

Central Asia News Update

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**MIDDLE
EAST
STUDIES
FORUM**
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Recent Developments

Economic

The Kazakh national currency [improved](#) marginally against the dollar, although the country is still experiencing a stock market slump.

Uzbekistan [announced](#) that it would increase import duties on some consumer goods from September 1.

Kyrgyzstan [abolished](#) customs controls on the Kazakh border on August 12, formalising its entry into the Eurasian Economic Union.

The Uzbekenergo State Joint Stock Company (SJSC) will [build](#) two combined-cycle gas turbines at the Talimarjan thermal power plant in southern Uzbekistan.

The Kazakh currency [lost](#) 26 percent of its value in a matter of hours following a government decision to implement a free-floating exchange rate.

The Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev [announced](#) that the country's financial woes would require the government to cut expenditure until 2018.



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) [granted](#) Kazakhstan a \$1 billion loan.

Iran and Kazakhstan [discussed](#) bilateral ties, including the possibility of establishing an energy, oil and gas free trade zone in the Caspian.

Politics

The Kyrgyz President, Almazbek Atambayev, [scheduled](#) the country's parliamentary elections for October 4.

Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistani Prime Minister, met with senior Kazakh officials on August 25 to [discuss](#) bilateral, regional and international issues.

The Kyrgyz President [signed](#) a legal amendment on August 11 to allow citizens to be exempted from military service for religious reasons.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan made [progress](#) in talks aimed at easing tensions on their shared border.

The Turkmen President [met](#) his Kyrgyz counterpart in Bishkek during his first official visit to Kyrgyzstan. The presidents discussed further energy cooperation.

Tajik authorities [blocked](#) Facebook and YouTube on August 25 without explanation.

Tajikistan [asked](#) Russia to extradite seven alleged members of the banned 'Group 24' organisation.

Yury Zhukovsky, who is [accused](#) of shooting an Uzbek cleric in Sweden in 2012, was extradited from Russia to Sweden.

Uzbek authorities [arrested](#) nine more individuals linked to the Uzbek President's daughter's corruption case.

The Uzbek President [signed](#) a law on August 11 which will enable Uzbek authorities to strip nationals of citizenship if they are involved in mercenary activities, terrorism or other crimes.



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Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan was [summoned](#) by Afghan authorities after Pakistani security forces killed eight Afghan border police.

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was [banned](#) by the Tajik Justice Ministry.

Security

A court in Kazakhstan's northwestern city of Aqtobe [jailed](#) eight men on charges of propagating extremism.

A Moldovan appeals court [extended](#) the detention of the Tajik opposition activist, Sobir Valiev, who is fighting extradition to Tajikistan. Human Rights Watch has [urged](#) Moldova to refuse the extradition request.

The IMU [released](#) a video on August 6 that depicted its leader, Usmon Ghazi, taking an oath of allegiance to ISIS.

A jailed Tajik politician was [sent](#) to a remote prison after giving an interview to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Tajik authorities [announced](#) that they had 'neutralised' a transnational drug-trafficking group that was operating on the Tajik-Afghan border.

A man wearing an Afghan National Security Forces uniform in Helmand Province [killed](#) two US soldiers on August 26.

The United States [invited](#) Uzbekistan to join the international coalition to fight against ISIS.

An Uzbek resident of United States [pleaded](#) guilty in a US court to supporting terrorism in Iraq and Syria.

Uzbek authorities [mobilised](#) thousands of security forces members in the Ferghana region in mid-August to search for two females alleged to be suicide bombers.

Six Tajik citizens were [injured](#) during a clash on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border on August 4.

The Death of Mullah Omar

On 29 July, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani [announced](#) that the Taliban chief, Mullah Omar, had died two years earlier in Pakistan. Although the Taliban quickly [appointed](#) Mullah Akhtar Mansur as the group's new leader, Mullah Omar's family [declared](#) their opposition to Mansur's appointment on the grounds that Omar's successor should have been chosen by a grand council, instead of just senior members. The Afghan government [banned](#) any ceremony to honour Mullah Omar, but Kabul [experienced](#) some violence, including on August 7, when 51 people were killed.

Mullah Omar's death raises significant problems for the Taliban, which had published a number of statements in Mullah Omar's name in the two years following his death. Most significantly, Omar was [purported](#) to have sanctioned the current Taliban-Afghan government peace talks. The absence of this sanction now threatens to derail the much-anticipated peace talks. The Taliban's failure to acknowledge Omar's death has also damaged the legitimacy of the group's leaders amongst its supporters, many of whom were already feeling the lure of the Taliban's competitor, ISIS, which has recently increased its influence in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's intelligence agency [reported](#) that the leader of the Jundullah group, Qari Ghulam Hazrat, was killed in an air strike in Kunduz Province on August 24.

The United States [added](#) the Haqqani network chief's brother, Abdul Aziz Haqqani, to its terrorist list on August 25.

A suicide car bombing [killed](#) 12 and wounded at least 60 in Kabul on August 22.

The Afghan Vice President, Abdul Rashid Dostum, [survived](#) an ambush in Faryab Province on August 21.