the international arena.

Human rights NGO's in Central Asia and the West immediately demanded an international investigation, with initial claims of several thousand civilian fatalities capturing world headlines. Karimov's government, never adept at handling bad international press, reacted bitterly to the accusations and essentially shut down most news organizations seeking to investigate the story. Official Uzbek claims of 187 dead were denounced by leading observers, while the U.K's Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, in a strongly worded statement publicly condemned the actions of the Uzbek government.<sup>54</sup> U.S. reaction was muted in comparison, as Washington attempted to determine what had actually taken place in Andijan, and whether there was going to be any room for further dialogue with Karimov.

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<sup>54</sup> Grant Podelco, "Uzbekistan: Western Reaction Toughens To Andijan Killings, Crackdown", *RFE/RL*, May 17, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/05/baaec7a3-4b7a-4450-a478-co4827b64d62.html>

Searching editorials in multiple international dailies questioned the role of the U.S. in working with the Uzbek Armed Forces, attempting to discern whether the U.S. had played any role in equipping and training the forces that participated in firing on the massed civilians in Andijan. There seemed to be an assumption in many articles that the U.S. was strengthening the Uzbek President in his autocratic style by its very presence at Khanabad, and that the U.S. needed to demand reform and cooperation from Tashkent or be prepared to pull out its forces from Khanabad as punishment to Karimov. Ironically, in a case of the tail wagging the dog, the U.S. had virtually no leverage remaining with Tashkent and such a threat would have been welcomed by Karimov, sparing him the task of ordering CENTCOM out of the Air Base. The two sides had reached an impasse on the principle of payment for access to Khanabad, and U.S. air sorties had already been curtailed to the point that the only real remaining lever against Washington that Tashkent could threaten was to order the U.S. to depart within 180 days per the original agreement in the 2001 SOFA. Karimov did so in July, giving the U.S. until December to vacate the air base.<sup>55</sup>

In November 2005, a month before the 180-day deadline for the U.S. pullout from Khanabad, the last U.S. aircraft lifted off and the remaining military personnel finished preparations to turn the U.S. portion of the installation over to the Uzbek military. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, as the last U.S. personnel packed their duffel bags and boarded trucks for the Tashkent airport several hundred kilometers away, Uzbekistan signed a mutual defense pact with Russia.<sup>56</sup>

These events altered the strategic picture for the U.S. in Central Asia by limiting to one principle air base the locations from which the U.S. could operate to support Afghanistan. More importantly, it was the critical sign of Karimov's now dogged determination to resist all U.S. influence in Uzbekistan's internal political and economic reform. Brought into question through this series of events were the ties that actually remained between Tashkent and Washington in maintaining stability in Central Asia. Also in doubt were Karimov's intentions regarding continuing to work with the U.S. in the War on Terror. It was obvious that Tashkent's original enemies, the

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<sup>55</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Dan Fried, September 27 2005, Embassy Press Conference, <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&mid=429&overview=1346>

<sup>56</sup> Sergei Blagov, "Uzbekistan and Russia Sign Mutual Defense Pact", November 15, 2005, EurasiaNet, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav111505.shtml>

IMU and HT, were still at large, but now it appeared Karimov had identified other elements to add to his list of unsavory elements: NGO's, the Western Press, and the U.S. were now topping Karimov's list of untouchables. He was uncertain of the level of involvement the U.S. sponsored NGO's had played in bringing about the unrest in Andijan, but he was certain of the role they had played in exploiting it publicly to humiliate his regime. He remained convinced of their collective involvement when the U.S. chose not to repudiate them, even if only to maintain normal relations with his government.<sup>57</sup>

In a display of principle, however, DoD continued to move ahead with plans to reimburse Uzbekistan with \$23M for costs Tashkent incurred supporting the U.S. in coalition operations, even as CENTCOM simultaneously prepared to withdraw from Khanabad. This irony came from the Bush Administration determination that the U.S. will pay its bills, even when politically difficult, in order to live up to obligations. This nuanced position was intended as a message to other nations beyond Uzbekistan. Secretary Rumsfeld still had multiple countries in various stages of negotiation on long-term base agreements, and he did not want to weaken any nation's political resolve by failing to follow through on fiduciary responsibilities to an ally in the War on Terror.

Congress attempted to block even this payment, however, in an effort to underscore the seriousness with which it viewed Karimov's intransigence on working with the international community on an independent investigation into Andijan. In the 2006 budget bill, language was inserted denying authorization of 2006 monies to go to the Government of Uzbekistan for any services rendered at Khanabad.<sup>58</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld instead utilized multi-year funds from the 2005 authorization and completed the payment nonetheless.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Author's interview with a senior Uzbek official.

<sup>58</sup> "US Senate Blocks Payment", *BBC News*, October 6, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co/uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4314432.stm>

<sup>59</sup> MosNews, "Pentagon Pays Uzbekistan for Air Base Use Despite Doubts", November 17, 2005, <http://mosnews.com/news/2005/11/17/pentagonuzbek.shtml>; and Dan Fried, Assistant Secretary of State, September 27, 2005, Tashkent, Embassy News Conference <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&mid=429&overview=1346>

### **Whither U.S.—Uzbek Bilateral Relations?**

The first step in crafting a coherent, workable bilateral policy with Uzbekistan is to reinforce areas of common concern. The two nations are still in agreement today on multiple vital security issues, to include counter-proliferation, narcotics trafficking, regional stability, and the presence of terrorists in Central Asia. The U.S. and Uzbekistan previously worked together successfully against these threats precisely because they held them in common. These threats exist even if Karimov is an uncomfortable, even distasteful, bilateral partner. The U.S. needs to readdress these issues with Tashkent.

However U.S. policy makers need to remember that Karimov places little confidence in the U.S. after his recent experiences. He must be presented policy options to which he can agree without having to act upon faith in U.S. actions. This bilateral policy building process will not be unlike drafting Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM) into a negotiated settlement between longtime antagonists. But, in the nature of successful CSBM from military conflicts where over time trust is built, so the relations between the two nations can begin to be rebuilt and the U.S. can build traction with Uzbekistan's efforts to modernize, reform and move ahead. Such a policy effort must be sensitive to the issue Karimov finds most distasteful: NGO involvement in his nation. The necessary involvement of NGO's cannot be ignored, but should not be a pre-condition of U.S. engagement with Uzbekistan. Washington knows in advance that Karimov does not trust NGO's; it cannot require of Uzbekistan a blanket acceptance of the organizations that Tashkent will not trust. Such pre-conditions would lead to failure. Instead, it is time for solid, diplomatic discussion, led by trusted professionals from each nation. Building trust takes more than one trans-Atlantic flight.

To push democracy at all costs in Uzbekistan will close the door to U.S. engagement with the Karimov regime. While non-engagement with Uzbekistan and official sanctions may appeal to those who do not have a vested interest in the region's long-term policy, it does not place the U.S. in a position to meet its own national security needs in Central Asia. Democracy needs to be presaged by a time honored Islamic value that also offers political opportunity: just governance. A just leader is a culturally acceptable feature

in an Islamic society.<sup>60</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski warns that “...it is essential that U.S. policymakers not be seduced by doctrinaire advocates of an externally imposed and impatient democratization—a democratization from ‘above,’ so to speak.”<sup>61</sup>

In Uzbekistan, the concept of a just leader and just governance will lead to politically and socially acceptable goals, providing a midway point for Uzbekistan on the road to reform and eventual democratization. Such an approach does not directly threaten entrenched elites manipulating the national process to the disadvantage of the majority, while still moving on the path to a representative government in which majority ambitions are considered. The Just Leader in Islam does not challenge the current social or political order, he or she strengthens and improves upon it. This policy understanding also provides Karimov room to modify his rule and reform his government without overtly presenting a threat to his current legitimacy.<sup>62</sup> Such a policy gives credence to the existing order, potentially enhancing the role of the family and family elders in Uzbek society, a long standing institutional check on social or political excess. The very threatening sense of Uzbekistan’s social fabric being torn asunder in a dash to modernize and reform is ameliorated, allowing greater social oversight of political decisions. There are tremendous strengths in Uzbekistan’s traditional society. The U.S. needs to work with Tashkent to harness those traditional elements, rather than ignoring the current leadership and demanding an immediate, comprehensive overhaul of the system.

Karimov is aware of the history of social and government reform in Uzbekistan and Central Asia. Trained as a communist, he would instinctively view such changes within the prism of class conflict. Today’s events are strongly reminiscent of the debate on reform within the region that took place prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, as the Jadids attempted to persuade Turkestanian citizenry of the need for social reform and modernization, and received a great deal of criticism for their efforts. Adeb Khalid explains the debate from that period focused on competing claims of

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<sup>60</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, 1998, 28-30.

<sup>61</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, Perseus, 2004,

<sup>62</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski argues that, “Whatever the motivation, the fact is that genuine and enduring democracy is nurtured best in conditions that gradually foster spontaneous change and do not combine compulsion with haste. The former approach can indeed transform a political culture; the latter can only coerce a political correctness that is inherently unlikely to endure.” (Brzezinski, *The Choice*, 2004)

cultural authority, and the concomitant understanding that such claim by new elites “challenged the authority of the old (elites), for in the attempt to reform society lay a claim for leadership that was profoundly subversive to the established order.”<sup>63</sup> A similar dynamic is at work today, with outside forces (international NGO’s) being viewed by government leaders as the subversive element, particularly when perceived to be in the pay of western nations. This view, no matter how incorrect or skewed, is particularly dangerous within Uzbekistan, because genuinely threatening elements of destabilization, such as the Islamic Caliphate movements, are easily conflated by Karimov to be one and the same with western NGO’s. It is in the best interest of the U.S. to work beyond such misperceptions with Tashkent. This will only take place as we remain in dialogue with Karimov. Vilifying him for failure to work with NGO’s will only serve to reinforce within his mind that the U.S. is seeking the overthrow of social order within Uzbekistan.

An excellent opening dialogue for balanced policy measures would be in the area that Karimov supported early in the bilateral relationship in 2001-2003: military education and defense reform. The stellar tactical performances of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, compared to the dismal performance of Russian forces in Chechnya, stand as mute testimony to the efficacy of western doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures. Western military training stresses the role within the military of rule of law and national sovereignty. Western military training teaches soldiers the value of personal initiative and decision-making skills, intrinsic qualities in later establishing economic reform and a stable economic middle class as the engine of representative government. When an Uzbek conscript is trained in these subjects, he will take this training home to his village upon completing his term of service. Military reform has acted as an engine for social change in many societies; it can do so in Uzbekistan. Additionally, an effort to reform and modernize the organization and training of the Uzbek Armed Forces cuts across the lines of clan and culture that can paralyze the efforts of

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<sup>63</sup> Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, University of California Press, 1998, 4-6. In expounding on the Jadids as reformers, Khalid notes, “Their prescription for reform contained a radical re-visioning of society and the roles of the various groups within it as well as a redefinition of Central Asian culture and what was valuable within it. Not surprisingly, the Jadid project provoked considerable opposition.” He comments, “The stakes for which the older elites put up such stubborn resistance to the ideas of the Jadids were nothing less than their social survival as an elite.”

international organizations working within traditional societies. Military training on the western model will not challenge the collective identity inherent in Uzbek society, but it can impart to individuals the skills necessary for a just society and positive social development.

Another area of potentially positive contribution is in the area of narcotics enforcement. Counternarcotics support also provides a logical entry point for European collaboration with Uzbekistan, as the narcotics transiting Uzbekistan from Afghanistan are routinely dumped on European streets. Bilateral and multilateral law enforcement engagement, coupled with a strengthening of the border control regime, will provide positive role models and interaction with that element of the Uzbek government that has traditionally been most resistant to reform: law enforcement, particularly the Ministry of Interior (MOI). It is not an accident that the organization most responsible for the ugly turn of events at Andijan, and most vilified in the eyes of the world, has very rarely had opportunity to work with western reform elements. To ignore that institution in the future will be to leave Uzbekistan on its current trajectory of systematic repression breeding continued resentment. The MOI was taking nascent steps to work with NGO's prior to Andijan. Such movement needs to be rebuilt and encouraged.<sup>64</sup>

The placement of Congressional conditions on bilateral program expenditures is a consistent barometer of the U.S. public's concerns. However, a blanket denial of funds pending unrealistic reform initiatives will only serve the interests of those elements in Tashkent and Moscow who want a cessation of all western influence within Uzbekistan. Additionally, such indexing leaves no room for policy options within an administration, diminishing the very tools needed to best craft positive bilateral policies. To index Uzbek performance to the Framework Agreement, which is a dead document, would be to kill any future policy options.

The Uzbek President is not likely to be ousted soon by a badly planned "revolution" of the type that put Kyrgyzstan's President Akayev out of power. NGO's that boldly demand a cutoff of all relations with Uzbekistan as punishment for excessive brutality in Andijan, or that insist upon blanket

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<sup>64</sup> Department of State Fact Sheet, "U.S. Engagement in Central Asia: Successes", Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, November 27, 2002; <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/15561.htm>. See also "Trafficking in Persons Interim Assessment Europe and Eurasia", <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/rpt/40257.htm>.

national sanctions on Tashkent, will not be doing the Uzbek people any favors; they will simply be denied visas to do any work in the country. We cannot accept, however, an elimination of the positive roles NGO's play. A balance must be maintained between traditional national security interests and the non-traditional national security interests from the civil society portion of the bilateral agenda. No forward movement will take place if that balance is perceived as favoring NGO's to the detriment of traditional concerns. Karimov has already turned away from his brief flirtation with Western models and is comfortable with Chinese and Russian reform, development, and financial credits. His internal coterie of supporters has invested a great deal in the continuation of current policies. We need to reassure Tashkent that the U.S. encourages NGO's to work with the government, not against it. We must partner with NGO's to establish realistic goals for their activities in Uzbekistan before they will be qualified to receive U.S. funding. We must be willing to accept Uzbek ideas on the goals and methods for the NGO's and downplay our prescriptive predilections.

An additional long-term Central Asian security concern that must be incorporated in U.S. policy is the potential for an eventual political falling out between Russia and China.<sup>65</sup> We need to enable Tashkent to maintain a strategic balance between its two largest neighbors and to play a stabilizing regional role. While the SCO is currently serving the interests of Russia and China in the region, it is apparent that their separate national security interests may well eventually collide over the role of China in the Russian Far East, the primacy of each nation's trade in the region, and the most critical concern: Caspian oil and gas. Just as our initial, small diplomatic and military cooperation steps prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> provided us the entrée we needed for OEF in Afghanistan, so a modest continuation of bilateral policies will act as an investment in Uzbekistan and the region to serve our interests for any future crises.

Uzbekistan remains important today for the reasons it was originally important in 2001— Failure to craft a long-term U.S. policy which lends stability to the region will only aid in creating vacuums of governance, lawlessness, and the assorted social and legal ills stemming from narcotics

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy Toward Russia and the Central Asian Republics*, Rand, 1999; 41, 46-47.

trafficking, human trafficking, and the movement of components for WMD that the U.S. initially identified as threats. With a positive, patient policy, mutual trust and confidence can be rebuilt. The U.S. will not achieve the same levels of interaction and understanding that were the hallmark of the 2001-2003 relationship. It needs to seek better relations now, however, to ensure stability and growth in Uzbekistan, and to meet the security needs of the U.S. and the greater Central Asian region. Washington must not shy away from responsibility in developing stable governance in Uzbekistan, no matter how prickly the regime in Tashkent.

# The Unfolding of the U.S.-Uzbekistan Crisis

Vladimir Socor\*

The Russian-led campaign to evict United States bases from Central Asia began with a Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit on July 5, 2005. At this meeting, the presidents of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signed a joint declaration requesting the U.S.-led anti-terrorist coalition forces to set a date for leaving Central Asia. It was the first request of this type from any party in the region since the American-led forces established a presence in Central Asia in the autumn of 2001.

## The SCO Meeting

The joint declaration used soft language in stating, “We support and shall continue to support the coalition’s efforts in conducting the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. We note at the present time a positive trend toward stabilization of the internal situation there. Some SCO countries provide infrastructure on their territories for temporary deployment of the forces of coalition countries, as well as military transit by land and air in the interest of the anti-terrorist coalition. Considering that the active [combat] phase of the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan has been completed, the SCO member countries deem necessary that the coalition countries involved should set the final dates for their temporary use of those infrastructure installations and stationing of their troops on SCO member countries’ territories”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Interfax*, July 5, 2005.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's top foreign policy aide, Sergei Prikhodko, stated on the record that no one is giving "them" ultimatums or suggesting specific deadlines. However, Prikhodko went on to suggest timeframes from several months to a year and a half. Off the record, Russian officials apparently including Prikhodko told reporters, "A precise and clear answer is needed. We need to know until when the anti-terrorist coalition will use infrastructure facilities in SCO member countries for the operation in Afghanistan. This question is of practical significance both for us and for the [host] countries".<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Uzbek President Islam Karimov, with Putin's *sotto voce* approval in Moscow, suspended the landing of C-17 heavy transport planes as well as night-time flights at the U.S. Karshi-Khanabad base.

The assertion that the situation in Afghanistan was improving and that active operations were no longer necessary represented a change of spin by Moscow and other SCO members. It appeared designed to imply that the United States and its NATO allies no longer needed bases and installations in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to support military operations in Afghanistan. Until most recently, the official position in Moscow and other capitals did acknowledge that Afghanistan remained a source of threats to the region and indeed to Russia, thus implicitly justifying the continuing U.S.-led military presence in Central Asia. Yet in the Summer of 2005, the security situation in Afghanistan actually deteriorated.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the SCO forum's assessment veered in the opposite direction, apparently tailored to the new political objective of nudging U.S. forces from the area.

Partly contradicting its own assessment regarding Afghanistan, the SCO summit described the narcotics trade originating in that country as a major security challenge closely linked to terrorism and affecting all member countries. The summit decided to create a "SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group" to support anti-drug efforts, "stabilize the socio-economic situation," and become involved in reconstruction programs in Afghanistan. If institutionalized, such a Contact Group could clearly be used to erode the U.S. leading role with regard to Afghanistan. It could also become an avenue for Russia and some of Afghanistan's neighboring countries to play tribal politics in Afghanistan.

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<sup>2</sup> Itar-Tass, Reuters, July 5, 2005

<sup>3</sup> See *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 13, and 27, 2005.

There were no direct references to the United States in the summit's concluding documents and the presidents' speeches. Clearly, a political decision had been made in advance to avoid any positive or negative mention of the United States and its NATO allies. However, speeches and documents did include veiled criticism of American and, more generally, Western policies and understanding of the region's problems. The six presidents spoke of "the countries' right independently to choose ways of development based on their specific characteristics," "noninterference in internal affairs," "sovereign equality and mutual respect," non-acceptance of "export of democracy" and "models imposed from outside" – barely veiled terms opposing what these leaders regard as U.S.-inspired democratic revolutions with destabilizing effects in this region.

The summit reflected a diminishing estimation of the ability of the United States to uphold its stated interests in the region or to assist Central Asian countries in sustaining theirs. U.S. credibility in the region has steadily declined since the heyday of confidence in and expectations from the United States in the first half of 2002. Three events during 2005 palpably accelerated that decline: First, the Taliban's reemergence as a fighting force in Afghanistan, against the backdrop of a booming drug trade that (on the coalition's watch) endangers the neighboring Central Asian countries. Second, the misfired "democratic revolution" in Kyrgyzstan – an event widely seen as Western- (primarily U.S.-) inspired and destabilizing at least in the short term. And third, the confused and uncoordinated U.S. response to the rebellion in Andijan, which left Uzbekistan isolated from the West and once again dependent on Russia – and, to a lesser extent, China – for security assistance and diplomatic support.

The summit also adopted largely declarative anti-terrorism documents, and admitted India, Pakistan, and Iran to the SCO with the status of observer countries. The SCO did not and does not propose to form a political or security bloc. Rather, the summit made it clear that the SCO is Russia's and China's vehicle for jointly offsetting the influence of the United States in Central Asia. Significantly, Moscow and Beijing could until recently not have counted on Central Asian countries to support steps aimed at limiting U.S. influence. Now they apparently can, because U.S. credibility in the region is perceived as eroding.

## Central Asian States Follow Suit

With Moscow in the lead, the Russo-Chinese tandem then advanced from a containment policy to a rollback policy toward the United States in Central Asia. The SCO's initiative was meant to instigate demarches by the host governments – Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Russian policy planners counted on these countries themselves to ask the United States and other Western countries to discuss placing specific time limits on the functioning of coalition bases and installations. Such demarches indeed followed.

On July 7, a communiqué by Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the United States of failing to carry out the terms of the October 7, 2001, agreement that governs, *inter alia*, the operation of the Karshi-Khanabad base. The Uzbek communiqué claimed that the United States had not been paying the landing and takeoff fees for its flights as stipulated; that it had not reimbursed Uzbekistan for the costs incurred in guarding and servicing the base; and had not compensated Uzbekistan for ecological damage and the inconvenience caused to the local population. This last point, especially, signaled that Uzbekistan sought excuses for challenging the basing arrangement.

Tashkent had already suspended major parts of that arrangement by suspending flights of C-17 heavy transport planes as well as nighttime flights at the U.S. base. The Uzbek communiqué went on to cite the goals of the U.S. military presence under the 2001 agreement: eliminating threats from the Taliban and international terrorism originating in Afghanistan, enhancing the security and stability of Uzbekistan, and supporting military operations in northern Afghanistan. "These considerations will determine any decision by Uzbekistan regarding the prospects of the U.S. military presence in the country," the communiqué stated.<sup>4</sup> Uzbekistan had already accused the United States of failing to live up to those commitments in connection with the May 12-13 rebellion in Andijan. President Islam Karimov repeated those accusations in his SCO summit speech.<sup>5</sup>

In Kyrgyzstan, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Roza Otunbayeva held a news conference to rehash the SCO declaration's arguments for setting a deadline on the U.S.-led military presence. She echoed the contention that

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<sup>4</sup> *Interfax*, July 7, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Uzbek Television First Channel, July 6, 2005.

Afghanistan had basically been stabilized and that active military operations were no longer necessary in that country, thus implying that the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan had lost its *raison d'être*. Citing the U.S.-Kyrgyzstan agreement of 2001, which stipulated that either side may discontinue the basing arrangements with 180 days advance notice, Otunbayeva stated, "We intend to act in line with this and discuss the matter. We want to know how long the base is going to stay".<sup>6</sup>

In a similar vein, Acting Deputy Prime Minister Adakhan Madumarov stated that any decision to discontinue the basing arrangement would be an "internal decision by Kyrgyzstan," in which case the country would not be obligated to explain the reasons for it.<sup>7</sup> Otunbayeva (who is presumed to be pro-American) and Madumarov came to power in April as part of the U.S.-supported regime change. Another post-revolution leader, acting Prime Minister Felix Kulov, called in June for the creation of a second Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan. This could not have been the U.S. game plan for regime change in that country.

Tajikistan seems to take a far more nuanced view, partly due to the fact that it only hosts a small French contingent on its territory. The Deputy Director of the Strategic Research Center attached to Tajikistan's presidential office, Sayfullo Safarov, lost no time refuting the SCO summit's and even Moscow's theses. He bluntly stated that the SCO and the CIS Collective Security Organization are ineffective, lack resources to counter international terrorism and drug trafficking, and are unable to maintain security in Central Asia. Consequently, "It would be premature to impose [time-limitation] requirements on the United States and NATO military".<sup>8</sup>

Responding to the SCO's declaration, the U.S. State Department and American embassies in Moscow and in Central Asian countries are pointing out that the basing arrangements and other aspects of the military presence are determined by bilateral agreements of the United States with each country. Consequently, Washington will only use bilateral channels for any discussions on this issue with each host country. The French embassy in Dushanbe has taken a similar position.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Itar-Tass, Interfax*, July 6, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *Interfax*, July 7, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> *Avesta*, July 6, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> *Avesta*, July 7, 2005.

In Moscow, the former prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, and intelligence chief Yevgeny Primakov hailed the Kremlin's performance in using the SCO summit to trigger national demands for withdrawal of U.S. forces: "For the first time, a [diplomatic] formula has been announced that can put an end to the American military presence in Central Asia," Primakov commented.<sup>10</sup>

### Moscow Hardens Its Tone

Scarcely a week passed following the news that Central Asian states had picked up on the SCO declaration, that two new terms with adversarial connotations made their appearance in Moscow's discourse on Central Asia. Elaborating on the demand made in Astana, an official statement issued by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 15 termed the U.S. forces in the region "non-regional," and went on to say that "such a military presence in the region must be rolled back (*dolzhno byt svernuto*)".<sup>11</sup> Most English-language translations did not capture these nuances in the Russian original. The stricture against "non-regional forces" seemed a Russian borrowing from Tehran. This term has long been a fixture in Iran's official rhetoric against the Western presence in the Caspian region and Central Asia. This usage had hitherto not been a characteristic of Russian pronouncements. The "roll-back" concept added emphasis to the demand for a deadline for western use of the bases. The original and follow-up statements had sounded more restrained, calling as they did for discussion of a timeframe for the presence, not rollback. This loaded Russian term entered diplomatic history through the recollections of Milovan Djilas, who cited Stalin ordering in 1948 that a certain operation in the Balkans must be *svernuto* ("rolled back") and clarifying the connotation.

The Russian Ministry's July 15 statement did maintain the linkage between the coalition's operations in Afghanistan and the use of Central Asian bases, but seemed to loosen that linkage by implying that completing the mission in Afghanistan and withdrawing from Central Asia are parallel processes, not cause and effect. This seems to suggest that Moscow would be content with a drawdown of coalition forces, leading to their withdrawal from Central Asia, rather than a single-move pullout.

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<sup>10</sup> *Interfax*, July 7, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> *Interfax*, July 15

Moscow's statement took issue with General Richard Myers, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, who referring to the SCO had on the preceding day told U.S. media, "Two very large countries [Russia and China] were trying to bully some smaller countries" into imposing time limits on the coalition forces' use of bases in Central Asia. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs countered by claiming, "As is well known, SCO decisions are made by consensus and reflect the member countries' collective opinion".<sup>12</sup>

However, Kyrgyzstan's President-elect Kurmanbek Bakiyev inadvertently confirmed that he had simply followed Russian President Vladimir Putin's lead: "Vladimir Vladimirovich had raised the issue, and I said yes," Bakiyev admitted on live television.<sup>13</sup> While Bakiyev and other Kyrgyz officials reiterated the call for a deadline to the U.S.-led military presence, the prospective prime minister, Felix Kulov, adopted a more nuanced position. In Tajikistan, the French ambassador and military attaché and the Pakistani ambassador have taken to the airwaves to underscore the need for a continued presence of coalition forces in the country.<sup>14</sup>

In Uzbekistan, the state's mass media continued severely criticizing the U.S. reaction to the May rebellion and subsequent crackdown in Andijan, and in this context portrayed the U.S. air base as an economic and even ecological liability to the country. The media also publicized officially inspired messages from ordinary citizens portraying the base in that light.<sup>15</sup> However, articles generally stop short of calling for withdrawal of U.S. forces. Uzbekistan nevertheless declined to participate in a staff-level exercise, focused on counter-terrorism and border security, hosted by the U.S. Central Command in Suffolk, Virginia on July 14-27.

### **End of Ambivalence and the Eviction Order**

Uzbekistan's ambivalence did not last long. On July 29, Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered a note to the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, asking the United States to vacate the Karshi-Khanabad air base, withdraw the troops and materiel from Uzbekistan, and terminate the 2001 bilateral agreement within 180 days. The document did not state the reasons for this demand.

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<sup>12</sup> *Interfax*, July 15, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> *RTR Russia TV*, July 17, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> *Avesta*, July 14 and 15, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> *Khalk Sozi, Adolat, Narodnoye Slovo, Vatan Parvar*, July 14 and 15, 2005.

The six-month deadline is broadly consistent with the timeframe suggested by Russian President Vladimir Putin's top foreign policy adviser, Sergei Prikhodko, at the July 5 SCO summit. Some Russian officials were quick to gloat. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov urged the United States sarcastically "to make up its mind: how many years will the war in Afghanistan go on: 20, 30, or 250 years?" Professing to link the American military presence in Central Asia solely to the operations in Afghanistan ("There is no other reason, and none would be acceptable"), Ivanov portrayed that presence as both ineffective and unnecessary: "There are no active combat operations in Afghanistan, while the Taliban control a large part of the country. Terrorist threats continue to emanate from Afghanistan, but the Taliban don't even bother to hide because no one pursues them. The narcotics business keeps growing because no one lifts a finger to deal with it."

Sergei Karaganov, chairman of the Foreign Policy and Defense Council, echoed Ivanov's sarcasm by predicting, "It is probably a matter of several centuries yet before Afghanistan fully recovers. But the situation is much better there now, so the bases [in Central Asia] have served their purpose, the Americans can do without the bases." Federation Council chairman Sergei Mironov, praising Tashkent's anti-U.S. move, also distorted the U.S. position: "The Uzbek authorities took an absolutely right and logical step. The United States has said several times that the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan has ended, thus it is time for U.S. forces to leave Uzbekistan".<sup>16</sup>

The Uzbek "eviction notice," as some commentators described it, was not, however, a foregone conclusion, and did not necessarily have to be the final word. Even as the Uzbek-U.S. political miscommunication had deepened through the Kyrgyz upheaval and the Andijan violence, and Tashkent placed restrictions on the use of the Karshi-Khanabad base, Uzbek authorities did not seem intent on asking the U.S. military to leave the country. Even after the SCO summit, state-controlled Uzbek media listed alleged economic and ecological costs and inconvenience to local inhabitants caused by the base, but stopped short of calling for its closure. Rather, they seemed intended, however clumsily, to set the stage for complete fulfillment, or perhaps re-negotiation, of some of the terms of the 2001 and 2002 bilateral agreements.

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<sup>16</sup> *Interfax*, July 28 and 29, 2005; *Russian Television Channel One*, July 30, 2005; *RIA-Novosti*, August 1, 2005.

The July 29 note came the day after the United States, working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Bishkek, arranged the airlift from Kyrgyzstan to Romania of 439 Uzbeks who had fled from Andijan. The group included some escaped criminals and some suspected rebels who were wanted for questioning by Uzbek authorities as part of the investigation into the Andijan violence. Nevertheless, U.S. officials strongly pressured Kyrgyzstan to allow the evacuation of the entire group. Thus, Tashkent's "eviction notice" seems to have been an instant reaction to that move. Yet President Karimov may still have been keeping his – and America's – options open. By August 1, Tashkent had not announced the base-closure demand in the Uzbek media. The note was delivered to the U.S. Embassy by an Uzbek courier, not by the usual mode of delivery through government officials, thus decreasing the document's weight. Moreover, the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs' protest note against the U.S.-arranged evacuation of Uzbek suspects from Kyrgyzstan, published on August 1, stopped carefully short of naming the United States. Such hints seemed calculated to suggest that Karimov at this juncture still preferred to avoid a rupture in the security relationship.<sup>17</sup>

On August 3 – five days after the note had been delivered – Uzbek state media announced that the government had asked the United States to vacate the Karshi-Khanabad air base and to withdraw its military units from Uzbekistan. Accompanying the August 3 announcement, a petulant government commentary claimed that Uzbekistan had, since 2002, asked the United States six times to consider terminating the basing agreement, but Washington had demurred "under various pretexts." Moreover, the document asserted that the U.S. base had outlived its mission, because it was "strictly linked to the completion of the military campaign in Afghanistan," where "active operations ended already in 2002, according to U.S. official statements." Emphatically denying any link between the withdrawal request and U.S.-Uzbek political differences over the violent events in Andijan, the document insists that the reasons behind Tashkent's withdrawal request predate those events.

Ultimately, the trigger to Tashkent's request was the U.S.-arranged airlift from Kyrgyzstan of two groups of Uzbek fugitives from Andijan, including some escaped criminals and some suspected rebels who were wanted for

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<sup>17</sup> Uzbek radio and television, *Khalk Sozy*, July 29-August 1, 2005.

questioning by Uzbek authorities as part of the investigation. The July 28 airlift of a first group of escapees from Bishkek triggered Tashkent's July 29 "eviction notice"; the August 2 decision, at U.S. insistence, to evacuate the second group as well became the trigger to the August 3 public announcement of the base-closure demand.

The basing arrangement seemed, nevertheless, retrievable even after July 29: the precautions taken by the Uzbek government hinted at President Karimov's interest in further discussion and avoiding a rupture in the security relationship. But a U.S. State Department statement on August 2, immediately distributed by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, underscored the U.S. demand for release of the second group of Uzbek suspects from Kyrgyzstan and threatened to withhold a prescheduled \$22 million tranche of U.S. aid to Uzbekistan. Finally, the tit-for-tat moves on August 2-August 3 may have brought this dynamic to the point of no return.<sup>18</sup>

The public announcement of the "eviction notice," and its strict linkage to the end of the war in Afghanistan, made it difficult for Karimov to climb down and reconsider the issue. The linkage aligned Karimov publicly with Moscow's position. For its part, Washington found itself pressed to resort to some counterproductive rationalizations of its own. Portraying the loss of Karshi-Khanabad as a U.S. choice to put democratic values above military considerations was the easiest rationalization. Publicly discounting the strategic importance of Karshi-Khanabad by citing fallback basing options elsewhere (even if they were clearly poorer) seemed an almost mandatory rationalization in these circumstances. Those interpretations, dictated by short-term politics, should not obscure the strategic setback to both the United States and Uzbekistan, and indeed to security in Eurasia, of the closure of the base and the unraveling of the bilateral security relationship.

### **Reviewing American Options in Central Asia**

Faced first with restrictions on the use of the Karshi-Khanabad base and subsequently with an impending eviction, the United States began looking for alternative or substitute basing options in the region. An active search had begun already in the wake of the Andijan violence, as the deepening

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<sup>18</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, August 3, 2005; Uzbek radio and television, August 1 and 2, 2005; *Interfax*, August 2 and 3, 2005.

political rift between Washington and Tashkent was correctly understood as jeopardizing America's use of the base. Basing options in other Central Asian countries acquired growing importance, as did the need to reorder the political priorities in U.S. bilateral relations with some of those countries.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld discussed a possible transfer of some operations from Karshi-Khanabad to the Manas base during his July 25-26 visit to Kyrgyzstan. Rumsfeld succeeded in negotiating Kyrgyz consent in principle to an indefinite prolongation of American use of Manas, despite Russian and Chinese pressures on Kyrgyzstan to set a deadline and suggestions that it be a short-term one. Bishkek proposed to revise the terms of the 2001 agreement on the Manas base, beginning with the financial terms, so as to increase significantly the compensation to Kyrgyzstan.

In that context, a transfer of some operations from Karshi-Khanabad to Manas seemed acceptable to official Bishkek. Following Uzbekistan's request to the U.S. military to leave that country, Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Miroslav Niyazov declared that Washington had not yet officially submitted a transfer proposal to Bishkek, but that Bishkek would consider such a proposal. Several leaders of U.S.-supported political parties openly called for a stable U.S. military presence as a matter of Kyrgyzstan's national interest. According to some local reports, the U.S. military had already begun to move some equipment from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>19</sup>

In Tajikistan, however, the Defense Ministry's chief spokesman hastened to discount the possibility of American use of the Ayni airfield, situated close to Dushanbe. According to the spokesman, the United States had not made an official request, Tajikistan was not considering the issue, the airstrip and installations were unable to service flights and were undergoing reconstruction, and – for a clinching argument – Russia's military intended itself to use the Ayni airfield. At the time, only Tajik Defense Ministry helicopters were stationed at Ayni. The United States used that airfield for refueling American planes that operated in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, but Russia reclaimed it for itself during President Vladimir Putin's October 2004 visit to Tajikistan.<sup>20</sup>

Moscow did not seem to object to the small French and German military presence in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, respectively. A German contingent

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<sup>19</sup> *Interfax*, August 4, 2005; *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, report no. 399, July 27, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> *Avesta* and *Interfax*, August 4, 2005.

was stationed at the Termez airfield and military base in Uzbekistan, the key logistical point on the border with Afghanistan for German and NATO forces operating in the north of that country. In Germany, left-leaning and pacifist opinion called for abandoning the Termez base to protest Uzbekistan's crushing of the Andijan rebellion. For their part, German mainstream-conservatives cautioned against such a self-defeating move.<sup>21</sup>

A small French Air Force contingent is stationed at the Dushanbe airport. On August 4, 2005, six Mirage planes arrived there, carrying a 400-strong French unit en route to Afghanistan to strengthen coalition forces during the period of parliamentary elections there. An agreement signed during French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie's July 21-24, 2005, visit to Tajikistan and Afghanistan authorized a temporary increase in the French contingent at Dushanbe airport and additional servicing of French planes there. The small French contingent at the U.S.-led base Manas in Kyrgyzstan was also being increased – by two tanker aircraft and 50 personnel – in order to support coalition operations in Afghanistan during the elections there.<sup>22</sup>

Facing the strategic loss in Uzbekistan, Washington on August 1 made an abrupt, if long overdue, move to improve relations with Kazakhstan. In a letter made public that day, and glowing in many passages with praise for Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's policies, President George W. Bush termed Kazakhstan a "strategic partner of the United States in Central Asia." Noting Kazakhstan's anti-terrorist efforts in Central Asia in cooperation with the United States, Bush's letter announced that the U.S. wanted "to expand that cooperation." Bush went on to underscore Kazakhstan's troop contributions to U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Kazakhstan's "impressive economic performance," and the country's internal political stability, by all of which "Kazakhstan has set an example for other states in the region." Further democratic reforms and a free and fair presidential election should give Nazarbayev a strong mandate for another presidential term, Bush concluded in his letter, delivered in Astana concurrently with Uzbekistan's "eviction notice" to Washington.<sup>23</sup> Given the collapse of the U.S. strategic partnership with Uzbekistan, Bush's letter to Nazarbayev would seem to signal an overall reordering of Washington's policy priorities in Central Asia.

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<sup>21</sup> *Die Tageszeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 1, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> *Kabar*, July 29, 2005; *Avesta, Interfax*, August 4, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> *Kazakhstan News Bulletin* [Washington], *Khabar*, August 1, 2005.

### Pressure Continues: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

On August 5 and 10, respectively, the heads of presidential think tanks in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan made statements to local media calling for the removal of U.S. bases from Central Asia. Their statements partly reflected Moscow's public arguments to that end, but also introduced some new adversarial arguments.

In Bishkek, Valentin Bogatyrev, director of the Strategic Studies Institute attached to Kyrgyzstan's presidency, urged that Kyrgyzstan should follow the example of Uzbekistan and set a deadline for the removal of the Manas base. While "the existence of the Manas base is unjustified even now," Bogatyrev recommended that the request to close it be made in October, after the holding of parliamentary elections in Afghanistan (scheduled for September) would have shown that the situation in that country was normalizing. In common with Moscow officials, Bogatyrev tried to turn the tables on the U.S. public presentation of the situation in Afghanistan: If the U.S. was correct in saying that the military operation there has been completed, he argued, then the Manas base was no longer necessary. Otherwise, he claimed, the United States should admit that conflict hotbeds persist in Afghanistan, in which case "the anti-terrorist operation in its existing form should be pronounced a failure," and the United States should continue its operations using airfields inside Afghanistan, "of which there are many," Bogatyrev inaccurately claimed.<sup>24</sup> Other officials in President-elect Kurmanbek Bakiyev's entourage, however, supported a continuing U.S. military presence, while the Russia-oriented Bakiyev seemed to be living up to his reputation for indecisiveness.

In Almaty, Bulat Sultanov, director of the Strategic Studies Institute attached to Kazakhstan's presidency, told a news conference that U.S. bases in Central Asia "potentially threaten the security of Russia and China." Moreover, Sultanov argued, the presence of U.S. air bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has circumvented the CIS Joint Air Defense System, rendering parts of it meaningless. He went on, "I am categorically against the presence of military bases in Central Asia because any military base is an occupation base. ... The American military bases should definitely be removed from Central Asia." Sultanov scathingly criticized Kyrgyzstan's leaders for succumbing to U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's influence and

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<sup>24</sup> *Interfax, Kabar*, August 5, 2005.

reversing Bishkek's initial decision to set an early deadline on the Manas base. He praised Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's "far-sightedness" in ruling out a U.S. military presence in Kazakhstan.<sup>25</sup> This latter claim was inaccurate, as Nazarbayev had in fact publicly and repeatedly offered after 9/11 and during 2002 to host a U.S. air base in Kazakhstan. This adviser's statements seemed to be doing his president a disservice even as the U.S. White House was signaling its readiness for a major improvement of relations with Kazakhstan.

In Bishkek, outgoing U.S. Ambassador Stephen Young told an August 10 news conference that it would be premature at this time to plan or discuss transferring some operations from the base in Uzbekistan to that in Kyrgyzstan. He noted that geographic location means that Manas cannot perform the same missions as Karshi-Khanabad, and that the United States had six months during which to address the Karshi-Khanabad issue. The remarks seemed to signal a rare and overdue public recognition that Karshi-Khanabad was not expendable or interchangeable with some other base, and that Washington might seek ultimately to retrieve the basing arrangement with Uzbekistan. Young denied Russian media reports that Washington had promised \$200 million in foreign aid to Kyrgyzstan in return for prolongation of the American presence at Manas. The United States had only promised to increase foreign aid to Kyrgyzstan in 2006 to \$35 million, from the previously planned \$30 million. Additionally, the United States pledged two tranches of \$5 million each to support anti-terrorism, anti-narcotics, and anti-corruption programs in Kyrgyzstan. For an interim balance sheet of expenditures since late 2001, Young reported that the United States had paid to Kyrgyzstan thus far \$28 million in rent and landing and takeoff fees at Manas; \$114 million for fuel supplies to American planes; and \$17 million to Kyrgyz contractors for other services at Manas. These amounts do not include an estimated \$4 million spent on personal purchases by the U.S. military in the Bishkek area and its humanitarian assistance activities there.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Unprecedented Uzbek-Russian Joint Military Exercises**

On September 21-23, for the first time since 1991, Uzbekistan hosted a joint military exercise with Russian troops on its territory. Presidents Putin and

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<sup>25</sup> *Interfax, Khabar*, August 10, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> *Kabar, Interfax*, August 10, 2005.

Karimov ordered the holding of the exercise in their capacity as commanders-in-chief, and Defense Ministers Sergei Ivanov and Kadyr Ghulamov watched the event at the Farish training range in the Jizzak region in southern Uzbekistan. Each side committed some 200 elite troops to the exercise: Russia, a reinforced airborne company and a GRU Spetsnaz unit; and Uzbekistan, two companies of special mountain troops.

Held in a desert environment and hilly terrain, the exercise rehearsed an operation by a Russian-Uzbek combat group to destroy a 100-strong terrorist detachment that had infiltrated Uzbekistan from the south. The hypothetical detachment was affiliated with an Islamist organization aiming to create a universal Caliphate and seeking to seize a foothold in Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya district as a first step toward that goal. During the first phase of the operation, the joint combat group liquidated a 30-strong advance unit of the terrorists and wrested a mountain village from their control. In the second phase, the joint combat group cut off the path of retreat of the main terrorist detachment, encircled, and destroyed it. In the process, the joint combat group also practiced seizing a terrorist-held building, freeing hostages, spotting a drug-carrying convoy, and closing off its route. Putin and Karimov held a telephone conversation on September 24 to register satisfaction with the troops' performance and the level of their cooperation in the exercise. Ivanov met in Tashkent with Karimov and National Security Service Chairman Rustam Inoyatov to assess the joint exercise and consider an expansion of training for joint military and security operations. The next military exercise (at a date to be set) should involve the use of state-of-the art weapons and equipment, Ivanov told the press, thus holding out the prospect of Uzbek access to modern Russian items. The Russian minister clearly implied that Uzbekistan need not join the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization and its Rapid Deployment Forces. Uzbekistan's "cooperation with Russia on a bilateral basis suits us absolutely," he reassured the host country. Ivanov and Ghulamov also signed an agreement on measures to ensure the safety of flights between Russia and Uzbekistan.

Ivanov endorsed Karimov's decision in early August to demand the closure of the U.S. base at Karshi-Khanabad within 180 days: "It can clearly be understood as a sovereign state's decision; nothing more and nothing less than that." During Ivanov's Tashkent visit, the governmental *Rossiiskaya gazeta* wrote gleefully about the demand that "the Yankees should leave" Uzbekistan, as "there are no longer any serious grounds for the Yanks'

presence at this strategic airfield. Where might they go? Apparently even the Pentagon does not know.” Insisting that Russia and Uzbekistan face the same types of threats and challenges, Ivanov pointed to Afghanistan’s booming drug production.

Although this is a standard Ivanov swipe at the United States and NATO, it did reflect a threat perception widely shared in Central Asia. Russia exploits this issue politically to cast doubt on the U.S. role as a security provider in the region. In a related development, Tajikistan made public on September 23 an unprecedented request to Russia for more equipment and more instructors to assist Tajik border troops in stemming the drug trafficking from Afghanistan. That same day, President Imomali Rakhmonov, in a public statement, ruled out the possibility of hosting U.S. troops in Tajikistan.<sup>27</sup>

### **Missing the Chance to Save Karshi-Khanabad**

On September 27-28, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried headed an interagency delegation to Tashkent on the first leg of a Central Asian tour. A hoped-for Uzbek consent to continued American use of the irreplaceable Karshi-Khanabad (K-2) air base did not materialize during this visit. Fried’s was the highest-level U.S. mission to Uzbekistan after six months of deep crisis in bilateral relations. The visit apparently intended to restore the political dialogue that had broken down over the Kyrgyz putative “revolution” in March-April and the bloodshed in Andijan in May.

On the eve of the delegation’s departure from Washington, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack stated that Fried’s discussions with Uzbek President Islam Karimov would include the question of continued American use of K-2 and related issues. A State Department official suggested on a not-for-attribution basis that, if the base is lost after all, Washington would seek to retain overflight arrangements with Uzbekistan. In Tashkent, Fried announced that the United States had agreed to pay \$23 million to Uzbekistan for some of the services rendered to the K-2 base during almost four years of operations. Tashkent had long complained that Washington was in arrears on such payments, and it ultimately made those complaints public in early August along with the eviction notice. Whether the \$23 million pledge closes those accounts remains unclear. This

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<sup>27</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, September 21, 2005; *Interfax, Itar-Tass*, September 21-23, 2005; *Uzbek Television*, September 23.

amount is almost identical with the \$22 million tranche of U.S. aid to Uzbekistan that Washington threatened to withhold in late July-early August in response to Tashkent's demands for the extradition of Andijan fugitives by Kyrgyzstan.

Yet at the news briefing following his meeting with Karimov, Fried stated that he had not raised the issue of continued American use of K-2 because it was not part of the delegation's agenda, and that Washington was not asking Tashkent to revise its decision to end the American military presence. He concluded, "The United States intends to vacate the base as requested by the government of Uzbekistan." If McCormack's summary of the agenda was correct, Fried's account leads to the conclusion that some attempt was made but failed to retrieve the base. Acknowledging the need to "overcome a complicated phase in the relationship," Fried called for continuing cooperation based on the 2002 Declaration on U.S.-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership, the dimensions of which he rearranged in the following order: democracy and human rights, political dialogue, regional security, and economic development. The order of priorities had looked differently in late 2001, when the United States gained use of K-2 and in 2002 when the Declaration was signed. At that time, strategic considerations clearly took pride of place in Washington.

Following the armed rebellion and ensuing crackdown in Andijan, much of political Washington has posited an artificial dilemma between U.S. strategic interests and democracy-promotion in Uzbekistan, implying that democratic values ought to prevail over mere strategic interests in this equation. Such reasoning has served to rationalize the looming loss of the invaluable K-2 base and a tendency to write off Karimov and Uzbekistan as strategic partners. Fried's visit seemed designed to restore some balance to that equation; as McCormack's briefing suggested, "Our strategic interests and our interest in promoting democracy intersect there, and we are not going to sacrifice one for the other." At that moment, however, U.S. policy seemed to be mired in that either-or ("one or the other") mode, instead of balance.

The way in which Washington formulated its demand for an independent international investigation into the Andijan violence was one of the unnecessary irritants. It emphasized the bloodshed committed by the forces of order while de-emphasizing the organized armed rebellion that triggered the authorities' overreaction. Demands for a show-time international investigation tend to suggest a prosecutorial intent toward the authorities,

instead of conveying a fact-finding intent such as would serve U.S. and Uzbek anti-terrorism efforts. The Uzbek authorities clearly lack the capability to establish the full facts behind the Andijan rebellion. This limitation was also noted when earlier terrorist attacks hit Uzbekistan (1999-2004). An American offer to conduct a professional fact-finding investigation on the ground would clearly be more effective than the proposed international investigation. The United States can also improve the Uzbek authorities' crowd-control methods and, especially, prevention capabilities, so as to avoid another possible overreaction to surprise terror attacks. Such assistance could help begin restoring the strategic partnership in all of its dimensions.<sup>28</sup>

The American delegation's visit occurred against a backdrop of rapid expansion in Russia's relations with Uzbekistan. On September 21-23, for the first time since 1991, Uzbekistan hosted a joint exercise with Russian troops on its territory, as part of understandings reached between Karimov and Russian President Vladimir Putin. On September 26, Gazprom chairman Alexei Miller wrapped up a set of agreements in Tashkent whereby Russia tightens its hold on Uzbekistan's gas exports and the export pipeline for years to come.

### **Enter Russia, Exit America**

The alliance treaty of Russia and Uzbekistan, signed on November 14 in Moscow, painfully illustrated Washington's declining plausibility as a buttress of security and stability in Central Asian perceptions, particularly that of the region's strategic linchpin country Uzbekistan. Those perceptions are traceable to U.S. policy incoherence not only in Uzbekistan, but in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan as well.

President Karimov's remarks during his treaty-signing visit in Moscow demonstrated the significance and consequences of that shift in perceptions. Even as he was evicting U.S. forces from the country, Karimov averred in Moscow that Uzbekistan "needs cooperation with a powerful country that would ensure its protection.... [With] this treaty, any evil deeds against Uzbekistan, any attempts to attack our country will mean raising a hand against Russia as well.... Russia was and remains for us the most reliable bulwark and ally." By the same token, Karimov underscored the gains

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<sup>28</sup> *Interfax*, AP, AFP, September 26-28

accruing to Russia from Uzbekistan's switch of alliances: "This [treaty] strengthens Russia's positions in Central Asia, it is a reliable guarantee of peace and stability in the region." Terming Central Asia "Russia's soft underbelly," Karimov expressed confidence that "no-one will ever be able to dispute Russia's presence in this region." He cast the treaty as a long-term strategic choice by Uzbekistan: "It demonstrates with whose interests our interests converge and with whom we intend to build our future."

Playing up to Russian anxieties about security threats from Central Asia (e.g., through the soft-underbelly theory, a favorite reference to Churchill by Russian analysts until recently) no longer seems to bring the political returns it formerly did. In his public remarks during Karimov's visit, President Putin barely acknowledged threats to Russia emanating from Central Asia. Instead, Putin singled out Afghanistan, urging joint Russian-Uzbek measures to "combat the drug trafficking and terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan" as well as to "support peace in Afghanistan and that country's independence." Such remarks allude to purportedly unsuccessful U.S. policies in that country and seem to signal a Russian intent to reenter Afghanistan politically at the head of a Central Asian alliance.

Moscow and Tashkent described this new stage in their relations as an "alliance-type relationship" (*soyuznicheskiye otnosheniya*), a designation one step short of an outright alliance. However, the treaty itself contains hallmarks of a classical alliance treaty, as well as language familiar from Moscow's erstwhile treaties with its former satellites. Thus, "An act of aggression by any state or group of states against one of the parties will be viewed as an act of aggression against both parties. ... The other party will render the necessary assistance, including military assistance and will also support it by other means at its disposal." Furthermore, "In the event of a situation arising that, in view of one of the parties, could pose a threat to peace, break the peace, or affect that party's security interests, and also in the event of a threat of aggression against one of the parties, the parties will immediately activate consultation procedures with a view to coordinating practical measures to resolve the situation." Those provisions would seem to cover Uzbekistan against threats from both state and non-state actors; and they also seem worded so as to allow invoking the treaty for preventive and even preemptive actions as well.

The treaty opens the door to the stationing of Russian forces in Uzbekistan: "In order to maintain security, peace, and stability, the sides shall grant each

other the right to use military installations on their territory, should the need arise, on the basis of additional agreements.” Furthermore, the treaty envisions Russian assistance to Uzbekistan for “modernization of the armed forces, providing them with up-to-date armaments and technical equipment, and raising their combat readiness.” In this area as well, Russia is stepping into a niche unnecessarily forfeited by the United States.

The official agenda of Karimov’s visit did not include specific discussions on creating a Russian military base in Uzbekistan. However, discussions on that subject are under way unofficially in Moscow. The Kremlin-connected analyst Sergei Karaganov predicts, “It will be a small base to symbolize Russia’s military presence and Russia’s willingness to stabilize the situation....For now, the decision to deploy a base and the prospect of rendering mutual assistance in the event of conflict is [in itself] a deterrent”.<sup>29</sup> Statements by some senior Duma members similarly seem to reflect a political decision by the Kremlin to create a Russian base in Uzbekistan.

In parallel with the military track, Moscow is reentering Uzbekistan massively on the economic track as well. During Karimov’s visit, the sides noted recent advances in exploration and development of Uzbekistan’s oil and gas deposits by Lukoil and Gazprom, respectively. The joint communiqué also suggested that Tashkent expects Russian investments in Uzbekistan’s manufacturing industries.<sup>30</sup>

Tashkent’s now-official switch of alliances completes the reversal of a cycle that saw Uzbekistan attending NATO’s 1999 Washington summit, quitting the CIS Collective Security Treaty that same year, and joining the U.S.-supported GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) group. Uzbekistan became America’s de facto ally promptly after 9/11 when Karimov, defying Moscow, made arrangements with U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for American use of the Karshi-Khanabad air base, and signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership with the United States in Washington in 2002. Uzbekistan provided indispensable support for American and NATO operations in Afghanistan, and went on to ask NATO for an Individual Partnership Action Plan.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ekho Moskvy*, November 14, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> *Interfax*, Russian Television Channel One, Uzbek Television Channel One, November 13-15, 2005.

The relationship began unraveling in 2004 when political Washington allowed itself to be caught in a false dilemma, strategic security versus democracy, regarding Uzbekistan, and began to single out that country for a one-sided resolution of that false dilemma. Tashkent's counterproductive reaction was the signing of a "strategic partnership" treaty with Moscow in June 2004, as well as changing its official discourse to characterize the United States and Russia equally as Uzbekistan's strategic partners. Washington's mishandling of a "color-revolution" experiment in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 further damaged relations with Tashkent.

### **End-Game**

Ultimately, the bloodshed in Andijan in May exacerbated the lack of balance in U.S. political assessments, which strongly emphasized the authorities' crackdown while downplaying the well-organized, surprise terrorist assault that triggered those brutal reprisals. Instead of offering professional intelligence assistance to elucidate this third major terrorist assault on Uzbekistan in the space of five years and help prevent recurrences, the State Department called – over the Pentagon's objections – for a purely political exercise in the form of an international investigation, and made it a non-negotiable demand. Yet it was only in late July to early August that Tashkent asked the United States to vacate the K-2 base, after Washington had pressured a reluctant Kyrgyzstan to allow hundreds of Andijan refugees, including escaped convicts and suspect rebels, to be flown to third-country destinations. In September, Uzbekistan hosted for the first time since 1991 a military exercise with Russian troops, rehearsing a joint anti-terrorist actions.

A last possible chance to retrieve K-2 was missed when a State Department-led delegation visited Tashkent in late September, three months before the expiry of the base evacuation deadline. The K-2 base was crucial to U.S. anti-terrorist, anti-WMD missions in a wide range of contingencies in Eurasia. Yet strategic security interests and democracy-promotion had fallen out of proper correlation in U.S. policy. The United States forfeited an irreplaceable long-term military presence, and Russia gained the promise of one. It was probably in early October that Tashkent and Moscow decided to draw up the alliance treaty just signed. At the signing ceremony, Putin, by way of praising the staff work, remarked that the new treaty was drawn up in a very

short time. If so, it is a further indication of missed U.S. opportunities to retrieve K-2 between June and October.

Events have now come full circle with their lessons: Exit America, enter Russia, Putin is no ally, and U.S. policy must not be turned into a clash of priorities in a zero-sum equation of priorities. By the same token, to presume an end to zero-sum strategic contests among great powers in Eurasia post-9/11 is as unrealistic as – and indeed a remnant of – the post-1991 presumption of the end of history.

# Chronology of U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001-2005

Compiled by John C.K. Daly

## 1992

On February 19, 1992 the United States established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan, opening an embassy the following month.

## 1993

October 24. In 1993 Uzbek President Islam Karimov got his first glimpse of the U.S. when he attended the United Nations General Assembly's 48th session in New York, where on October 24 he proposed the creation of a nuclear free zone in Central Asia.<sup>1</sup>

## 1994

According to current ambassador to Uzbekistan Jon R. Purnell <sup>2</sup>, “As early as 1994, the U.S. and Uzbekistan has signed a Bilateral Assistance Agreement that provided (and still provides) (Fall 2005) the legal basis for the work of American nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) here.”<sup>3</sup>

## 1995

Karimov also attended the UN General Assembly's 50th session on October 24 1995.

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<sup>1</sup>. <http://www.mfa.uz:8002/policy/>;  
[http://www.nti.org/h\\_learnmore/nwftutorial/chronology.html](http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/nwftutorial/chronology.html).

<sup>2</sup>. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/28745.htm>.

<sup>3</sup>. Jon R. Purnell, “U.S.-Uzbek Relations” *The Ambassadors Review* Fall 2005 p. 35.

**1996**

June 23-28, Karimov visited the U.S. on a private trip, during which he met with President Bill Clinton, then-Secretary of Defense William Perry and then-Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary. Karimov also opened an Uzbek embassy in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

**1997**

In 1997, following concerted efforts by progressive elements in the Uzbek Foreign Ministry, Uzbekistan became one of eight CIS countries eligible for U.S.-government foreign military financing, which provided for the acquisition of defense articles, services and training in conjunction with the Department of Defense.

In 1997 five U.S. government delegations visited Uzbekistan. The first occurred on March 3, when Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robin Raphel arrived in Tashkent.<sup>5</sup> Raphel also visited Pakistan and Afghanistan urging a political solution to Afghanistan's continuing conflict. Raphel's visit was followed by a May 26 trip by Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee Congressman Bill Archer, an August 14-15 sojourn by Republican Senators John McCain (Arizona) and Phil Gramm (Texas), and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Bill Richardson (August 17). The most high profile visit occurred November 13-15, when First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton flew into Tashkent for two days, where she attended the opening of the Women's Wellness Center at Tashkent Medical Institute and visited Bukhara and Samarkand.<sup>6</sup> Six days after her departure Chairman of the House Rules Committee Congressman Gerald Solomon arrived in Uzbekistan for a one day visit.

During this year the U.S. and Uzbekistan collaborated successfully on the "Rebirth" decontamination effort to address chemical waste issues in the Aral Sea basin.

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<sup>4</sup>. "Visits to the by Foreign Heads of State and Government—1996" @ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/5178.htm>.

<sup>5</sup>. <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&lid=1&mid=327>.

<sup>6</sup>. <http://web.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&mid=547>.

*U.S. Assistance For Military Reform In Uzbekistan*

The most visible event of 1997 in U.S.-Uzbek relations was the first of a series of “Centrazbat” joint military exercises under the NATO's “Partnership for Peace Program.” The maneuvers took place in Chirchik during September 18-21.

More important than these exercises was a successful U.S.-sponsored program of transforming Uzbekistan's old Soviet-type military into a modern army that would serve the needs of a more open and democratic society. This program proceeded steadily down through 2004, with notable success. Cooperation in this area was later to be roundly criticized by western human rights groups.

**1998**

The year 1998 would see six U.S. delegations visit Uzbekistan. Leading off was an April 3 visit by Speaker of the House Robert Livingston. On April 14-17 Kansas Republican Senator Sam Brownback visited; two years later would co-author the “Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999.”<sup>7</sup> Brownback said, “The U.S. needs to show more leadership and strength in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Until now policy in the region has been seen only through the prism of our Russia policy; these countries are free and independent and should be treated as such. They are in a strategically important region of the world, standing against the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. We need to make the most of this opportunity to help these countries maintain their sovereignty and independence, as well as their pro-western policies.”<sup>8</sup>

Growing economic interest in Uzbekistan was underscored by the April 20 visit by Counselor to the Department of Commerce and Clinton Administration's expert on Energy and Commercial Cooperation with the NIS States, Jan Kalicki, while the October 2 visit by Central Command Commander-in-chief Anthony Zinni emphasized growing military ties. The year ended with a November 4-5 visit by Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for NIS States, Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich, Assistant Secretary of Defense Theodore Warner, and Acting Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State on Assistance to NIS States, William Taylor.

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<sup>7</sup>. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/regional/silkroad.html>.

<sup>8</sup>. <http://brownback.senate.gov/pressapp/record.cfm?id=175949&>.

Increasingly during this year the Uzbek embassy in Washington actively urged U.S. policy makers to take seriously the danger of "terrorism." However, programs on this theme organized jointly by the Uzbek embassy and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute brought few participants from U.S. government offices and no focused interest from that quarter.

## 1999

### *Uzbekistan Sounds the Alarm in Washington Over Terrorism*

On February 16 terrorist bomb blasts in Tashkent killed more than a dozen people and wounded 100s. Karimov blames "fanatics" from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, led by Tahir Yuldashev for the carnage. The IMU subsequently broadcast a declaration of jihad from an Iranian radio station in Meshed.

In August IMU terrorists entered Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan, bound for Uzbekistan. The U.S. responded with training and equipment for the Kyrgyz and Uzbek border forces. The government of Uzbekistan begins lobbying hard to get the U.S. to list the IMU as a terrorist organization. Meanwhile, the Russian government was far more outspoken in denouncing the attackers as extremists and terrorists and did not mix its comments with statements on human rights in Uzbekistan. This was duly noted by the government in Tashkent and accounts for its more measured support for U.S in the UN during 2,000.

On April 23-25 1999 President Karimov was among the more than 40 world leaders who visited Washington for NATO's 50th anniversary. Russia did not attend the festivities. Uzbekistan was already deeply involved with the NATO's-sponsored Partnership for Peace program. While in Washington Karimov met with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl Inderfurth, World Bank President James Wolfenson, Eximbank President James Harmon, and International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Shigemitsu Sugisaki. Karimov also met with Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee Bill

Archer as well as a group of senators and Republican Senator Sam Brownback, the author of the Silk Road Strategy Act.<sup>9</sup>

In the wake of the NATO summit the Uzbek embassy hosted a meeting of representatives of five former Soviet republics - Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, where they jointly announce enlargement of the regional GUUAM bloc, with an openly pro-NATO inclination.<sup>10</sup>

During the summer Special Forces begin first joint activities with Uzbek counterparts, which would continue through the following year.

In May 1999, a joint Uzbek- commission agreed to work together to decommission chemical weapons facilities and to prevent the spread of the technology used for their production. The U.S. also pledged to give Uzbekistan \$6 million to decommission the Nukus biological weapons facility. The year 1999 would also see seven official delegation visits, which included Zinni (2 visits, May 17 and December 3), Stestanovich, Kalicki, as well as Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for NIS states Ross Wilson (February 2-4), Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth (July 19) and Republican Senator Richard Shelby (November 12.)

During the autumn the U.S. launched a program of cooperation with the Uzbek security services directed against the Taliban in Afghanistan. This included flying predators out of Uzbekistan.

## 2000

On September 7-8 2000 Karimov visited New York for the UN Millennium Summit, where he told delegates, "From this high rostrum, I would like to address the UN, the UN Security Council and international community and say: the continuing war in Afghanistan stands as a threat to security of not only the states of the Central Asian region, but this is also a threat to the whole world."<sup>11</sup> In this period U.S. teams monitored Taliban efforts to eradicate poppy production but otherwise took little notice of Karimov's warning.

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<sup>9</sup>. [http://216.239.51.104/search?q=cache:iZzZxtkIerWJ:uzland.uz/news/05\\_01\\_99.htm+1999+Karimov+Washington+NATO+50th+anniversary&hl=en&gl=U.S.&ct=clnk&cd=2](http://216.239.51.104/search?q=cache:iZzZxtkIerWJ:uzland.uz/news/05_01_99.htm+1999+Karimov+Washington+NATO+50th+anniversary&hl=en&gl=U.S.&ct=clnk&cd=2)

<sup>10</sup>. "Crisis in the Balkans: Russia; New Alliance Highlights Ebb of Russian Clout," *New York Times*, 2 May 1999.

<sup>11</sup>. [http://www.uzland.info/2000/09\\_16.htm#presidentun2](http://www.uzland.info/2000/09_16.htm#presidentun2).

While at the UN Karimov met with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to discuss cooperation and regional security, following it up with a private meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, during which they discussed promoting bilateral relations and fighting terrorism. During the meeting Albright told Karimov that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was to be listed as a terrorist organization and that Washington was ready to offer Tashkent political, moral and, if need be, material assistance.<sup>12</sup> Later that month the United States designated the IMU a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” noting, the “main goal of the IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan.”<sup>13</sup>

The appointment of a civilian academic physicist, Kodyr Ghulamov, as Minister of Defense in September 2000 capped the reform efforts going forward within the government of Uzbekistan. Ghulamov quickly emerged as a key partisan of reform.

In the same period, however, international financial institutions were pressing Tashkent hard to introduce economic reforms, including the introduction of a fully convertible currency, freeing of all domestic prices, and the privatization of state industries. Karimov several times stated his intention to move along these lines but then proved unable to override entrenched opposition, which extended deep into his own government.

Secretary of State Albright visited Tashkent and, according to press reports, raised criticism on human rights issues. Senior Uzbek officials later commented that her decision to do this in a public setting had hurt, rather than helped, the Uzbeks’ ability to respond.

## **2001**

*9-11-2001*

The Sept. 11 2001 terrorist attacks set the stage for an intensification of U.S.-Uzbek relations, building on previous contacts.

Uzbekistan was the first of Afghanistan’s neighbors to reply to Washington’s call for assistance. President Putin had spent the first two days

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<sup>12</sup>. [http://www.uzland.info/2000/09\\_16.htm#presidentun2](http://www.uzland.info/2000/09_16.htm#presidentun2).

<sup>13</sup>. “Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2000 - Eurasia Overview,”

Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism @ <http://www.milnet.com/state/2000/eurasiaoverview.html>.

after 9-11 on the phone to Central Asian leaders, including President Karimov, arguing that they should not enter into any understandings with the Americans without first consulting with Moscow. When Karimov and the other presidents rejected this warning Putin reversed ground and announced that he had “persuaded” Karimov and the others to cooperate with Washington.

Six days after the terrorist attacks Uzbekistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Komilov told the *Washington Post* that Uzbekistan was willing to discuss U.S. use of Uzbek airspace and military bases for possible operations against the Taliban and Al Quada. Komilov said, “We’re prepared to discuss any issue that would be conducive to eliminating terrorism in our region and strengthening stability.”<sup>14</sup>

Nine days after the attacks President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress. In discussing the perpetrators of the atrocity he said, “This group and its leader- a person named Osama bin Laden - are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. .”<sup>15</sup> The text about Uzbekistan remains, as of January, 2006, on the White House’s “Frequently Asked Questions – What is the War on Terrorism?” on the official White House website.<sup>16</sup>

After 9-11 Washington had no doubts about Uzbekistan’s importance in the war against terror. Some groundwork had undoubtedly been laid when U.S. Central Command General Tommy Franks visited Tashkent on May 18. Franks had first visited Uzbekistan in Sept. 2000 shortly after his appointment as CENTCOM Commander-in-Chief. During his May visit Franks met with President Karimov, Chief of the Joint Staff Gen. Tulkun Kasymov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Komilov as well as with other senior civilian and military officials.<sup>17</sup> During a press conference Franks told reporters, Let me say at this point that the relationship between the military of the United States of America and that of Uzbekistan remains excellent.

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<sup>14</sup>. “Uzbekistan Offers Cooperation to US,” CNN, 17 September 2001 @ <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/17/uzbekistan.ofer/>.

<sup>15</sup>. “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People” @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>16</sup>. <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/infocus/nationalsecurity/faq-what.html>.

<sup>17</sup>. Head of Central Command Visited Uzbekistan (05/20/2001) @ <Http://Www.U.S.Embassy.Uz/Home/Index.aspx?&=&Mid=217&Overview=574>.

That relationship has grown over the years and I would anticipate that it will continue to grow even stronger in the future. We will continue to work on issues such as counter-terrorism, countering the flow of narcotics across international borders, the control of contraband and smuggling. This sort of cooperation, which has characterized our relationship, will certainly continue, as I said, in the future.”

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made two official visits to Uzbekistan, the first on Oct. 5 and the second Nov. 3-4. On October 5 Rumsfeld held a joint press conference with President Karimov. Karimov told reporters, “As far as Uzbekistan and its fight against terrorism are concerned, I would like to tell you the following. The first point is Uzbekistan grants its airspace to American aircraft and helicopters. The second point is Uzbekistan is ready to upgrade and step up cooperation between special services for the exchange of intelligence information. Uzbekistan gives its permission and gives use of one of its airfields and its facilities for the United States’ aircraft and helicopters as well as for personnel employed in search and rescue operations. At the moment there is work going on the legal document, which will formulate the mutual commitments, and obligations, and guarantees. And I would like to use this opportunity to say that we have no secret deals, no covert negotiations with the United States. As soon as this document has been formulated, it will be subject to public attention.”<sup>18</sup>

The following exchange appears to be the first public allusion to what would later become know as “the Strategic Partnership Agreement.”

Question – “Mr. President, you mentioned that the bilateral document will be signed. What sort of document is that?”

Karimov: “It will be a bilateral document which will formulate commitments and most importantly the guarantees given Uzbekistan so that Uzbekistan can defend its territory and its people. As for the guarantees themselves, the work is still in progress. It is too soon to formulate the provisions of the document.”

Rumsfeld told the assembled journalists, “Interestingly, the interest of the United States in Uzbekistan, it should be well understood, precedes the

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<sup>18</sup>. Transcript of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's and President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov's Joint Press Conference (10/05/2001) @ <http://www.u.s.embassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&mid=217&overview=534>.

events of September 11. Indeed, on my first visit to Brussels for a NATO meeting, I made it a point to have a bilateral meeting with the Minister of Defense here, of Uzbekistan, because of my interest and the interest of our country, and of course that was many months before the terrorist attack in New York and Washington. And the interest of the United States is of a long-standing relationship with this country and not something that is focused on the immediate problem alone.”

Before signing a Status of Forces Agreement with Uzbekistan, Rumsfeld reminded the assembled journalists that U.S. interest in the country long antedated 9/11. The air war in Afghanistan opened within one hour of signing in Tashkent, while Uzbekistan sent senior military officers to Tampa (CENTCOM) to work with other Coalition partners.

Franks also returned for two more visits, on Oct. 30 and Nov. 21. Senators John Warner (R) and Carl Levin (D) of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee were received in Tashkent on Nov. 20.

Within about months of 9/11, the Pentagon established 12 bases in and around Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> According to Karimov’s chief spokesman Rustam Jumaev, “Our cooperation began long before the events of Sept. 11,” adding that military and intelligence efforts extended back “two or three years” before that.

#### *The Strategic Partnership Agreement*

A month after the terrorist assaults Uzbekistan, the first among Afghanistan’s neighboring former Soviet states, announced that it had concluded an agreement allowing Washington to use Uzbek military facilities for its upcoming Operation Enduring Freedom operations in Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> Under terms of the agreement the U.S. was permitted to use Uzbek airspace, military and civilian infrastructure.

The negotiations in late 2001 went easily and quickly. Foreign Minister Komilov, Ambassador Sodyk Safaev and Minister of Defense Ghulamov led the Uzbek team. All three were well-known to their U.S. counterparts and much respected by them.

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<sup>19</sup>. “Building USAF ‘Expeditionary Bases’ for Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan, 2001-2002,” Air & Space Power Chronicles @ <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/marion.html>.

<sup>20</sup>. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1596654.stm>.

When both sides had come to a common understanding on military issues, the Uzbeks indicated their desire to conclude an Agreement of Strategic Partnership with the U.S. To the Americans' astonishment, they even produced a draft of such an agreement. And to the Americans' still greater astonishment, *the text began with a section devoted to measures to promote democratization.*

The U.S. response was, first, to dismiss the project as peripheral to its main concerns, and, second, to dismiss the democratization section as a cynical move on the Uzbeks' part to curry favor in Washington. Nonetheless, the document was eventually signed.

On November 10 Agency for International Development official Andrew S. Natsios traveled to Central Asia, reviewing humanitarian operations into Afghanistan, during which time he visited Uzbekistan's Tashkent and Termez.<sup>21</sup>

The U.S.' evolving relationship with Uzbekistan clearly unsettled Russia, which had for more than a century regarded the country as its exclusive domain. During a joint press conference at the White House on November 13 Russian president Vladimir Putin said in response to a question about redrawing Central Asian sphere of influence, "One shouldn't forget that both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are independent states and decide, therefore, in policies independently, who cooperates (with who) with and at which level...And in these conditions, the continued application of Jackson-Vanik amendment to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and so on and so forth, one wouldn't call it justified and just."<sup>22</sup>

Putin's veiled swipe at the Jackson-Vanik amendment referred to legislation unanimously passed by Congress in 1975 to pressure the U.S.S.R over its emigration polices. Despite the collapse of Communism in the U.S.S.R. in December, 1991, the amendment remains in force, notwithstanding the appeals of six former Soviet republics.

From Fiscal Year 1992 through Fiscal Year 2003 Washington sent Tashkent \$508 million in funding along with \$209 million in surplus Department of Defense and privately donated humanitarian commodities. In 2002

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<sup>21</sup>. "The Commitment to the Afghan People" 19 November 2001 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011119-4.html>.

<sup>22</sup>. Press Conference by President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin 13 November 2001 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011113-3.html>.

Washington sent Tashkent \$219.8 million in aid, of which \$79 million was for law enforcement and security. The following year the government sent Uzbekistan \$86.1 million in aid, of which \$30.2 million was directed towards security and law enforcement.<sup>23</sup>

*The Powell Visit, December 7.*

Capping the year for the Uzbek government was a December 7 visit by Secretary of State Colin Powell. At a joint press conference the next day Karimov began by telling reporters, “We have just had a very open and candid exchange of views on the issues pertaining to bilateral relations as well as to the situation with the antiterrorist operation. If you think that we focused our attention mainly on the situation in Afghanistan, you will be mistaken.”<sup>24</sup> Powell said, “I assured the President that our interest in Uzbekistan and in this region go far beyond the current crisis in Afghanistan. *In the months ahead, we look forward to deepening and widening our relationship with Uzbekistan on security issues, on economic issues, issues of political democratization and human rights, and we had a very full exchange of views on all of these matters,*” and invited Karimov to Washington. Powell added that the next day Uzbekistan would reopen the “Friendship Bridge” over the Amu Darya river in order to ease the flow of supplies into Afghanistan.

At the same press conference CNN’s Andrea Koppel asked the pair, “President Karimov, what do you say to your critics who say that you are nothing more than a brutal, repressive, authoritarian dictator? And for Secretary Powell, sir, the Uzbek government had been dealing with its own Taliban-like problem. What help has the Uzbek government asked from the United States in dealing with Islamic militants?”

Karimov replied, “I am very surprised to hear the question you posed. And I believe that these questions that are (inaudible) are due to be asked and probably we cannot circumvent these questions. We have to answer them. What can I answer? My answer is that one is to see things rather than hear

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<sup>23</sup>. Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – “Russia And The CIS” 9 March 2005, [http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/cissu/uzbeso8o.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod\\_Name=CISS&](http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/cissu/uzbeso8o.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=CISS&).

<sup>24</sup>. Transcript - Joint Press Conference By Secretary Of State Colin L. Powell And President Islam Karimov At The Presidency @ <http://U.S.embassy-aU.S.tralia.state.gov/hyper/2001/1210/epf108.htm>.

them one hundred times. I would like to invite you for communication with me on a more permanent basis and believe that I will not disappoint you.” Powell answered, “Uzbekistan does have a problem with Islamic fundamentalism and we talked about that as well. I think it is because they had such a problem that caused them to realize that it would be wise to join in the campaign against terrorism. I'm not aware of any specific requests that they have made, there may have been, I just don't have (inaudible).”

## **2002**

The year 2002 would prove the high water mark for visits by official U.S. delegations to Uzbekistan. A record 25 delegations visited Tashkent, six in January alone. This burst of activity was hastened by the 27 January signing of the Framework Agreement by Ambassador Liz Jones for the U.S. and Foreign Affairs Minister Komilov for Uzbekistan.

Among 2002 visits were four high-level military delegations (CENTCOM commander General Tommy Franks (21-24 January and August 22-23)).

During a January 25 press conference Franks took a question from ITAR-TASS. “Tuesday you signed a document with the Uzbek military... Could you elaborate on the most important articles in the document and what kind of military cooperation is envisioned in the framework of this document for 2002?”

Franks replied, “Thank you. The military cooperation document was between the United States Central Command and the Ministry of Defence of Uzbekistan. And described in the document are visits by the American military to Uzbekistan for discussions and conferences with their counterparts, as well as visits by Uzbek military to the United States for discussions, seminars and so forth... Also mentioned in the military-to-military document are opportunities for Uzbek officers to receive training inside the United States. And finally, there is also mentioned in the document, partner relationships between some units in the United States and some Uzbek units.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>. <http://216.239.51.104/search?q=cache:dyPWVppIaigJ:U.S.embassy.state.gov/islamabad/wwwwho2012506.html+CENTCOM+Franks+Tashkent+2002+&hl=en&gl=U.S.&ct=clnk&cd=1>.

Other high-level Pentagon contacts were the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Meyers (February 19-20) and Vice Chairman of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace (August 8-11.)<sup>26</sup>

The year 2002 would also see Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill visit Tashkent June 16-17 to discuss financial and economic reform.

### *Launching the Human Rights Counterattack on Uzbekistan*

Muffled rumblings about human rights in Central Asia were now beginning to arise in Congress. These were fed not by research issued to Congress by the CIA but by NGO reports which began to proliferate at this time. There is no evidence that any authoritative agency of the U.S. government ever subjected these reports to scrutiny or analysis, or attempted to analyze the situation on the basis of evidence gathered independently by U.S. government agencies. Indeed, the preoccupation of the CIA with issues pertaining directly to the military effort and war on terrorism effectively ruled this out. Nor did the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent carry out its own authoritative analysis of the situation or subject the NGO reports to independent verification. Instead, all accepted the NGO reports issued by the International Crisis Group, Open Society Institute, Human Rights Watch, and others at face value. The failure here is not by the NGOs, which were carrying out the advocacy that is their mission, and doing so passionately, if at times with less than complete rigor in the gathering and evaluation of evidence. Rather, it is the State Department's failure to develop its own body of evidence, to weigh the implications against other U.S. interests, and to propose constructive means of balancing them. The Congress' Helsinki Committee proved an effective sounding board for NGO views on human rights during this period, but signally failed to carry out similar hearings on security and economic issues, even though they are as central to the "Helsinki mission" as human rights.

On March 6 at a Hearing before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, ranking minority member Cynthia McKinney (Dem., Ga.) said during an overview that, "One glaring example of the Bush administration's willingness to forego human rights concerns altogether in the name of the short-term, tactical support of the "war on terrorism" is Uzbekistan. As the United States expands financial

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<sup>26</sup>. <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/>.

and military aid to the government of Uzbekistan, that country has intensified its severe human rights abuses. Uzbek authorities have arrested, tortured, and imprisoned thousands of independent Muslims and others. More than 7,000 political and religious prisoners, including large numbers of religiously observant women, continue to languish in Uzbek jails. Many of us are alarmed that while the State Department report accurately documents the severity of the repression in Uzbekistan, our government has done little to curb the systematic persecution of Muslims and other abuses. China and Russia and other countries are using the war on terrorism as a cover to repress ethnic and religious minorities. The message from our government to the world's human rights abusers must not be you can violate human rights with impunity so long as you do it in the name of combating terrorism."<sup>27</sup>

The core of the human rights charge was that Muslim extremism in Uzbekistan was caused not by developments within the world of Islam as a whole but by the actions of the Uzbek government itself. With little or no debate, many U.S. officials accepted an interpretation that transformed the Uzbek government from the status of victim of terrorism to its cause.

McKinney was defeated in her reelection campaign in 2002, only returning to Congress two years later. Republican Representative from Florida Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, also had harsh words for Uzbekistan's progress on human rights.

For the time being Congressional criticisms had no impact on U.S. policy. During a March 11 2002 White House commemoration of the six-month anniversary of the 9-11 attack Bush said, "And we could not have done our work without critical support from countries, particularly like Pakistan and Uzbekistan."<sup>28</sup>

On 12 March Karimov arrived in the U.S. on his first state visit. During an Oval Office meeting Bush told Karimov, with regard to human rights and previous criticisms, "We are not going to teach you." Five bilateral

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<sup>27</sup>. "A Review Of The State Department's Human Rights Reports From The Victims' Perspective" - Hearing Before The Subcommittee On International Operations And Human Rights Of The Committee On International Relations House Of Representatives One Hundred Seventh Congress, Second Session, March 6, 2002 @ [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa78083.000/hfa78083\\_o.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa78083.000/hfa78083_o.htm).

<sup>28</sup>. Remarks by the President on the Six-Month Anniversary of the September 11th Attacks 11 March 2002 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020311-1.html>.

agreements were signed during Karimov's visit.<sup>29</sup> Uzbek Foreign Minister Komilov and former Secretary Powell initialed the "Strategic Partnership Declaration" pledging Uzbekistan to "intensify the democratic transformation" and improve freedom of the press.<sup>30</sup>

The agreement subsequently led to a bilateral conference of State, Defense, Commerce and Treasury officials in Tashkent in the Joint Security Cooperation Consultation Talks (JSCC.)

Deepening -Uzbek military ties in the spring led the two nations to hold bilateral defense consultations in Tashkent. This caused Uzbekistan to come under criticism from the China-Russia sponsored Shanghai Cooperation Organization. On July 8 Tashkent's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement noting that the previous year's agreement "has been compelled, firstly, by the strife of Uzbek side, as an active participant if the antiterrorist coalition in Afghanistan, to make a feasible contribution to the cause..." The press release noted that its permission for Washington to use its facility at Khanabad "did not consider any other options of deployment prospects of the Armed Forces contingent on the territory of Uzbekistan," adding, "It should be underscored that the U.S. practically has not made any payments to cover the extra costs made in fact by Uzbek side to ensure the 'Khanabad' airfield's security and to establish and exploit the needed infrastructure, nor has it compensated the environmental damage and discomfort for the local population."<sup>31</sup>

The human rights issue refused to go away, however. Beginning in 2002 it was voiced most effectively from within the State Department itself, by Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner, who visited Tashkent three times during the summer and autumn. Between 1986 and 1989 Craner had served as Senator John McCain's foreign policy advisor. In his role at State Craner seems to have acted virtually independently, as a senator might do. His public statements show no evidence of having been coordinated with Secretary of State Powell, the Pentagon, or the Department of Commerce, let alone the White House. In

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<sup>29</sup>. "-Uzbek Ties Grow despite Rights Concerns" CNN 12 March 2002 @ <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/us/03/12/ret.uzbek.U.S./>.

<sup>30</sup>. "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for Interests" – Congressional Research Service, Updated April 12, 2005 @ <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/47086.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup>. Press-Release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan" 8 July 2002.

the absence of visits or comprehensive statements by higher-ranking officials and the silence of others at the same level, Craner effectively became the main civilian spokesperson on Uzbek affairs and the State Department's mouthpiece for the view that Hiz-ut-Tahrir and other such groups were in fact nothing but "especially pious Muslims."

In August Uzbek Foreign Minister Komilov said of the presence at Khanabad, "the logic of the situation suggests that the United States has come here with a serious purpose, and for a long time."<sup>32</sup>

During his November visit Craner told a press conference, "I ... have had a series of meetings with people from across the spectrum who are concerned about the issue of human rights in Uzbekistan...I met with Prime Minister Sultanov, Foreign Minister Komilov, Justice Minister Polvonzoda, and officials in the Interior Ministry. I also had the opportunity to discuss human rights and freedom issues with groups of Uzbek human rights activists and independent journalists. This afternoon I attended an OSCE-sponsored roundtable on torture. This morning I visited the newly opened offices of the U.S. human rights group Freedom House. And yesterday I participated in the opening ceremony of the Human Rights Clinic at Tashkent State Law Institute, which is funded by my bureau within the State Department. Over the past year, relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan have improved dramatically. We are grateful for the support that Uzbekistan has provided in the war on terror. But the United States will not sacrifice its long-term commitment to protect human rights for short-term political expediency. The U.S. is deeply concerned about human rights in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government has in turn made a commitment to improve human rights, but we see mixed results on the ground, and there is obviously still a long way to go."<sup>33</sup>

On September 20 the State's Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe denied to a Yale University audience that the Bush administration was downplaying human rights and democracy issues in order to ensure security cooperation in Central Asia. Insisting that Central Asian nations "cannot make it to modern statehood without political

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<sup>32</sup>. "Plants footprint in shaky Central Asia," *Washington Post*, 27 August 2002 p. A01.

<sup>33</sup>. Press Statement of Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Press Conference at the Public Affairs Section Tashkent, Uzbekistan November 8, 2002 @ <http://U.S.is.freenet.uz/2002/021112.htm>.

reforms,”<sup>34</sup>) Pascoe favored a gradualist approach. Uzbekistan’s government had “taken modest steps toward reforming its human rights practices....There is still far to go and we will continue to encourage progress.”

Other Bush administration officials also advocated patience. On October 29 Agency for International Development assistant administrator for Europe and Eurasia Kent Hill told a nongovernmental organization (NGO) forum in Washington that while support for the development of civil society and NGOs in Central Asia is “extremely important,” donors should make Central Asian investments in long-term projects “regardless if we see results immediately. We shouldn't be discouraged if results are taking longer than we would like.”<sup>35</sup>

#### *Gulnara Karimova as an Irritant in U.S.-Uzbek Relations*

U.S.-Uzbek relations were also strained by personal issues. On September 13 New Jersey State Superior Court Judge Deanne M. Wilson ordered Karimov’s daughter, Gulnara Karimova-Maqsudi, to return to his jurisdiction with her children, nine year-old son Islam and four year-old daughter Iman for a hearing over a custody dispute, as Karimova was involved in divorce proceedings with her husband, a naturalized Uzbek from Afghanistan named American Mansur Maqsudi.<sup>36</sup> Karimova had abruptly departed the for Uzbekistan with her children on July 29, 2001, the day after Maqsudi asked for a divorce.

Still, U.S.-Uzbek relations were growing, and not only in the military sphere; in 2002 the top firms operating in Uzbekistan were Newmont Mines, Case New Holland, Coca Cola Bottlers Uzbekistan, Chevron-Exxon, and Daimler Chrysler.<sup>37</sup> The *New York Times* reported that the World Bank was prepared to dispense \$1 billion in Central Asia over the next three years.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>. U.S. Department of State, 24 September 2002 @ <http://www.forum.uz/archive/index.php/t-9626.html>.

<sup>35</sup>. “USAID Official Urges Donors to Have Patience with Central Asia,” Washington File 29 October 2002 @ <http://www.forum.uz/archive/index.php/t-9892.html>.

<sup>36</sup>. <http://www.forum.uz/showthread.php?t=9536>.

<sup>37</sup>. <http://216.239.51.104/search?q=cache:4O9XKMqcwPgJ:uzland.uz/bilat/U.S.a.htm+22Assistant+Secretary+of+State+for+South+Asia%22+%22Robin+Raphel%22+Uzbekistan+1997&hl=en&gl=U.S.&ct=clnk&cd=8>.

<sup>38</sup>. “New Allies, the Uzbeks: Mired in the Past,” *New York Times*, 31 May 2002 @ <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/31/international/asia/31UZBE.html>.

*The December 2002 Crisis over Strategic Partnership and Democracy*

In late 2002, several Uzbek diplomats appeared in Washington and asked officials and students of Uzbek affairs whether a review of compliance with the terms of the Strategic Partnership Agreement was planned. These Uzbeks implied clearly that the reformers among the Uzbek government had supported the agreement in the hope that it would bring to bear American influence in the cause of reform in Uzbekistan. Clearly, President Karimov himself had supported the agreement and its astonishing section on democratization; perhaps in the hope that it would enable him to gain stronger leverage over the more recalcitrant parts of his own government. At the time these included many who opposed all measures of reform and maintained close ties with Moscow. Safaev, as a well-regarded former Uzbek ambassador to Washington, was the ideal figure to champion President Karimov's project. Promoted by Karimov, Safaev was pushing hard to save his bold sally.

However, the U.S. side was deaf to the Uzbeks' urgent plea, as its attention was focused narrowly on the War on Terrorism and not on becoming a party to an internal Uzbek struggle over reform. The Uzbek officials went home empty handed and the anniversary of the signing of the agreement passed with no action from Washington. Surprisingly, not one of the offices in the State Department that were later to be so vocal in their criticism of Uzbekistan's internal policies suggested at this key moment that the U.S. should be taking advantage of a unique, if peculiar invitation by the Uzbek side to foster reform in that country.

This proved to be a decisive moment in the overall relationship, in that it marked the moment when those favoring a strong relationship with Washington and reform at home began to lose power in Tashkent. Their opponents could henceforth say, in effect, "See, we told you the Americans' sole concern is with their own immediate goals." They are no more interested in reform than many of U.S. are. You have taken the President and Uzbekistan down a blind alley and humiliated the country in the process. By the end of the year government Freedom Support Act funding to Uzbekistan totaled \$118.2 million.

**2003***Iraq*

On the eve of the assault on Iraq, Uzbekistan offered its unequivocal support, to the point that President Karimov's March 7 statement was posted on the White House's website on March 26, where it remains today.

Karimov said, "We unambiguously support the position of the United States to resolve the Iraqi problem...I believe the has grounds for the stance it has assumed, and therefore radical measures need to be taken," adding that the Iraq operation was a continuation of "efforts to break the back of terrorism."<sup>39</sup>

The next day the White House posted a document on its website enumerating Uzbekistan among the 48 members of the "coalition of the willing."<sup>40</sup> The document noted, "This number is still growing, and it is no accident that many member nations of the Coalition recently escaped from the boot of a tyrant or have felt the scourge of terrorism."

However, the perception in Washington that Uzbekistan was failing to make progress on human rights was beginning to catch up with Tashkent; Congress now attached a condition to the Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 bill, signed into law on February 20, 2003, that prohibited the administration from granting Uzbekistan Freedom Support Act assistance unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that Uzbekistan was making substantial progress in meeting its commitments to democratize and respect human rights. Tashkent could take cold comfort in the fact that the same conditions were applied to Kazakhstan.<sup>41</sup>

*Karimov and the Internal Battle within the Uzbek Government*

Concern about Uzbekistan's shortcomings in the field of human rights also began to emerge in the international area; in March 2003 the U.N.'s Rapporteur on Torture completed a draft report that concluded that police

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<sup>39</sup>. President Islam Karimov, March 7, 2003 "Uzbekistan" @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030326-7.html>.

<sup>40</sup>. "Who are the current coalition members?" 27 March 2003 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030327-10.html>.

<sup>41</sup>. "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for Interests" – Congressional Research Service, Updated April 12, 2005 @ <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/47086.pdf>.

and prison officials in Uzbekistan systematically employed torture and other coercive means to obtain confessions and as punishment.<sup>42</sup> The fact that all these issues were focused in the anti-reform Ministry of Internal Affairs was not noted, if indeed it was known.

Yet during a 2003 meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski, General William Odom, and Frederick Starr, President Karimov had complained openly about forces within his government that “resisted all change.” He stated that he did not have as free a hand in dealing with these forces as his western critics assumed when they accused him of being an “authoritarian.” And on this basis he averred that change would come slowly, or not at all.

But in Western eyes and in the view of Washington, the problem was not with *part* of the Uzbek government but with all of it. Sweeping reformers and hard-core troglodytes into a single bundle, and ascribing to President Karimov a degree of absolute control over the Ministry of Internal Affairs that he may not actually have possessed, they began tightening the screws, in the process undermining whatever pro-reform and pro-western faction may have existed. This was seen as an unfortunate consequence but an inevitable one in light of what appeared to be that faction’s waning influence in Tashkent.

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Just at this moment Tashkent experienced a fresh spate of terrorist attacks. Between March 29-31 a series of bombings and gun-battles in Bukhara and Tashkent left 47 people dead, including 33 alleged terrorists, and more than 30 injured. Tashkent saw these as justifying its concerns over internal security.

Uzbekistan’s western critics, by contrast, had no doubt that these provided further proof that the policies of the Karimov government were fomenting the very terrorism that the U.S. was trying to fight.

In April the U.S. and Uzbekistan convened their second JSCC in Washington to consider the Framework Agreement and its implementation. On April 29 the White House again lauded Uzbekistan’s earlier

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<sup>42</sup>. “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for Interests” – Congressional Research Service, Updated April 12, 2005 @ <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/47086.pdf>.

contributions to the war on terror, noting, “Uzbekistan has helped relieve strategic airlift requirements by leasing IL-76 transport aircraft to coalition members to move forces and equipment into the CENTCOM AOR”<sup>43</sup>

In May and July 2003 Secretary of State Powell reported to Congress that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were both making progress in democratic development, which elicited skepticism from some Congressmen. These findings were in response to conditions imposed by Congress that would prevent assistance to the central governments unless they made progress in human rights, the establishment of a “genuine” multi-party system, free and fair elections, and freedom of expression. These conditions were imposed on an ad hoc basis until they were signed into law on December 8, 2004.

In June Uzbekistan and the Bush administration held bilateral defense consultations in Washington. In August Uzbekistan also received praise for its emigration laws and policies.<sup>44</sup> Later in the month however, President Karimov stated that Uzbekistan would not send troops to Iraq.<sup>45</sup>

On August 1 in the midst of the trial for the March bombings, Tashkent suffered a series of suicide bombings targeting the office of the Prosecutor-General and the Israeli embassy. Two people were killed and nine injured. The “Islamic Holy War Group in Uzbekistan” claimed responsibility for the attacks.

On other contentious issues such as human trafficking Uzbekistan received praise. On September 10 the White House issued a “Presidential Determination Regarding the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for 2003” which listed Uzbekistan among countries that “avoided possible sanctions under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 because of significant steps their governments have taken to fight trafficking in persons.” These governments, in concluded, deserved “recognition for their quick action to

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<sup>43</sup>. International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom 29 April 2003 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/march11/coalitioncontributions.html>;  
<http://www.whiteHouse.gov/march11/coalitioncontributions.html>.

<sup>44</sup>. Presidential Letter To the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate 8 August 2003 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2003/08/20030808-4.html>.

<sup>45</sup>. “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for Interests” – Congressional Research Service, Updated April 12, 2005 @ <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/47086.pdf>.

address problems noted in the Department of State's June 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report.”<sup>46</sup>

In 2003 Uzbekistan also received \$10.7 million from the Coalition Support Fund, which was not subject to certification.

Uzbekistan also took a stand against its Shanghai Cooperation Organization partners, which began to lobby members to limit U.S. access to the Central Asia region.

In November 2003 Georgia's "Rose Revolution" swept out the old post-Soviet regime of President Eduard Shevardnadze. The ousted president promptly accused foreign NGOs of conspiracy in the coup. The Uzbek government watched developments in Tbilisi with unabashed concern, and also took note of Shevardnadze's accusation.

*Tashkent Appeals in Vain for A Renewed (and Extended) Agreement on U.S. Use of the Khanabad Air Base*

In December 2003 Tashkent privately asked Washington to consider a new agreement for the utilization of Khanabad Air Base. Decisive evidence on Tashkent's motivation for this request is lacking. However, it is apparent that President Karimov, unsettled by events in Tbilisi, sought some clearer confirmation of the U.S.' long-term security commitment to Uzbekistan. As one well-placed Uzbek later stated in a conversation in Tashkent, "We were prepared to sign a base agreement for five years, ten, or even fifteen. We needed and wanted clarity."

Was Tashkent also motivated by a desire to transform what had been a rent-free arrangement into one involving payments by Washington? In light of support to the government of Uzbekistan over many years, this does not appear likely.

Focused on its own priorities rather than those of Uzbekistan, the U.S. government replied that it was content with the existing arrangement and was disinclined to consider any changes. The Karimov government was stung by this response and chose to view it as implying an unwillingness by

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<sup>46</sup>. Presidential Determination Regarding the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for 2003 10 September 2003 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030910-2.html>.

Washington to make the kind of commitment to Tashkent that Tashkent had made to Washington.

Nonetheless, those forces in Tashkent that had championed the strategic alignment with the U.S. persisted. Indeed, over the course of 2004 and the first months of 2005, the government of Uzbekistan sent no fewer than six letters to the Department of State, each of them seeking to raise the same issue and each of them including a draft agreement for discussion.

All of these letters were duly acknowledged by Washington but without eliciting a substantive response from the U.S. government. The requests and proposals they contained were neither accepted nor rejected. For all practical purpose, the Uzbeks received no response at all.

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## **2004**

*State Finds Uzbekistan's Record Wanting; NSC and the White House Demur.*

2004 began on a sour note for Tashkent. On January 9 the State Department declared that the Uzbek government failed to make progress towards international human rights standards.<sup>47</sup> The policy review that gave rise to this was required under the terms of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program. State's finding was reached first by Lorne Craner, who by now had visited Uzbekistan more often than any other country during his tenure. The office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (which Craner headed) reached its negative conclusion mainly on the basis of published reports issued by NGOs. The much more positive statements issued by the American embassy in Tashkent some months later (see below, June 2004) suggests that the embassy's input may have been more positive, but was overridden in Washington. There is no evidence that the State Department's conclusion was informed by any other independent analyses or by studies by the CIA. This finding and recommendation was then passed up to, and approved by, Secretary of State Powell without comment.

Despite the finding from his own Secretary of State, President Bush waived the human rights certification provision, noting bluntly that the "Republic of

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<sup>47</sup>. "U.S. Gives Uzbekistan Failing Grade on Rights," *Washington Post*, January 11, 2004, Page A18. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A6617-2004Jan10?language=printer>.

Uzbekistan is important to the national security interests of the United States.” This judgment obviously came not from the State Department but from the National Security Council or another source.

On March 24 National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice made a revealing observation about Uzbekistan’s value to the United States. Rice was asked about a January 25, 2001, memo by Clinton’s terrorism advisor to the National Security Council Richard A. Clarke.<sup>48</sup> Clarke had urged the Administration to give counterterrorism aid to Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance and to Uzbekistan.

Rice replied that “all the recommendations relate to Afghanistan...The counterterrorism support for Uzbekistan -it's all related to Afghanistan.”<sup>49</sup>

Two days later Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld reported with pride to the 9-11 Commission that, “The United States brought together countries like Pakistan, India, Uzbekistan, and Oman into this coalition.”<sup>50</sup>

On March 29 the White House issued a statement condemning the most recent terrorist attack in Uzbekistan, noting that, “terrorists respect no religious, cultural, or geographic boundaries. The United States extends its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to all citizens of Uzbekistan. These attacks only strengthen our resolve to defeat terrorists wherever they hide and strike, working in close cooperation with Uzbekistan and our other partners in the global war on terror.”<sup>51</sup>

Four days later, however, White House spokesman Scott McClellan, when asked if the disturbances were local or larger in nature replied that the question, “...would probably be best addressed to Uzbekistan.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB147/clarke%20memo.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup>. Interview of the National Security Advisor by a Roundtable of Wire and Print Journalists 24 March 2004 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2004/03/20040324-2.html>.

<sup>50</sup>. Global Message - From remarks by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in testimony before the 9/11 Commission 26 March 2004 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2004/03/20040326-3.html>.

<sup>51</sup>. “President Denounces Terror in Uzbekistan” 28 March 2004 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2004/03/20040329-10.html>.

<sup>52</sup>. Press Gaggle with Scott McClellan, Marshall Community and Technical College Huntington, West Virginia 2 april 2004 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040402-3.html#2>.

Later in January Washington expressed concern over Uzbekistan's new requirement that all international non-governmental organizations register with the Justice Ministry. At this time President Karimov wrote to President Bush requesting economic assistance, but initially received no reply, only to be told later in the year that no further assistance would be forthcoming.

In February the Uzbek government hosted delegates from neighboring Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to hammer out a final draft of a Treaty on a Nuclear-Free Zone in Central Asia, first proposed by President Karimov at the United Nations eleven years earlier.<sup>53</sup> The United Nations sent a delegation headed by the director of the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in the Asia-Pacific Region.

In June 2004 the U.S. embassy in Tashkent reported on its website a more positive view of the state of democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan than had been reached by the State Department. "Although no independent political parties were registered by year's end (2003), with the assistance of the U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI), opposition parties were able to conduct grass-roots activities and convene organizing congresses. Local human rights advocacy and monitoring groups operate in cooperation with international human rights organizations such as U.S.-funded Freedom House. Following the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Government drafted an Action Plan to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations."<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, back in Washington the State Department issued its "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004." Drafted by Lorne Craner's office, these reports for the first time grouped Uzbekistan with Turkmenistan as the most repressive states in Central Asia, even while rebuking Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic for limiting freedom of

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<sup>53</sup>. *Jane's Intelligence Watch Report* 08-Feb-2005 02:19:20

Volume/Issue: 12/028 @

[http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/mags/iwr/history/iwr2005/iv12no28a.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod\\_Name=IWR&](http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/mags/iwr/history/iwr2005/iv12no28a.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=IWR&)

<sup>54</sup>. "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The Record 2003-2004" @

<http://216.239.51.104/search?q=cache:sFPzISFWfw8J:www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx%3F%26%3D%26mid%3D387%26lid%3D1+%22Lorne+Craner%22+Tashkent+2002++June+November+three&hl=en&gl=U.S.&ct=clnk&cd=2.>

expression and other civic rights which they had honored during the previous decade.<sup>55</sup>

The U.S. penal facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, began to receive Uzbek detainees in 2004. UPI on Feb. 4 listed two unidentified Uzbek citizens at Guantanamo.<sup>56</sup> As of May 2004 six Uzbek citizens were there.<sup>57</sup>

In July the U.S.AID slashed 2004 U.S. assistance to Uzbekistan by \$18 million, but the following month the White House raised the resulting \$39 million dollar package to \$60 million, specifically to assist Uzbekistan in fighting the threat of the proliferation of biological weapons.

Uzbekistan briefly emerged as a topic in the 2004 Vice-presidential campaign. During an August 12 stump speech in Ohio Vice President Dick Cheney included Uzbekistan as an ally in the U.S.-led “global war on terror.”<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, the Department of Defense continued its cooperation with Uzbekistan under its International Counter-Proliferation program. On Oct. 30 and Uzbek forces began a seven-day integrated exercise in Uzbekistan to improve coordination between Uzbek agencies responding to a simulated incident involving weapons of mass destruction. Seventy-five officers from Uzbekistan’s General Prosecutor’s Office, Ministries of Defense, Internal Affairs, Emergency Situations and Health, State Customs Committee, Committee on State Border Protection, and Institute of Nuclear Physics participated in the simulation, drawn up by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Homeland Security.<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding the outspoken position taken earlier by the Department of State, the rest of the U.S. government remained muted in its criticism of that

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<sup>55</sup>. “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for Interests” – Congressional Research Service, Updated April 12, 2005 @ <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/47086.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup>. “Revealed: the nationalities of Guantanamo” UPI 4 Feb. 2004 @ <http://www.upi.com/inc/view.php?StoryID=20040204-051623-5923r>.

<sup>57</sup>. “The Most Comprehensive Detainee List On The Web” @ <http://www.cageprisoners.com/page.php?id=10>.

<sup>58</sup>. “VP’s Remarks in Dayton, Ohio” 12 August 2004 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040812-3.html>.

<sup>59</sup>. “Uzbek Security Officials Complete WMD Integrated Exercise Sponsored by the Embassy,” Embassy in Uzbekistan press release, 5 November 2004, <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&mid=283&overview=1024>.

country's human rights policies. Nonetheless, strains were developing over the continuing Use of Khanabad airbase. In November the U.S. finally consented to initial talks on a new agreement for the facility, but would not discuss financial compensation. Instead the Pentagon began an effort to provide a new runway in lieu of any direct payment.

Despite disagreements earlier in the year, 2004 ended on an upbeat note for U.S.-Uzbek relations. President George W. Bush in a Dec. 14 memorandum waived restrictions placed on nonproliferation aid to Uzbekistan under the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program.<sup>60</sup> Confirming his earlier position, Bush said the waiver of Cooperative Threat Reduction assistance restrictions on aid to Uzbekistan was "important to the national security interests of the United States."

The intent of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program was to confirm that former Soviet states were making good faith efforts to destroy WMDs. However, Congress had placed additional constraints on the program requiring participating nations to observe internationally recognized human rights, including the protection of minorities.

Bush's decision met with muffled criticism from State Department officials who, speaking off the record, complained vehemently that Uzbekistan had failed to meet the CTR human rights requirement for the second year in a row. These criticisms were especially audible from the bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and the Central Asia desk. Despite such unofficial grumbling, other officials, also speaking off the record, made known that Uzbekistan was set to receive CTR funding in the "low tens of millions" of dollars in fiscal year 2005, and that Washington was engaged in an "ongoing dialogue" with Uzbekistan on human rights.

By January, 2005, in Termez U.S. ambassador Jon Purnell presented two 65-foot patrol boats worth \$5.6 million to Uzbekistan's Committee for State Border Protection, a division of the National Security Service. The craft were to patrol Uzbekistan's Amu Darya river border with Afghanistan to interdict illegal drug trafficking.<sup>61</sup> The boats were provided to Uzbekistan under the Department of State-funded Aviation/Interdiction Project.

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<sup>60</sup>. "Bush Waives Restrictions on Non-Proliferation Support for Uzbekistan,"

[http://www.nti.org/d\\_newswire/issues/2004\\_12\\_20.html#578881E1](http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2004_12_20.html#578881E1).

<sup>61</sup>. [http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jnc/jnc\\_9366.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=h](http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jnc/jnc_9366.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Uzbekistan&backPath=h)

During the following month Uzbekistan's State Customs Committee, Committee for State Border Protection, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Emergency Situations received \$749,539 of donated U.S. equipment, including radiation detectors, Geiger counters, acoustic signature" systems, density meters, handheld metal detectors, and night-vision binoculars. These were provided under the State Department's Export Control and Related Border Security program. Since its inception in April, 2000, the EXBS program gave Tashkent some \$12 million in equipment and training.<sup>62</sup>

### *Rendition*

Even before the events in Andijan, to be discussed shortly, trouble was brewing for U.S.-Uzbek relations. The new focus was the CIA's controversial program of "rendition," whereby it dispatched terror suspects to countries that were thought to be less squeamish about human rights violations. On March 6 the CBS investigative program "60 Minutes" aired "CIA Flying Suspects to Torture?" Correspondent Scott Pelley reported, "There's another destination that 60 Minutes noticed frequently in the plane's flight logs: Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, a predominately Muslim country, with a reputation for torture." Pelley then quoted former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, who claimed that, "I know of two instances for certain of prisoners who were brought back in a small jet, and I believe it was happening on a reasonably regular basis."<sup>63</sup>

CBS's report reverberated through a White House press briefing the following day, when an unidentified journalist entered into a prolonged exchange with White House Press spokesman Scott McClellan. The reporter asked "What is it that the Uzbekis (sic.) can do in interrogations that the

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[http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod\\_Name=JNC&](http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JNC&)

[http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Uzbekistan/index\\_5471.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Uzbekistan/index_5471.html).

<sup>62</sup>. "United States Presents Radiation Detection and Other Equipment to the Agencies of the Government of Uzbekistan," 15 February 2005,

<http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&mid=429&overview=1115>.

<sup>63</sup>. "CIA Flying Suspects To Torture?" @

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/04/60minutes/main678155.shtml>.

United States of America can't do? “ McClellan sidestepped repeatedly, on the grounds that he was not prepared to address issues of a classified nature.”<sup>64</sup>

On March 17 the issue was again raised at a White House press conference, this time by Elisabeth Bumiller of the *New York Times*. Unlike McClellan, the President responded with a general but firm assertion that “We seek assurances that nobody will be tortured when we render a person back to their home country.”<sup>65</sup>

### *Craig Murray*

Craig Murray was appointed British ambassador to Uzbekistan in August 2002 and fired on October 15 2004 for what the Foreign Office labeled “operational reasons.”<sup>66</sup> Murray courted controversy from the moment of his arrival, but for the first year and a half criticism focused on his personal conduct. Criticism of his behavior came mainly from the Uzbek government, but American Peace Corps workers in the town of Dzhizak reported grossly inappropriate conduct on Murray's part as well. Similar reports proliferated, and led to several complaints to Westminster from the government of Uzbekistan. Then they were aired in the Uzbek press.

Murray responded to these attacks with increasingly sharp counter-attacks against the Uzbek government for its human rights violations. His own government chastised him for unprofessional conduct, but what led to his dismissal was the publication in the *Financial Times* of a confidential document in which Murray maintained that Uzbek officials abused prisoners to extract information which was then Used by MI6 and passed on to the CIA.<sup>67</sup>

After the British Foreign Minister fired him, Murray devoted himself to embarrassing both his own government and the government of Uzbekistan. His website (<http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/>) regularly featured confidential British documents that he published in violation of the Official Secrets Act. Notwithstanding his dubious past and the highly personal

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<sup>64</sup>. “Press Briefing by Scott McClellan” 7 March 2005 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050307-2.html>.

<sup>65</sup>. “President's Press Conference” 16 March 2005 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050316-3.html>.

<sup>66</sup>. “UK ambassador is withdrawn from Uzbekistan” *Independent* 15 October 2004.

<sup>67</sup>. “‘Torture intelligence’ criticised” *BBC News* 11 October 2004 @ [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/3732488.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3732488.stm).

nature of his vendetta, Murray became an oft-cited source of information, and could henceforth be counted on for the most scathing attacks both on Uzbekistan for alleged human rights violations and on the Blair government for cooperating with the United States.

## 2005

### *More "Color" Revolutions*

The overthrow of the Kyrgyz government of President Askar Akayev on March 24 sent shock waves throughout Central Asia. Many local rulers saw the covert hand of U.S.-funded NGOs behind the unrest in Bishkek. It was noted, for example, that Freedom House, with partial government funding, had established a printing press in Bishkek that produced 60 opposition journals. Following Akayev's hurried departure after 15 years in power, Freedom House's Bishkek project director Mike Stone said simply, "Mission accomplished."<sup>68</sup>

In April Tashkent limited the U.S. to 4 C-17 sorties per day. Ambassador Purnell acknowledged that the "U.S...made detailed plans and received funding authorization from Congress for building a new runway at the (K-2) base to replace the 50-year-old Soviet runway that was visibly cracking."<sup>69</sup> During April and May the two countries met over final negotiations on Khanabad's status. Both sides prepared to reconvene in two weeks. Meanwhile, the tragedy in Andijan intervened and they never met.

### *Andijan, 13 May*

The first public intimation of trouble in Andijan came from the State Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council, which on May 13 issued the first of two Wardens' Messages to citizens. The first led with a message about an aborted suicide attack on the Israeli embassy: "Embassy Tashkent has confirmed that a suicide bomber was shot outside of the Israeli Embassy this morning (May 13). The Government has received reports of gunfire and possible explosions in the city of Andijan. BBC is reporting that a group of

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<sup>68</sup>. UPI Hears 9 May 2005 @ <http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20050509-121755-2865r.htm>.

<sup>69</sup>. Jon R. Purnell, "U.S.-Uzbek Relations" *The Ambassadors Review* Fall 2005 p.38.

armed men took over the prison and released prisoners...Travelers should avoid traveling to Andijan at this time.<sup>70</sup>

Later the same day the U.S. embassy in Tashkent issued a second Warden Message noting, "Embassy Tashkent has confirmed with the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that no one will be allowed to enter or exit the city of Andijan for the time being."<sup>71</sup>

In Washington, during a May 13 press briefing Scott McClellan was asked, "On Uzbekistan, do you have any reaction to what is going on over there, on the crisis? And have there been any high-level contacts since this erupted?" McClellan replied, "We have had concerns about human rights in Uzbekistan, but we are concerned about the outbreak of violence, particularly by some members of a terrorist organization that were freed from prison. And we urge both the government and the demonstrators to exercise restraint at this time. The people of Uzbekistan want to see a more representative and democratic government, but that should come through peaceful means, not through violence."<sup>72</sup> Ambassador Purnell reported meanwhile that, "the Uzbeks imposed a ban on all night flights in and out of the (K-2) base."<sup>73</sup>

Five days after the events in Andijan the White House press briefings got more heated. In the most extensive questioning to date, White House press secretary Scott McClellan had the following exchange on May 18, apparently with "Terry" Moran of ABC.

Question - "Scott, the President of Uzbekistan has now admitted that his government killed upwards of 170 of its citizens, some anti-government protestors, some escaped prisoners, apparently. Opposition groups say the figure could have been far, far higher. What's the President's view of this situation?"

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<sup>70</sup>. [http://Warden Message: Suicide Bomber Shot Outside Israeli Embassy, Violence in Andijan Consular Affairs Bulletins South / Central Asia - Uzbekistan 13 May 2005 www.ds-osac.org/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=28926&print&print&print](http://www.ds-osac.org/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=28926&print&print&print) <http://www.ds-osac.org/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=28926&print&print&print>.

<sup>71</sup>. "Warden Message: No Entrance or Exit to Andijan Permitted, Consular Affairs Bulletins, South / Central Asia - Uzbekistan, 13 May 2005 @ <http://www.ds-osac.org/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=28954&print&print&print&print>.

<sup>72</sup>. "Press Briefing by Scott McClellan" 13 May 2005 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050513-3.html#g>.

<sup>73</sup>. Jon R. Purnell, "U.S.-Uzbek Relations" *The Ambassadors Review* Fall 2005 p. 39.

McClellan - "We were deeply disturbed by the reports that authorities had fired on demonstrators last Friday, and we expressed our condemnation about the indiscriminate Use of force against unarmed civilians...But we've also called on people to reject those who would try to incite violence, as well. We've urged the government, as well, to allow humanitarian organizations, like the International Committee for the Red Cross, to have access to the region so that they can gather facts and help take care of people that need help...We've laid out the facts as we know them about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. We would like to see a more open and responsive government. But the way to achieve that is not through violence; it's through peaceful means."

Question - "He [Pres. Karimov] is clearly a dictator by any definition of that word. And I wonder if you could respond to the concerns that many people have that this administration is going easy on him because he is necessary in the war on terrorism, in part because the United States has rendered certain detainees into his country and..."

McClellan - "I just did."<sup>74</sup>

#### *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*

Throughout 2004 the international Islamist organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir had been the subject of debate in Washington. One side, led by Human Rights Watch, claimed it to be a peaceful organization of "especially pious Muslims" who gained support only because the government oppressed them. The other side, far less vocal, argued that this is a radical, anti-democratic, anti-Western, and anti-Semitic group of Islamists that intended to use elections only to destroy existing secular regimes and replace them with theocratic rule.

After Andijan Hizb-ut-Tahrir quickly moved to exploit the events. On 25 May its website reported "from credible and trustworthy sources" that 7,000 had died in Andijan. Another related Hizb-ut-Tahrir website, the "1924 Organization," further inflated Andijan casualty figures, claiming that 10,000 to 20,000 were killed.

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<sup>74</sup>. "Press Briefing by Scott McClellan" 18 May 2005 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050518-1.html#d>.

Andijan now became a political football. On May 29 Republican Arizona Senator John McCain, Republican South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, and New Hampshire's Republican Senator John Sununu traveled to Uzbekistan on a self-appointed fact-finding mission. No high-ranking Uzbek government officials would meet with them.

After meeting opposition groups and alleged Andijan witnesses the trio held a press conference. McCain immediately established a strident tone saying, "We find the recent events to be shocking but not unexpected in a country that does not allow the exercise of human rights and democracy. We believe there should be a complete investigation conducted by the OSCE and I believe that the United States must make this government understand that the relationship is very difficult, if not impossible, if a government continues to repress its people."<sup>75</sup>

Furthering the confrontational posture, when a correspondent from Russia's RIA Novosti offered that "actually the large part of the Uzbek population considers that action of Uzbek government was to stop that terrorist act was right" and asked what the appropriate action for the Uzbek government would be in light of the situation McCain replied, "Allow registration of political parties, cease the economic repression of the people, allow free media to function, and don't go the way where the Russians are."

The BBC reported, the Uzbek government's figure of 180 deaths, including those killed by the insurgents.<sup>76</sup> Most Western news agencies went with more lurid figures. Accounts attempting an objective assessment of the tragedy were largely overlooked.<sup>77</sup>

On May 31 during a press conference in the Rose Garden the Washington Post's Jim VandeHei asked Bush, "...how come you have not spoken out about the violent crackdown in Uzbekistan, which is an ally in the war on terror...". Bush replied, that "we've called for the International Red Cross to

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<sup>75</sup>. <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&mid=429&overview=1200>.

<sup>76</sup>. "Timeline: Uzbekistan - A chronology of key events" @ [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country\\_profiles/1295881.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1295881.stm).

<sup>77</sup>. Dr. Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: an Independent Assessment*, Washington and Uppsala: Silk Road Paper, July 2005 (<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/0507Akiner.pdf>); Dr. John C. K. Daly, "Events in Andijan: Anything but Black and White, *ISN Security Watch* (08/06/05) @ <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=12067>.

go into the Andijan region to determine what went on, and we expect all our friends, as well as those who aren't our friends, to honor human rights and protect minority rights.”<sup>78</sup>

While for the moment criticism of the events in Andijan remained muted, European Union critics were out in full force. These included Britain's Foreign Minister Jack Straw, who flew to Washington for talks with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice four days after the events in Andijan. Straw told reporters that the Andijan events "plainly cannot be justified" and demanded that aid agencies, diplomats and journalists be allowed access to the area.<sup>79</sup>

In May Uzbekistan canceled all C-17 sorties and limited C-130 sorties from Khanabad. Andijan also reverberated in far-off Guantanamo. On June 11 the Boston Globe reported that the Bush administration decided not to repatriate three Uzbek prisoners deemed eligible for release from Camp Delta because of events in Andijan. A senior official involved in arranging the transfer and release of detainees said, "Any plan to move them is on hold." A second official said that of the three unidentified Uzbeks declared eligible for release, one was among 38 detainees determined not to be enemy combatants, while the other two were considered former fighters who no longer posed a threat.<sup>80</sup> Two months later the Washington Post reported that the Bush administration was attempting to persuade a European country to accept at least fifteen Chinese Uyghurs and two Uzbeks slated for release, but who Washington now no longer wanted to return to their home countries for fear they might be abused or tortured.<sup>81</sup>

On June 14, a month after events in Andijan, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack fielded 17 questions related to the events there.<sup>82</sup> In reply to a query from the Associated Press's Chief State Department correspondent Barry Schweid about possible administration conflicts over Andijan McCormack said the government spoke with one voice, and was

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<sup>78</sup>. "President's Press Conference" 31 May 2005 @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050531.html>.

<sup>79</sup>. "Straw visits U.S. amid Uzbek crisis" BBC News 17 May 2005 @ [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/4553937.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4553937.stm).

<sup>80</sup>. "Repatriation of Uzbeks from Guantanamo halted," Boston Globe 11 June 2005.

<sup>81</sup>. "Administration Close to Reaching Agreements With 10 Muslim Governments," Washington Post 9 Aug 2005.

<sup>82</sup>. State Department transcript (12:50 p.m. EDT, June 14, 2005) @ <http://www.forum.uz/showthread.php?t=22453>.

demanding an international enquiry into what happened in Andijan. He added that, “we believe that our strategic objectives and our democracy objectives are indivisible in this regard.”

When asked about the State Department’s failure categorically to condemn the events McCormack answered, “Well, there are two separate things that we are talking about here. First of all, there was the attack on the prison, which there is nothing that justifies the attack on the prison. We have condemned that. There was loss of life with respect to the attack on the prison. Then following that, there were actions taken in which we have credible reports and which you allude to, that innocent civilians in the hundreds have lost their lives. And we have condemned those actions as well. That condemnation is based on credible reports that we have that innocent civilians were killed in the aftermath.”

#### *How Many Perished in Andijan, and At Whose Hands?*

Scathing reports about the events in Andijan proliferated. On June 7 Human Rights Watch issued its “‘Bullets Were Falling Like Rain’ The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005,” asserting that the death toll was “hundreds... Eyewitnesses told us that about 300-400 people were present at the worst shooting incident, which left few survivors.”<sup>83</sup> Amnesty International also alleged that hundreds died in Andijan,<sup>84</sup> while a *New York Times* investigator claimed the death toll was 350. Most Western accounts overlooked the fact that the night preceding the events saw insurgents shortly after midnight attack a police post, killing officers and seizing submachine guns, grenades, and pistols from the post’s weapons depot and subsequently assaulting a military base, shooting five servicemen, acquiring more weapons, after which they stormed Andijan’s central prison and released hundreds of high security prisoners.

Given that selected congressmen, senators and policy makers all have the right to demand a “product” from the CIA, one must assume that CIA developed an estimate of the numbers of those who perished in Andijan, and at whose hands the deaths occurred. However, three weeks after the event a CIA staff member reported informally that no report had yet been issued. If

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<sup>83</sup>. “‘Bullets Were Falling Like Rain’ The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005 @ <http://hrw.org/reports/2005/uzbekistano605/>.

<sup>84</sup>. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR620282005?open&of=ENG-UZB>.

and when it was, CIA did not choose to release it. In the absence of an exhaustive study, figures ranging upward to 2,000 were regularly bandied about in the press. The only rigorous attempt to answer these question was made by Professor Shirin Akiner, a highly regarded Uzbek-speaking scholar of Muslim Indian background based in London. Her estimate, developed in the course of a visit to Andijan shortly after the events, was close to the Uzbek government's figure of 180. Later, the respected Russian human rights organization Memorial issued a report with the same figure. Akiner also pointed out that several score of those who perished, including many released prisoners who refused to join the insurgents, had been killed by the insurgents themselves. Former British Ambassador Craig Murray proceeded to denounce Akiner and to seek for her to be fired from her academic post. Subsequent reports by Human Rights Watch and others proposed much higher figures, but without providing any rigorous documentation beyond anonymous reports by "eye witnesses."

It is worth noting that many in the U.S. government (including, notably, the Central Asia-Caucasus desk, whose chief officer frequently surprised Washington interlocutors by referring to Andijan as "Uzbekistan's Tiananmen Square"), seems to have accepted the higher figures. Moreover, they largely ignored the fact that the insurgents had killed scores themselves, that they had attacked a high-security prison with machine guns, and had used prisoners and by-standers as human shields.

#### *Were U.S. Trained Forces Responsible for the Crackdown?*

When pressed if there was "some confusion in the Defense Department about what that policy was?" a Pentagon spokesman replied that, "the Defense Department... has issued the same request to the government of Uzbekistan as the State Department and other administration officials, that we want a credible, independent investigation into the Andijan events."<sup>85</sup>

At almost the same time the Washington Post reported that and Russian defense officials the previous week had blocked demands at a NATO defense ministers' conference in Brussels to include language calling for an

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<sup>85</sup>. "Press Gaggle by Trent Duffy," Private Residence, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 14 June 2005 @ <http://www.whiteHouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050614.html>.

independent investigation into Andijan.<sup>86</sup> In fairness, it should be noted that this occurred in the context of a NATO meeting regarding the future of Partnership for Peace activities. There was consensus that a PFP document was an inappropriate venue for raising such a politically charged issue.

Four days later the *New York Times* published an explosive article citing government officials and Congressional records to argue that Uzbek security forces at Andijan had for years received training and equipment from counterterrorism programs.<sup>87</sup> The report noted that “hundreds” of Uzbek Special Forces and security officers received U.S. training. The newspaper reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, headed Col. Gen. Zakirdzhon Almatov, who was present in Andijan on May 13 along with President Karimov, coordinated the actions of Uzbek forces, including the elite Bars (Snow Leopard) and Skorpion counter-terrorism units.

In 2004, according to the State Department, among the eighteen Uzbek security officers trained in a Crisis Response Team-Tactical Commander course sponsored by the State Department for crisis-response commanders in Louisiana were two or three Bars members. The previous year under a \$2.2 million United States' Anti-Terrorism Assistance program 150 Uzbek security officers were trained, including twelve Uzbek security officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutor's office who received “anti-terrorism instructor training” in New Mexico.

What the *Times* and other U.S. papers failed to note is that the scale of U.S. and NATO cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs was extremely limited, especially in comparison with its major commitment to reform in the Ministry of Defense under its capable and reform-minded minister, Ghulamov, one of those most directly responsible for the draft “Strategic Partnership” document, with its passages promoting democratization in Uzbekistan. Contact with NATO and the U.S. was obviously a powerful engine for reform in the military. One might therefore reasonably regret that the U.S. did not have more contact with the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well. But the U.S. embassy in Tashkent, backed by human rights groups, generally opposed all contact with that Ministry on the grounds that it was as yet unreformed, which, of course, was true.

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<sup>86</sup>. “U.S. Opposed Call at NATO for Probe of Uzbek Killings,” *Washington Post*, 14 June 2005 p. A 15.

<sup>87</sup>. *New York Times*, 18 June 2005 @ <http://uzland.info/2005/june/19/05.htm>.

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The fall off of official visits to Uzbekistan in the wake of Andijan was dramatic – while in 2004 there had been 12 official delegations, in 2005 there were only two, both after Andijan, including McCain’s hectoring visit.<sup>88</sup>

*Was the U.S. in Contact with the IMU?*

The White House continued to make conciliatory remarks about Uzbekistan. In a June 29 interview with Britain’s ITV President Bush affirmed that, “There is no question we have an American base [in Uzbekistan]. They’ve been very helpful in helping fight the war on terror. On the other hand, we are sending very clear messages that we expect minority rights to be honored, that people ought to be allowed to express themselves in the public square without fear of reprisal from the government.”<sup>89</sup>

Notwithstanding these assertions, there were widely publicized claims at the time that the U.S. was in contact with the IMU leader Tahir Yuldashev. In light of the fact that Yuldashev led the organization that had perpetuated several terrorist bombings in Tashkent and elsewhere in Uzbekistan, that he had been in close contact with Bin Laden himself, and that the Tashkent government considered him to be Uzbekistan’s chief security threat, these claims are of considerable importance. Even if the allegations are groundless or were a deliberate act of misinformation, as appears likely, it is certain that the Uzbek government was convinced there were true and that those in Tashkent who had always opposed the strategic partnership with the United States used them effectively against the pro- faction in Tashkent.

On 23 January 2005 Deutsche Welle published an article in Russian in its “Focus” program entitled “IMU in Kabul?” by Ahhmed Durani, Oraz Saryev and V. Volkov.<sup>(90)</sup> The article claimed that IMU leader Tahir Yuldashev, with U.S. and Pakistani assistance, had recently arrived in Kabul, for the

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<sup>88</sup>. Embassy, Tashkent, “Official visits 1997-2005” @ <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&=&lid=1&mid=327>.

<sup>89</sup>. “Interview of the President by ITV, United Kingdom” @ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050629-12.html>.

<sup>90</sup>. “IDU v Kabul?” “Fokus” 23 January 2005 @ <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1467158,00.html>.

purpose of planning attacks on Russian military targets in the region in order to hasten their withdrawal from Central Asia.

Representatives of the Afghanistan's Defense and Interior Ministries emphatically denied Durani's account, as did for the Pakistani Army spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan. Deutsche Welle never withdrew them while the U.S. did not respond.

#### *The U.S.-E.U. Demand for an Investigative Commission and Tashkent's Response*

As early as June 10, 2005, the Uzbek government indicated its willingness to cooperate with both the UN and OSCE. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release affirmed that UN and OSCE missions and all overseas embassies accredited in Tashkent were all welcome to acquaint themselves with the situation in Andijan-city and to have direct meetings with the local population."<sup>91</sup> The U.S. and E.U. rebuffed this offer since it fell short of the "independent investigation" they both insisted upon.

Tashkent, meanwhile, had established its own international investigative group on Andijan. Participating countries included Russia, China, India, Pakistan and all the other former Soviet states of Central Asia. It invited the U.S. to send a representative but the U.S. refused. Ten days after the events in Andijan Uzbekistan's Parliament resolved to create an "independent commission" of its own to investigate the Andijan events.<sup>92</sup>

Why did the Uzbek government refuse to set up the commission demanded by the U.S. and EU and then proceed to set up one of its own? A year earlier, the family of one Andrei Shelkovenko was convinced that their son had been killed under torture while detained by the Uzbek police. Human Rights Watch announced this as a case of government-sponsored torture-no qualifications. Its Tashkent staff was so convinced of its claims that they actually hid the body in their apartment to protect the evidence, a grossly illegal act. Freedom House, meanwhile, approached the Ministry of Internal Affairs with a proposal to establish an international investigative commission. Surprisingly, the Ministry agreed, and a highly qualified team

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<sup>91</sup>. Press-Release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan" 10 June 2005.

<sup>92</sup>. "Resolution of the Legislative chamber of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Creation of Independent Commission of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Investigation of Events that Took Place in Andijan" 1 June 2006 press release, Uzbek embassy in Brussels.

was assembled, including the top forensic expert from the Ottawa Provincial Government and three-time U.S. ambassador, Victor Jackovitch.

The commission was given full access to the evidence. In the end it concluded that there was no evidence of torture and concluded that the death was caused by hanging, i.e., suicide, as the government had declared. When this was announced, the Uzbek activists who had peddled the case to human rights monitors then proceeded to attack the findings of the Forensic Pathologist of the Province of Ontario and other experts who concurred in this finding. Meanwhile, western and especially U.S. newspapers that had widely publicized the initial accusations against Uzbekistan were silent on the commission's findings. Nor did the Department of State issue a statement correcting its earlier and scathing announcements on the subject.

#### *Opening the Door to Moscow*

On 29 June President Karimov traveled to Moscow, where he was warmly received. Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov backed Karimov on Andijan, arguing that the attacks on police and jail installations there had been organized from abroad, and that it was "absurd" to claim that those killed were innocent bystanders. Ivanov and Karimov announced joint Russian-Uzbek military exercises.

#### *The Final Break*

Frustrated by the State Department's non-response to its six earlier letters, angered by what seemed to be a relentless campaign in the West to break off relations with Uzbekistan rather than engage with it, and irritated by the growing western insistence on an international investigation that met U.S.-E.U. specifications, on July 29 Tashkent informed Washington that it was abrogating the agreement permitting the military to use the Khanabad airbase. Under the terms of the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Tashkent gave the Pentagon 180 days to end its activities there. Tashkent stated that, "the U.S. practically has not made any payments to cover the extra costs incurred by the Uzbek side to ensure the security of the Khanabad airfield, establish and exploit the needed infrastructure; nor has it

compensated Uzbekistan for the environmental damage occurring there, and for the discomfort to the local population.”<sup>93</sup>

Chief Pentagon spokesman Lawrence DiRita took pains to minimize the damage caused by the Uzbeks’ action. “We will work through this, and we will work through it probably with a range of things. We have developed a number of [other] important relations in that part of the world over the past few years and that’s important to remember.”<sup>94</sup>

While the Pentagon put a brave face on the directive, the loss of the Army’s, Camp Stronghold Freedom logistics base just 60 miles from Afghanistan, was in reality a significant blow, as the 416th Air Expeditionary Group averaged 200 passengers and 100 tons of cargo per day on C-130H missions supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. A Washington Post report stated that, “scores of flights have Used K2 monthly.”<sup>95</sup> Military spokesman Col. James Yonts said of the eviction, “our ability to execute combat operations...will not be hindered by this decision,” adding that assets would be shifted to Use air bases at Bagram, Kandahar and Manas in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>96</sup> The announcement came four days before Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns was due to arrive in Tashkent to pressure the government to allow an international investigation into Andijan.

Moreover, Frederick Starr, visiting K-2 the previous summer, had been informed by local U.S. officers that efforts were underway to transform the facility into a long-term base.

U.S.-Uzbek relations were further strained by the State Department’s efforts to evacuate more than 400 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan, where they had fled after Andijan. On August 1 the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that “Foreign forces showed an ‘unprecedented pressure’ on the leadership and law-enforcement organs of the country (Kyrgyzstan), in particular on the issue of extradition of persons under investigation...”

By October State Department relations with Uzbekistan were sufficiently tense that Rice decided to leave Uzbekistan off the itinerary of her Central

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<sup>93</sup>. Press-Release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 8 July 2005.

<sup>94</sup>. “ Still Mulling Loss of air Base in Uzbekistan,” *Agence France Presse*, 1 August 2005.

<sup>95</sup>. evicted from air Base in Uzbekistan,” *Washington Post*, 30 July 2005 p. A01.

<sup>96</sup>. “Russia says Uzbekistan rightly ended U.S. military base accord”, *Pakistan Daily Times*, 2 August 2005 @ [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_2-8-2005\\_pg4\\_19](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_2-8-2005_pg4_19).

Asian trip.<sup>97</sup> On Oct. 8 Assistant Secretary of State for European and Central Asian affairs Daniel Fried said that the decision for Rice to bypass Uzbekistan on the first visit by a Secretary of State to the region in nearly four years, was “not a close call” and a “wise decision.”

Fried, who visited Uzbekistan during a regional trip in September, told reporters, “We were very troubled by Andijan, and not simply the events themselves, but the reaction...Pressure on NGO's, curtailment of exchange programs, a general climate of fear in the country which I did not find in any other country I went to. These are very troubling.”

Then, answering a question not asked, Fried offered a judgment which, within months, was to be proven remarkably naïve: “We do not look at Central Asia as an object in a great game. We do not look at this as a zero-sum contest between U.S., the Russians and the Chinese. We have our own interests. Our own interests do overlap significantly with what I believe are Russian interests, that is we both oppose Islamist extremism and terrorism.”

Two days later, en route to Central Asia, Secretary of State Rice castigated Uzbekistan for rejecting international appeals about human rights, and for being “out of step with what is happening in this region as a whole.”<sup>98</sup>

Congress, having drawn its own conclusions about Andijan, was also moving to harden its line on Uzbekistan; in October Senator McCain inserted language into the 2006 budget bill requiring Congressional approval before any 2006 Consolidated Stabilization Fund (CSF) monies could be disbursed to Uzbekistan.

In November Uzbekistan announced its intention to join the Eurasian Economic Community. This effectively put an end to U.S. economic influence on Uzbekistan and shifted that country's economic orientation firmly towards Moscow. Clearly, both Tashkent and Moscow saw the role of the U.S. in the region in “zero sum” terms that contrasted sharply with the collaborative approach championed by Mr. Fried.

On November 21 the American flag was lowered at the Khanabad base and the last U.S. aircraft and troops departed. However, the Pentagon, acting in defiance of Congress, released \$22.3 million in CSF funds to Uzbekistan for

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<sup>97</sup>. <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2005-10/2005-10-07-voa68.cfm?CFID=13469097&CFTOKEN=78471086>.

<sup>98</sup>. [http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2005/10/11/rice\\_signals\\_rift\\_with\\_uzbekistan?mode=PF](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2005/10/11/rice_signals_rift_with_uzbekistan?mode=PF).

earlier rent payment for Khanabad, dipping into multi-year 2005 funds to do so.

## **2006**

On 19 January Alexei Miller, chairman of Russia's natural gas monopoly, Gazprom, arrived in Tashkent. During his visit Miller signed documents for the joint development Gazprom-Uzbek development of west Uzbekistan gas fields, effectively assuring that this gas would reach the world market only via Russia, and not by any future trans-Caspian pipeline that Kazakhstan might build to Baku. Uzbekistan also committed to sell gas to Gazprom at a low \$80/tcmb, less even than the \$85 Turkmenistan was receiving. It is not clear whether this was due to Miller's tough bargaining or Tashkent's desperate need for a sale.

On 25 January Uzbekistan formally submitted its application to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Community.

## Biographical Note

Dr. **John C.K. Daly** received his Ph.D. in Russian and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of London and is an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC. His writing has appeared in Jamestown's Spotlight on Terror, Jamestown Eurasia Daily Monitor, China Brief and Terrorism Monitor, along with Janes's Defense Group's Intelligence Watch Report, Terrorism Watch Report, Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor and Islamic Affairs Analyst, Caspian Crossroads as well as the Christian Science Monitor.

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**S. Frederick Starr** is Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, a Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center affiliated with Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, and the Department of Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University. His research, which has resulted in eighteen books and 180 published articles, focuses on the rise of pluralistic and voluntary elements in modern societies, the interplay between foreign and domestic policy, and the relation of politics and culture. Dr. Starr was educated at Yale; Cambridge University, England; and Princeton University,

and was Associate Professor of History at Princeton. Before coming to the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, he was founding director of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Wilson Center in Washington, president for eleven years of Oberlin College, Ohio, and president of the Aspen Institute. He founded the Greater New Orleans Foundation, is a trustee of the Eurasia Foundation, and served for ten years on the board of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. He is the recipient of four honorary degrees and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.