

Central Asia News Update

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**MIDDLE
EAST
STUDIES
FORUM**
HOSTED BY THE ALFRED DEAKIN
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Recent Developments

Economic

Kazakhstan will [join](#) the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December.

Afghanistan is [negotiating](#) with Iran to purchase Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). Turkmenistan currently fulfils most of Afghanistan's LPG needs.

Kazakhstan's Kashagan oil field will [resume](#) operations by 2017. Operations were suspended three years ago when leaking pipelines were discovered.

Vladimir Putin [awarded](#) the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev with the Order of Aleksandr Nevsky for his contribution to "bilateral efforts to advance Eurasian integration processes."

Afghanistan will launch its first online [marketplace](#) in 2016, allowing Afghan traders to sell their products directly to the world market.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank will soon [decide](#) whether to accede to Tajikistan's request for \$40 million in budget support.



An Asian Development Bank Senior Advisor [said](#) that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline could be completed within three years, but that construction will not begin until a number of outstanding issues are resolved.

The 4th International Caspian Energy Forum Astana will be [held](#) in the Kazakh capital on November 4, 2015.

Uzbekistan is [reported](#) to have purchased military aircraft from Airbus, although neither Uzbekistan nor Airbus confirmed the sale.

Politics

Russia's Foreign Minister said that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) would ['upgrade'](#) Iran's member status if the nuclear agreement is achieved.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, [criticised](#) Central Asian countries over "the deterioration of some aspects of human rights, [and] a shrinking of democratic space."

An European Union (EU) strategy document [suggested](#) that the EU will push the Central Asian republics to address "serious challenges to human rights" in the region.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will [develop](#) a reserve bank of nuclear reactor fuel in Kazakhstan that can provide low-enriched uranium to countries excluded from the international uranium market.

President Nazarbaev [called](#) for joint cooperation against religious extremism at the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Ban Ki-moon [attended](#) a ceremony in Kyrgyzstan to mark the fifth anniversary of the 2010 ethnic clashes in Osh, in which 400 people were killed.

The Kyrgyz President, Almazbek Atambayev, [called](#) for harmony between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks on the fifth anniversary of bloody ethnic clashes.

A group of Afghan politicians and civil society figures held informal [talks](#) with Taliban representatives in Norway.



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The independent Joint Anticorruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee [published](#) a report that criticised the presence of favouritism and patronage in diplomatic appointments within Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry.

Ban Ki-moon [urged](#) Uzbekistan's President to end the use of forced labour in cotton fields, and improve the treatment of prisoners.

A senior Kyrgyz judge was [sacked](#) for objecting to the government's plan to collect biometric data from citizens in exchange for the right to vote.

Qatar negotiated the [release](#) of four Tajik border guards who were kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan in December 2014.

Social media networks were [blocked](#) in Tajikistan on June 18 after a video was released showing that the former commander of Tajik special police forces had joined ISIL.

The United States [urged](#) the Tajik government to allow greater internet freedoms.

Amnesty International [urged](#) Ban Ki-moon to confront Uzbek leaders on the violation of human rights during his trip to the region.

Security

Qatari officials [agreed](#) to temporarily increase the travel restrictions imposed on five senior Taliban leaders who were released from Guantanamo Bay prison last year.

Uzbek and Kazakh nationals were [charged](#) in New York with recruiting for ISIL on June 11.

Dias Kadyrbaev, a Kazakh [friend](#) of the Boston Marathon bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, was jailed for six years on charges of obstructing a Kazakh police investigation.

12 de-miners were [kidnapped](#) in incidents across eastern Afghanistan.

A Pentagon report found that the Afghan army continues to [suffer](#) high casualties, despite some capacity improvements.

Afghan security in brief

A US State Department official [weighed in](#) on the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) debate in Central Asia, suggesting that the conflicts in Iraq and Syria remained remote to most Central Asians. However, the official noted that ISIL has gained increasing influence in Afghanistan, although mostly through the defection of Taliban groups. The Taliban's central leaders clearly view these defections as a serious threat, as the Taliban's deputy leader [wrote](#) to the ISIL leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, warning him not to compete with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The two groups have reportedly directly clashed in recent months.

In June, the Taliban intensified its violence in Afghanistan, particularly in northern districts. On June 6, the Taliban [took](#) control of Yamgan district in Badakhshan province in the northeast of Afghanistan. Afghan officials reported that foreign insurgents had fought alongside the Taliban in Yamgan. The Taliban also won control of Kunduz Province in the country's north later in June, while mounting a simultaneous [attack](#) on the country's parliament in which two civilians were [killed](#).

The increased violence [prompted](#) northern Afghan rivals Atta Mohammad Noor and the Abdul Rashid Dostum to discuss the formation of a coalition against terrorists. Atta Mohammad Noor [accused](#) the central Afghan government of being weak.

The International Crisis Group [released](#) a report that accused the pro-government militia, the Afghan Local Police (ALP), of committing serious abuses within the communities that they are charged with protecting.

Tajikistan [issued](#) an international arrest warrant for Colonel Gulmuro Halimov, the Tajik former-police commander who joined ISIL.

An [explosion](#) in front of an office of Afghanistan's main news agency in the east of the country wounded at least two people.